

Book III

RISICO

A MURDER OF CROWS

*The presumption stealthily
asserted itself that if the actors' hats
had gaudy green ostrich feathers on them,
then their thoughts and motivations
probably did too.*

Christopher Clark, on the perception of pre-1914 politics.

Unlike the precipitate causes of the Second World War, the antecedents of the First and their interpretation remains the topic of a lively historic discussion. But before we dare to enter the abyss, we must remind ourselves of four instances in which the pre-1914 world was much different from today, and we must keep these conditions in mind when we review what happened.

I. To wage war was considered the natural privilege of a state, a part of its governmental discretion. Smaller wars before the 1870s, say, the Prusso-Danish War of 1864, had essentially been the last "cabinet wars", undertaken with limited resources to achieve specific political objectives. But the more technical and economic development allowed increases in army size and firepower, the more such changes aggravated the indeterminable risks - "the fog of war", as Clausewitz famously called it - and this uncertainty ensured that after 1871 a relatively long period of peace graced much of the European continent. Even men who could reasonably be accused of having advocated war in July 1914 did so without an idea of the sheer magnitude of the catastrophe they invoked. The odium that two world wars were to inflict on the idea of war itself, it's now increasingly doubtful legitimacy, did not exist in 1914.

II. Just as war was perceived as a simple, prosaic option of a government, the leadership of its armed forces was expected to be prepared for it. Every nation had copied the system of the Prussian and later German General Staff, and all these staffs were called upon to develop plans for every possible contingency; indeed, not to plan for a likely scenario would be tantamount to treason.

III. Due to false lessons drawn after the Crimean War of 1856 by generals worldwide, the dogma prevailing at European military academies in the years prior to 1914 embraced the superiority of attack; the French general staff called it "offensive à outrance", and it became the principle underlying its catastrophic Plan XVII. In addition, the inbred conservatism of cavalry officers - noble to a man - led to the establishment of additional cavalry units in all armies right up to the eve of the war, which had two significant drawbacks: not only took cavalry an exceptional and inevitable drain on the chronically overburdened supply system, for one cavalry division of 4,000 men and twelve guns needed as many daily supply trains (forty) as an infantry division of 16,000 men and fifty-four guns, (1) but the invention of the machine-gun had punched the death ticket for cavalry attacks, who came to resemble mass suicide. Yet this was, of course, not realized until the occurrence of the first battles. But the reliance on attack would also guarantee, it was surmised, that the decisive battle and its unavoidable destruction would take place on the enemy's soil, and, with luck, might disable some of his war industry - as it happened when Germany occupied the ten north-eastern French departments for much of 1914 to 1918 and thus took out approximately 70% of the pre-war French iron industry.

IV. The second half of the nineteenth century was the age of thriving imperialism, and all great powers attempted to partake in or project "world power"¹. Colonization was, in Rudyard Kipling's words, the "white man's burden".

But to some degree, colonization was a game, a show; while the gold and diamonds of the Cape provinces and the copper, ores and minerals from the Ugandan mines unquestionably were great economic boons for Great Britain, and other possessions could at least serve as strategic bases or coaling stations, there were just as many places which were useless, or, worse, a drain on resources. Most of the German possessions fell into this category. Yet psychological contemplations counted just as much, sometimes more, than profit or strategy. There was a theory that many statesmen subscribed to; the thesis that the riches of the globe would ultimately be divided between a very small number of contenders. The British Secretary of State for the Colonies and pro-German Liberal Unionist Joseph Chamberlain believed that "the tendency of the time is to throw all power into the hands of the greater empires, and the minor kingdoms - those which are non-progressive - seem to fall into a secondary and subordinate place" (2) The French politician Darcy opined that "... those who do not advance go backwards and who goes back goes under." (3)

Because of her fragile inner condition, Germany depended, in a sense, on success in her foreign policy, which included some more exotic colonialist adventures. Paul Kennedy observed:

[T]here remained the danger that failure to achieve diplomatic or territorial successes would affect the delicate internal politics of Wilhelmine Germany, whose Junker elite worried about the (relative) decline of the agricultural interest, the rise of organized labour, and the growing influence of Social Democracy in a period of industrial boom.

It was true that after 1897 the pursuit of Weltpolitik was motivated to a considerable extent by the calculation that this would be politically popular and divert attention from Germany's domestic-political fissures.

But the regime in Berlin always ran the dual risk that if it backed down from a confrontation with a "foreign Jupiter"², German nationalist opinion might revile and denounce the Kaiser and his aides; whereas, if the country became engaged in an all-out war, it was not clear whether the natural patriotism of the masses of workers, soldiers, and sailors would outweigh their dislike of the archconservative Prusso-German state. While some observers felt that a war would unite the nation behind the emperor, others feared it would further strain the German socio-political fabric. (4)

Yet at the same time, Kennedy argues, the overall vexations of Germany were not too dissimilar from those experienced by other nations, for all of them, whether more liberal England or more authoritative Russia, felt the need for the establishment - and retention - of a "place in the sun", which ought to deflect the public attention from the increasing social conflicts of the industrial age.

¹ In 1961, Professor Fritz Fischer of Hamburg University published *GRIFF NACH DER WELTMACHT* (which translates as „A Grip for World Power“ but was titled in its 1967 English translation "Germany's Aims in the First World War"). The book unveils the abyss of a German conspiracy for world supremacy, which apparently was undertaken by all sorts of influential people, from generals to newspaper owners, by their dreaming up nasty plans for world domination after they had won the war.

The introduction by Hajo Holborn of Yale argues that Germany strove to become "a 'world power', equal to Britain and Russia," and that her citizens "displayed a shocking disregard for the rights of other nations, especially of the small states." (5) While examples for these assertions can be found without difficulty, they seem to be beside the point: all these arguments can be reciprocated by "to quoque"; for why should Germany not strive to world power if Great Britain, France, the United States or Russia did? In regards to the freedom of other nations, Indians, Boers or Chinese could teach lessons about British concern for their rights and Cubans or Philippines comment on American charity. One may speculate what kind of social order Tsarist Russia or the Ottomans of Turkey would have imposed over conquered territories. Mutatis mutandis, none of these German plans ever saw the lights of factuality, while French revanchism ran rampant after 1918 and in its inflexibility much aided the demise of the German Republic and the rise of the Third Reich.

What *GRIFF NACH DER WELTMACHT* provided was an ex post facto argument that Germany's sinister plans justified the war; that the victors saved humanity from eternal Teutonic overlordship. This is pure utilitarianism, entelechial adjudication a posteriori, and thus of little significance in this investigation. The following chapters describe the complex interactions of the relevant nations respectively their governments.

² Kennedy relates here to a famous speech of Bernhard von Bülow, then Foreign Minister, who complained in 1899: "We cannot allow any foreign power, any foreign Jupiter to tell us: 'What can be done? The world is already partitioned.'" (6)

It has been argued by many historians that imperial Germany was a "special case," following a Sonderweg ("special path"), which would one day culminate in the excesses of National Socialism. Viewed solely in terms of political culture and rhetoric around 1900, this is a hard claim to detect:

Russian and Austrian anti-Semitism was at least as strong as German [the French Dreyfus affair might compete as well, ¶], French chauvinism as marked as the German, Japan's sense of cultural uniqueness and destiny as broadly held as Germany's. Each of these powers examined here was "special," and in the age of imperialism was all too eager to assert its specialness. (7)³

The psychological factors of the ongoing imperialist competition, however, were of a nature that the governments in question could not simply mollify by a new treaty with power X or the establishment of one more army corps. They had a life of their own, and in retrospect it would seem that what the continental powers crucially lacked were reliable crisis-control mechanisms.

The feudal inheritance, the proximity of power and influence near the respective imperial or royal courts, made sure that there was always more than a single foreign policy; too often, there were as many shades of foreign policy as there were important courtiers. The evil effects of compartmentalization added to the frequent befuddlements of the administrative processes: the general staffs tended to treat the foreign offices as handmaidens; competition between the different military services was often vicious; and in some countries even intra-service turf wars were ferocious enough to paralyse communications. Chapter One of Norman Stone's "The Eastern Front 1914-1917 - The Army and the State in Tsarist Russia", should be read in full length to appreciate the exploits of the milites gloriosi in the Russian officer corps.

An excerpt from a later chapter, regarding the customs of the Russian North-Western Front, which commanded I and II Army during the 1914 campaign in East Prussia, may suffice here:

The affairs of the north-western front were also bedevilled by an element of mistrust among senior officers that, in this first, confused, phase of the war mattered more than it did later. The leading personnel had been chosen from different cliques of the army -- friends and enemies of Sukhomlinov [War Minister, ¶], plebeian infantrymen on one side, aristocratic cavalrymen on the other. Lord and peasant stared resentfully at each other across the staff-maps.

As Grand Duke Nicholas's STAVKA [the nominal Supreme Command, only appointed at the outbreak of war, ¶] came into existence, it could insist on key appointments, to cancel those made by the War Ministry. Zhilinsky, commanding the front against Germany, was a Sukhomlinovite; but Rennenkampf, commanding I Army, was a notorious enemy. Samsonov, commanding II Army, was a Sukhomlinovite appointment, but their chiefs of staff, Mileant and Postovski, reversed the pattern -- Rennenkampf communicated with Mileant only in writing throughout the East Prussia campaign, and refused to act on information given first to Mileant.

For IX Army command in Warsaw, Sukhomlinov had named "the coarse Siberian", Lechitski; Grand Duke Nicholas appointed as chief of staff one of his favourites, the "gentleman", Guliewicz, an aristocratic Pole. The two men ended by addressing not a word to each other, after Lechitski refused permission for Madame Guliewicz to live in headquarters.

Communications, particularly between Zhilinsky and Rennenkampf, were confused to the point where Zhilinsky, nominally commander of the front, sometimes barely knew what was happening. The communications from I Army were so insultingly laconic and infrequent that Zhilinsky had to ask STAVKA to intervene. Five messages were sent to Rennenkampf and an adjutant of the Grand Duke himself - Kochubey - to remind him that he should let his seniors know what the army was doing. (8)

³ Paul Kennedy adds: "In this age of the 'new imperialism,' similar calls [as in Germany] could be heard in every other Great Power; as Gilbert Murray wickedly observed in 1900, each country seemed to be asserting, 'We are the pick and flower of nations ... above all things qualified for governing others.'" (9)

Germany did not do necessarily better. Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg was only briefed about the principal German War Plan⁴ in December 1912, during his fourth year in office, and then received only platitudes. About the most risqué and controversial element of the plan, the thrust to Liège, he was not informed until July 31, 1914, the day before war was declared. (10) Each country showed idiosyncrasies: during the war, the French chief of the general staff Joffre forbade even President Poincaré to set foot into the war zone, which he regarded as his personal fief, while Austria had to issue her mobilization order in fifteen languages. Bureaucracies reined the continent supremely.

The multiplication of government agencies was only exacerbated by the protocolary detours that remained in place everywhere; on behalf of the nobility's sense of decorum and the respect it thought proper to command, or the layered defence rings of the public service hierarchies: no provisions existed to expedite communications in a time of crisis. While Wilhelm II and Nicholas II were in touch, personally, via telegram, in the last days of July 1914, the chancellors, prime ministers and presidents of the European nations were not - neither their generals nor their foreign offices and ambassadors would allow it.

At this point in our narrative we reach the "fiendishly difficult issue" of the origins of the Great War of 1914, and we ought to begin with a look at the continental balance of power after 1871. The European equilibrium of power that had been set up at the Congress of Vienna after the Napoleonic Wars had proven relatively efficient in its dual purpose -- to prevent another great war, and to impede the political emancipation of the bourgeoisie, and, from the 1860s on, the industrial proletariat and Social Democracy - in short, to prohibit a reoccurrence of the French Revolution. The rebellious intermission of 1848/49 had been gunned down by the princes, but it was soon determined that an industrial society forbade such drastic measures, for the sake of productivity. The only fights Bismarck ever lost were the internal ones - his Kulturkampf, the cultural war against south-German Catholicism, and his attempt to destroy Social Democracy via specific anti-Socialist legislation in the 1880s. By 1912, Centre and Socialists had become the largest national parties.

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870/71 brought two principal changes in the strategic equilibrium of the continent; one clear and immediately visible, the other latent, circumspect, and slow in its consequences. Number One was the emergence of a new, possibly dominant, power on the continent - Wilhelmine Germany - which everybody had to take note of; Number Two was the emergence of another, possibly dominant, European power - an industrialized and modernized Russia - of which few took notice.

Franco-German enmity had become a predictable factor of the new European reality; revanchism was to remain the French Right's battle cry for the foreseeable future. That France's desire for revenge could not be fulfilled without outside aid was also clear; both her stagnant population and relative industrial underperformance - at least if compared to Germany - illustrated her weakness. She could not endanger Germany unless in concert with Russia, but this avenue Bismarck had blocked.

If Franco-German tension was the western centre of European politics after 1871, the other two were in the East, consisting of the triangles Constantinople - St. Petersburg - Vienna and Constantinople - London - St. Petersburg. These were the centres of the attention all European powers - except perhaps for Germany, which was far away and could not hope to profit from a breakup of the Ottoman Empire - paid to the decay of the Turkish realm and stood ready to pick up the pieces. Triangle One defined the Balkans, the scene of Austro-Russian disputes over the future inheritance, and Triangle Two incorporated Mesopotamia and Persia, the pieces over which Russia and Great Britain expected to haggle after the demise of the Ottomans.

To discern that both the European and Asian borderlands of the Turkish Empire were the most volatile areas of the respective international relations did not require the application of prophecy, and someone should have noticed that Russia was the attractor that figured in each possible crisis scenario, but no one did, and few care today; as Sean

⁴ Since the plan was and is known principally for the German chief of staff who first discussed it, Count Alfred von Schlieffen, who was in office until 1906, it is generally called the SCHLIEFFEN PLAN. His successor, Helmuth von Moltke (the younger), however, modified the plan quite significantly; the extent of these changes would justify to speak of the Moltke Plan, not the Schlieffen Plan. These changes, however, have not become known and appreciated until recently, and, for the sake of historic compability and a lack of alternatives, the German plan that became operative in August 1914 will still be referred to as the "Schlieffen Plan", but Moltke's modifications, which are discussed in Chapter XVIII, DE BELLO GALLICO, must be kept in mind. (11)

McMeekin notes, "as for what Russia's leaders hoped to accomplish by going to war in 1914, most histories of the conflict have little to say, beyond vague mutterings about Serbia and Slavic honour, treaty obligations to France, and concern for Russia's status as a great power." (12)

It is indicative of a habitual geopolitical superficiality that even general history works of the era do not enlighten the curious layman what, for example, French, British, Australian and New Zealand troops sought at the Gallipoli Peninsula, i.e. the Dardanelles, in 1915/16. There were no Germans, and the landscape was not very attractive. We'll get to this in a minute.

To prevent a Franco-Russian rapprochement had been Bismarck's priority, but as we had the opportunity to observe in Chapter XI, the Wilhelmstrasse was far too preoccupied with internal strife and incompetence after 1890 to notice the signs of the times; the failure was aggravated by the fact that the two decades after 1890 were the years in which the fateful system of alliances developed and petrified.

Early signs of trouble came from south-eastern Europe and the Balkan Peninsula, the critical triangle between Vienna, Constantinople and St. Petersburg. Slavic hotheads instigated local insurrections from the mid-1870s on; some were home-grown, as in Bulgaria, where, Luigi Albertini remarks, more than two hundred revolutionary committees could be counted in 1872, (13) some were kindled by Serbian agents. Russian expansionism and Slavic ethnocentricity concerted, founded upon age-old Russo-Turkish and Austro-Slavic enmity; encouraged, perhaps, by the Russian generals' impression that both Turks and Austrians were militarily inferior, "beatable", so to say. Luigi Albertini sums up the Russian designs on the Turks as follows:

Russian ambitions in the Balkan Peninsula were of ancient date.⁵ Eight wars at least she had waged on the Turks either to take their territory or to help Orthodox Slavs and Greeks to throw off the Turkish yoke. In the recent Crimean war Russia had come up against Austrian hostility. Forgetful of services rendered by the Tsar in 1849, when Nicholas I had saved Francis Joseph's throne by sending Russian troops to smother the Hungarian revolt, Austria had maintained an unfriendly neutrality during this war, and at the Congress of Paris in 1856 had helped to deprive Russia of part of Bessarabia.

Having reached the Black Sea in the eighteenth century Russia henceforward aspired to free access to the Mediterranean. But the Straits were in Turkish possession, and entry to them was regulated by inter-national agreements unfavourable to Russia. The Black Sea was a mare clausum⁶ and its key was in other hands. Still older than the Russian aspiration to the Straits was the aspiration for Constantinople.⁷ The cross was to be raised on the Church of Santa Sophia as symbol of the protection given by Russia to the Balkan Christians and of her aid in their liberation. (14)

The development of Pan-Slavism in the 1860s added to the volatility of the region, for the enthusiasts of some imaginary ethnical unity demanded the establishment of a greater Slavic confederation, which was to include "Russia, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Constantinople with the Straits, a Serb-Croat-Slovene realm corresponding approximately to Yugoslavia, and in addition Greece, Romania and Hungary." (15) It would appear that there were few Slavs in Constantinople who

⁵ Albertini explains: "In 1833, by the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi, Russia had achieved the closing of the Dardanelles to enemy fleets seeking to penetrate to the Black Sea. This clause was modified by the Treaty of London of 1840 and the Straits Convention of 1841, which denied the Straits to ships of war whether entering or leaving the Black Sea, a principle confirmed by the Treaty of Paris of 1856, which further forbade both Russia and Turkey to have warships in the Black Sea. After the denunciation of this clause by Russia in 1870, the Treaty of London had withdrawn the veto, but had for the first time admitted the principle that foreign warships might enter the Black Sea in time of peace, if the Sultan deemed it necessary for the safeguarding of the other clauses of the Treaty of Paris. Thus Russia could not pass her Black Sea fleet into the Mediterranean, while the Sultan could admit enemy fleets into the Black Sea, a complete reversal to the disadvantage of Russia of the principle of the closed Straits." (16)

⁶ Latin: a "closed sea"

⁷ Sean McMeekin comments that Constantinople had been called "Tsargrad" by Russians for centuries; the town from where, after successful reconquista from the Muslims, the Tsar would reign over a "Second Rome", a new Orthodox Christian empire. (17)

urgently expected their liberation. But Pan-Slavism found its most enthusiastic adherents in the south: neither the Poles, who longed to have their state back, which had been divided up by Russia, Austria and Prussia in the three successive divisions of the late eighteenth century, nor the Czechs, who aspired to their own state in Bohemia and Moravia, eventually together with the Slovaks a bit further east, were keen on a union with southern Slavs, for they were only too aware of the ethnic and religious divisions of the Balkan.

There existed within the southern Slavs living in Austria-Hungary a quite numerous faction which would accept the recently quite liberal Habsburg reign and aspired to little more than, say, limited home rule and decent representation in the administration of the realm. The Austrian heir apparent, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, was essentially open to their suggestions, but the good will of the constructive faction came to naught because of the intransigence of the Hungarian nobility -- in some respects, the Slavs were less of a problem to Austria than the Hungarians, who, by skilful negotiation, had created for themselves a very advantageous position in the Austro-Hungarian AUSGLEICH of 1867.

Luigi Albertini summarizes the result of the bargain:

[By the Ausgleich] ... the Empire was divided into two rigidly separated States; on the one hand Austria with the Hereditary Crown lands formerly belonging to the Holy Roman Empire and the later acquisitions Galicia and Dalmatia, and on the other Hungary together with Transylvania and Croatia, from which Fiume was detached and placed directly under Hungary.

Each of the two states was to have its own Constitution, Government, and Parliament. Common to both States were the ministers for War, Foreign Affairs, and Finance, the latter in so far as he administered the revenues covering defence and diplomatic expenditure. While legislation and the budget came under the separate Parliaments, their joint interests were to be dealt with by standing committees called Delegations nominated annually by the respective Parliaments. For matters concerning commerce and customs, the two Governments were to conclude separate agreements every ten years.

Though the word Ausgleich means "equalization" and the compromise assured equal rights to both sides, Austria was to contribute 70% of the joint expenditure and Hungary only 30%, which, as Friedjung⁸ observes, was equivalent to a "tribute obligation" from Austria to Hungary, of which the Hungarians were wont to boast. (18)

In his role as King of the Hungarians, Emperor Francis Joseph was bound by the resolutions of the Hungarian parliament, and thus, as the Austrian historian Viktor Bibl observed, the Magyars had the upper hand in governmental practice:

Not two sovereign Parliaments were to deal with joint business; not the King of Hungary and the Emperor were to base themselves on agreement between the two states. Solely the Hungarian Parliament and Ministers impose their will as law on the entire Monarchy, including Austria; the King of Hungary as executor of the Hungarian national will is absolute master of Austria. (19)

And so it had come to pass that most of the southern Slavs of the Empire had come under the Hungarian thumb, from which they received little kindness. It was the small, semi-autonomous principality of Serbia, technically a province of the Ottoman Empire, which, relying on Russian protection in the case of failure, felt elected to propel Pan-Slavic dreams toward their eventual fulfilment. After raising an insurgency against the Turkish overlords in Bosnia 1875, the Serbian ruler Prince Milan urged Constantinople to entrust his state with the governance of the errant province. When the Sultan denied the motion, Serbia and Montenegro declared war on the Turks on June 30, 1876. By September, they were defeated, and the Serbs asked their putative protector, Tsar Alexander II, to intercede on their behalf and to arrange an armistice. Russia eyed the possibility to have found in the Serbo-Turkish war a proper excuse to attack the Ottomans themselves, but this could not be done unless Austrian neutrality could be obtained.

Diplomatic missives were exchanged between Vienna and St. Petersburg, and despite Austrian conditions that, in Albertini's words, were "tantamount to [Russia] fighting for the benefit of Austria-Hungary," (20) a military convention and

⁸ Heinrich Friedjung, then Professor at the University of Vienna.

political agreement was signed in Budapest in early 1877, and Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire on April 24. The Convention of Budapest awarded Bosnia and the Hercegovina to Austria and assured her that no greater Slavic state would be founded in the Balkans as a result of Russia's future endeavours.

Eventually, Russia won a confused campaign, and in March 1878 exacted from Turkey the Treaty of San Stefano. The agreement established a geographically generous, supposedly independent Bulgaria on Turkey's doorstep, which, however, could fool no one as to its being a "Russian outpost towards Constantinople". (21) In addition, the compact not only bestowed full independence on Serbia, Montenegro and Romania but also provided autonomy, under Austro-Russian "supervision", to Bosnia and Hercegovina.

All that, of course, directly violated the Convention of Budapest and also was far more than Great Britain was willing to tolerate - for it turned out that Russia and Austria had clandestinely agreed to "liberate" Constantinople, which would become a "Free City". Now an Anglo-Russian conflict threatened over the San Stefano Treaty, and Austria espied an opportunity to renegotiate her terms with Russia. For her benevolent neutrality, she now demanded not only Bosnia and the Hercegovina, again, but added parts of Montenegro and of the large Bulgarian state the San Stefano Treaty had just created. It was all too obvious to suspect that Austria envisioned a road for herself all the way down to Salonika and the Aegean Sea; on August 6, 1878, Count Julius Andrassy, then Austria's Foreign Minister, admitted in a letter to the King of Wuerttemberg that the possession of these lands "enables us in the event of a collapse of Turkey to be as near as possible to the scene, to safeguard our interests." (22)

With Austria entering the race for the Straits - for a naval base in Salonika, furnished with the proper ships, could easily close the Straits independently of Turks or Russians or the British - the situation became opaque, impenetrable, while the stakes increased. Great Britain's new Foreign Minister Lord Salisbury realized this, and, assisted by Bismarck, whose back channels in St. Petersburg had informed him about the Austro-Russian collusion, invited the European powers to a continental congress to adjudicate all pending matters, which opened in Berlin on June 13, 1878.

After a lot of horse-trading and pressure brought to bear by Bismarck and Lord Beaconsfield, i.e. Benjamin Disraeli, the congress eventually entrusted Bosnia and the Hercegovina to Austrian occupation, while upholding titular Turkish suzerainty over these provinces. In addition, Austria reserved the right to intercede in the Sanjak of Novibazar, the strip of territory separating Serbia and Montenegro, if the Ottomans were unable to guarantee a competent administration of the province, which remained under their sovereignty.

The problem of the Straits, however, could not be addressed satisfactorily; for England and Russia could not find a compromise. (23) Statehood and independence were granted to Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, the latter two receiving additional territories. Russia appropriated Armenia and reoccupied Bessarabia. The island of Cyprus Great Britain had secured from Turkey on June 4, ten days before the Congress began; that she attempted to keep the acquisition secret - in vain, when the news went around the world on July 8 - was only more water on the mills of those who were wont to complain about "Perfidious Albion" and her hypocrisy. The bottom line, however, was that everybody had profited "at the expense of Turkey, to which up to 1878 had belonged Bosnia, Herzegovina, Bessarabia, Armenia, and Cyprus, and under whose sovereignty till then had stood Serbia, Montenegro and Romania." (24)

The short description of the events giving rise to the Congress of Berlin has been chosen to serve as an impression of the manner in which European diplomacy was customarily handled; in the best case, its double and triple layers of deceit could be repaired by the efforts of reasonable and skilful men like Disraeli and Bismarck; under the aegis of lesser diplomatic talents, accidents happened, as can be read in detail in Luigi Albertini's magnum opus.

We shall now attempt to concentrate the next twenty-five years or so of European power politics, each of them as complicated and deceptive as the events that led to the Congress of Berlin - and some worse - in a form that hopefully allows us to separate wheat from chaff. Essentially, we shall follow the interplay of the Great Powers, mindful that the rapid sociological and economical changes of the industrial age exerted limitations on governmental options than had been unknown only decades earlier - fear of socialism, for one.

The Congress of Berlin had not only addressed questions of the Balkans but many other points of interest, and one of its results had been that Bismarck and Disraeli had granted France "a free hand in Tunis," (25) for they much favoured to keep France busy in the Mediterranean instead of courting Russia. License for France, however, irked Italy, which felt a need to acquire new possessions; why exactly, nobody knew, for she was rather underdeveloped and would be expected to do her homework first, but she seemed to labour from a case of the aforementioned psychological desiderata of successful imperialism.

In 1880, France invaded Tunisia and established a protectorate over the region, but because at this time Gladstone and the conservatives were in power in England, far more sceptical to French acquisitions in Africa than Disraeli and Lord Salisbury had been, Italy thought she might enlist British aid for her own designs on Tunisia. But England was loath to replace a French threat to her Mediterranean position with a potentially worse Italian one and Rome got nowhere. Having arrived there, only an understanding with Germany could help, but then Bismarck was no friend of Italy, which he accused of pursuing a "jackal policy". (26) Thus it took another eighteen months of horse-trading before, on May 20, 1882, Germany, Austria and Italy signed the First Treaty of the "Triple Alliance", valid for five years.

The contract began with the assurance that the parties "have agreed to conclude a Treaty which by its essentially conservative and defensive nature pursues only the aim of forestalling the dangers that might threaten the security of Their States and the Peace of Europe." (27) Because it was exactly such conservative, peaceful and defensive agreements that proved unable to stop the conflagration of 1914, we shall have a look at a few of its clauses, summarized by Luigi Albertini:

The High Contracting Parties mutually promised peace and friendship, pledged themselves to enter into no alliance or engagement directed against one of their States and to exchange views on political and economic questions of a general nature that might arise, [and] promised mutual support within the limits of their own interests (Article I).

Austria and Germany undertook in the case of unprovoked attack by France to go to the help of Italy with all their forces. The same obligation was to devolve upon Italy in the case of an aggression by France on Germany without direct provocation (Article II).

*If one or two of the High Contracting Parties, without direct provocation on their part, should chance to be attacked and engaged in war with two or more Great Powers not signatories of the treaty, the *casus foederis* would arise simultaneously for all the High Contracting Parties (Article III).*

In the case that one of the three allies was forced to make war on a Great Power, not a signatory to the Treaty, which threatened its security, the two others would maintain benevolent neutrality, each reserving to itself the right, if it saw fit, to take part in such a war at the side of its ally (Article IV). (28)

The attentive reader will have identified two problems: the first in the clause that applies if one of the signatories is "... forced to make war ..." which entirely leaves open the question under which conditions this might be the case. Second, some scenarios were left out; for example, the contract would not apply if Austria would be attacked by Russia alone. The alliance was, of course, directed against France; Bismarck, whose opinion of the Italians had not much improved, saw the purpose of the Triple Alliance less in winning Italy but in preventing her from associating with France [and when exactly that happened in 1915, Bismarck's voice thundered from the grave "I told you so!", ¶1]. By 1888, Romania had essentially joined the Triple Alliance, and the situation at this time is often regarded as Bismarck's new, post-1871, continental equilibrium: France was isolated, and Bismarck himself would ensure that the interests of Russia and Austria on the Balkan would not collide. Great Britain's interests would profit from a stabilization of the continent as well and Russia's aspirations on the Straits were, for the moment, impeded by Romania.

But Italy remained a complicated customer; she had hoped to gain a seat on the highest table with her signature on the Triple Alliance, but had to find out that the DREIKAISERBUND courts, Berlin, Vienna and St. Petersburg debated Balkan affairs, in which Rome believed to have a voice, without her. Yet despite the Dreikaiserbund, Austro-Russian tensions developed over Bulgaria, in whose affairs Austria wanted to retain an interest that Russia was not willing to grant her.

Eventually, these tensions would open a way for Paris to an understanding, and later an alliance with the court of the Tsar. But we're not there yet.

After some mending of socks, the Triple Alliance was renewed on February 20, 1887 on identical terms, except for the addition of an Austro-Italian protocol that attempted to regulate the parties' interests in the Balkan, and a German-Italian agreement in which Italy reassured herself of German assistance in the case of a clash with France in central or western North Africa. (29)

Bismarck saw room for a further improvement of the status quo if Great Britain and Italy were to come to an understanding against France, and when Franco-British relations in regard to Egypt had taken one more dive after the French Prime Minister Freycinet publicly declared "that France could not allow Egypt to pass permanently under English rule because 'he who is master of Egypt is in large part master of the Mediterranean,'" Lord Salisbury began to make overtures to Italy. (30) Albertini remarks that he "had got to the point of half wishing for another Franco-German war to put a stop to French vexations." (31) In the spring of 1887 Italy and Great Britain signed an agreement regarding the retention of the status quo and pledging mutual support in Africa, an understanding Austria joined in late March 1887 to the chagrin of the aggressive Hungarian faction. But it seemed not to have come to Italy's attention that her planned occupation of Tripoli, which belonged to the Ottomans, might constitute a change of this status quo, and when the Italian Foreign Minister Crispi wrote to Salisbury to inform him of the plan which would, as he said, solely anticipate a similar French plan, Salisbury made clear that British support would not extend to such adventures. He wrote back:

"The interests of Great Britain as also those of Italy do not permit that Tripolitania should have a fate similar to that of Tunisia. We must absolutely guard against such an eventuality when it threatens us. ...

If Italy were to occupy Tripoli in time of peace without France having taken any aggressive measure, she would expose herself to the reproach of having revived the Near Eastern question in very disadvantageous conditions." (32)

On the eastern side of the Triple Alliance, Austria seemed to contemplate war with Russia over Serbia and Bulgaria. Kalnoky, the new Austrian Foreign Minister, approached Bismarck with his generals' wish to clarify the exact conditions under which the casus foederis under the Austro-German Alliance of 1879 would arise. The problem was that the Reinsurance Treaty was secret and had to remain so and hence Bismarck had to prevaricate. The Austro-German Alliance, he replied, provided for German assistance in the case of a Russian attack on Austria, but not for an Austrian attack on Russia, as he thought to have made clear to the Austrian Ambassador in Berlin in January 1886:

"If Russia attacks Austria-Hungary, Germany will come to her assistance with all her forces, but it is not possible to let Germany play the role of auxiliary army to increase Austro-Hungarian influence on the Danube. Not a member of parliament would be found to vote even a single mark for such a purpose." (33)

In a speech to the Reichstag on January 11, 1887, Bismarck had publicly clarified, with an eye to the Hungarian hotheads that:

"Our relations with Austria-Hungary are based on the consciousness of each one of us that the whole existence of each as a Great Power is a necessity to the other in the interests of European equilibrium; but these relations do not, as they are interpreted at times in the Hungarian Parliament, rest on the principle that one of the two nations puts itself and its whole strength and policy completely at the service of the other.

This is an utter impossibility. There exist specifically Austrian interests which we cannot undertake to defend, and there are specifically German interests which Austria cannot undertake to defend. We cannot each adopt the other's special interests." (34)

Austria had become the problem in both the Triple Alliance - for perpetual Austro-Italian tensions - and the Dreikaiserbund, due to her frequent spats and spars with Russia. In the winged words of Norman Stone, "Austria-Hungary was trying to act the part of a great power with the resources of a second-rank one." (35) It was a sign of the respect Bismarck commanded in all European capitals that he was able to balance the diverging interests of Germany's allies as

long as he was in office. But, as Luigi Albertini commented, "Bismarck's resignation in March 1890 produced a sense of dismay all over Europe. His authority and prestige, the veneration which surrounded him, the fear he inspired, were beyond compare," and observed that "the youthful sovereign who had dropped him [Wilhelm II] had no policy of his own, and a sinister influence on German foreign relations was exercised by the tortuous Holstein who, in his hatred for Bismarck, reversed all the latter's directives." (36)

Germany's lifeline to St. Petersburg ruptured quickly. Only three months after Bismarck's dismissal, the Russian Ambassador Shuvalov showed up in Berlin to renew the Reinsurance Treaty for another six years, but encountered disinterest bordering on hostility. Still, both Tsar and the Pan-Slavs remained sceptical of Paris, the former for its republicanism, the latter because they relied on Germany to keep Austria in check on the Balkans. Yet French perseverance began to pay off. Paris offered to float numerous Russian loans at advantageous conditions, sold weapons cheaply, and endeared the Tsar by arresting a few of the more obnoxious Russian anarchist émigrés that lived in France, of the sort that had assassinated the Tsar's father Alexander II in 1881. In August 1890, the French Chief of the General Staff Boisdeffre was invited to the Russian summer manoeuvres and there was introduced to his Russian colleague Obruchev and the Minister of War. Yet again it seems that it was Italy that unblocked the mutual suspicions between Paris and St. Petersburg, when her new Prime Minister Rudini notified parliament of the 1891 renewal of the Triple Alliance "in a form which created the impression that it had been in some measure joined by England." (37)

This was an ominous mistake, for if it were true, Russia had no choice but to entice France, Albion's old enemy, as a counterweight, and in this age of secret treaties one could not check whether it was a lie. Thus Russia initiated tender diplomatic overtures to France which ended, in summer 1891, in the unheard of invitation of the French fleet to a visit at Kronstadt, Russia's principal naval base in the Baltic, on the doorsteps of St. Petersburg, at the occasion of which the French Ambassador Laboulaye proposed that the two nations enter an agreement to further the continental peace. A memorandum was drawn up with rather unseemly haste, and on August 27, 1891, the French government approved a letter delivered by the Russian Ambassador in Paris, which stated that the Tsar had approved the following outlines:

"1. With the aim of defining and consecrating the ENTENTE CORDIALE which unites them, and in the desire to contribute by common accord to the maintenance of peace, which forms the object of their most sincere desires, the two Governments declare that they will concert on all questions of a nature to endanger general peace.

2. In the case that this peace were actually in peril, particularly in the case that one of the two parties were menaced by aggression, the two parties undertake to concert in advance measures to be taken immediately and simultaneously if the eventuality contemplated should actually arise." (38)

Elementary scrutiny, however, tells us that the interests of the prospective endorsers of the agreement were far from overlapping, and the declarations of peaceful intent cannot obscure their different motivations: France hoped to enlist the Russian aid without which she could not hope to overcome Germany; yet Russia's problem was not Germany but Great Britain, that blocked her designs on the Straits and expansion toward the Caucasus and Persia. Thus it took an additional twenty months of haggling and dickering until the Entente Cordiale was finally signed in January 1894, and the Franco-Russian pact that Bismarck had feared was reality. Even then, the foreign policy aims of the two signatories were far from identical, and it was less the incoherent political invocations than the military agreement that became important. In the first two paragraphs, the arrangement laid out the following scenarios for outright defence or mobilization in a crisis:

"1. If France is attacked by Germany, or by Italy supported by Germany, Russia will employ all forces at her disposal to attack Germany. If Russia is attacked by Germany, or by Austria supported by Germany, France will employ all the forces at her disposal to combat Germany.

2. In the case in which the forces of the Triple Alliance or of one of the Powers forming part of it were mobilized, France and Russia at the first announcement of the event and without need of preliminary agreement will immediately and simultaneously mobilize the whole of their forces and move them as near as possible to their frontiers." (39)

The operative memorandum that followed the protocol laid down the number of troops that were to be committed against Germany; France would dispatch 1.3 million men and Russia between 700,000 and 800,000. In addition, the general staffs of the nations were to meet at specified intervals to harmonize operational planning and prepare troop coordination, there would be no separate peace, and the Entente would last, in strict secrecy, as long as the Triple Alliance existed. (40)

Again, the treaty was technically defensive, but, as in the Triple Alliance, some possible scenarios made little sense or tended to provoke ill-advised complications. If, for example, Austria were to mobilize against Russia in a Balkan conflict, France would also be obliged to mobilize. Since France and Austria had no common border, this move would not only make no military sense but would lead to German mobilization, which in turn might well provoke the war that the alliance was supposed to avoid. As Luigi Albertini observed, "the French endeavoured to remedy this incongruity, but ended by resigning themselves to the consideration that, in an Austro-Russian conflict, France and Germany could not stand aside." (41)

This was of course all too true, as 1914 would prove, and it is exactly the smart approval of the likely scenario that makes one doubt very much the honesty of the French government's assertions that she was driven into the war of 1914 involuntary, solely because of her treaty obligations to Russia. Essentially, the Franco-Russian alliance guaranteed that *revanche* would occur in the near future; all that remained was to find a suitable pretext and to determine a suitable date.⁹ What was true in 1894 was even truer twenty years later: on May 29, 1914, the American President Wilson's envoy to Europe, Colonel House, wrote his master that "whenever England consents, France and Russia will close in on Germany and Austria." (42)

Whether outright war or mobilization, neither side had illusions about the decisiveness of the prospective military measures, nor were they unaware that the defensive character of the treaty might change in time.

The chauvinists of both countries expected much more from the alliance than did the Governments which concluded it. Moreover, in later years, like the Austro-German alliance, it lost its strictly defensive character to adapt itself to other ends; and the generals who negotiated the military agreement perfectly understood the consequences of the mobilizations contemplated in the agreement.

General Obruchev in the course of negotiations remarked that "to his idea the beginning of French and Russian mobilization cannot now be regarded as a peaceful act; on the contrary it is the most decisive act of war; i.e., would be inseparable from an aggression". Boisdeffre, likewise, said to the Tsar: "Mobilization is declaration of war. To mobilize is to oblige one's neighbour to do the same. Mobilization causes the carrying out of strategic transport and concentration. Otherwise, to allow a million men to mobilize on one's frontiers without at once doing the same oneself is to forfeit all possibility of following suit, is to put oneself in the position of an individual with a pistol in his pocket who allows his neighbour to point a weapon at his head without reaching for his own." To which Alexander III replied: "That is how I too understand it". The importance and the consequences of this judgement were to come to the fore in July 1914 when Russia was to be the first Power to order general mobilization. (43)

Now Great Britain found herself the odd man out, but her traditional equanimity, or indecisiveness had preserved her so far from having to jeopardize her global aims by continental obligations. But she had to protect the Mediterranean

⁹ The present author, however, disputes Luigi Albertini's subsequent opinion that "it would be wrong to imagine that the Franco-Russian Alliance was concluded by the French with a view to an impending *revanche* or by the Russians to realize their aspirations in the Balkans and Far East. What both sought was to end their isolation." (44)

In reality, France was not isolated any more than Great Britain, which saw no need to engage in questionable alliances then; both had extensive colonial interests that guaranteed them a major voice in global politics independent of alliances. In addition, French Republicans were much more sympathetic to liberal England than to reactionary Russia.

Russia was assured of non-intervention by the powers that counted - which did not include Austria-Hungary, who could not threaten Russia on her own - and protected by her vastness that had defeated even Napoleon - as long as she did not attempt to go for Constantinople and the Straits. Yet by exposing Germany to a potentially immobilizing two-front war, she might gain the opportunity to fight and decide in her favour what Sean McMeekin called the "War of the Ottoman Succession". (45)

life line that connected her to Egypt and the Near East and for this reason was interested in opposing French influence in the western part of the Mediterranean by friendship with Italy that would bring the necessary authority to bear in Her Majesty's name; yet, alas, her aversion to make binding commitments won the day, and Italy declined free services. But England might be left in a dubious position if, for instance, France and Russia were to cooperate in seizing Constantinople and the Straits. Such a scenario seemed possible after their alliance had become known, but Great Britain declined to join the Triple Alliance pre-emptively over this scenario, although her Prime Minister Rosebery acknowledged that "in such a case we should require the assistance of the Triple Alliance to hold France in check." (46)

When Great Britain extended feelers to Germany over such a scenario, she was rebuffed by Kaiser Wilhelm II, who, from traditional friendship to Russia as well as antipathy to England made it clear that a Russian seizure of Constantinople and the Straits would, in his opinion, not constitute a *casus belli* for Germany; the interest of Austria could be maintained by giving her Salonika as a compensation. It was the remainder of Bismarck's old policy of dividing the Balkans into two spheres of influence for Russia and Austria, and presiding over them as arbitrator. But Wilhelm was not Bismarck and thus the nostalgic endeavour tanked.

Meanwhile Italy complained that she received neither sufficient assistance from her partners in her diplomatic efforts nor true support against the Entente. When the question of the automatic renewal of the Triple Alliance in 1896 came up, her government pointed out, in Albertini's words, that "... from France, Italy could, by deserting the Alliance, have obtained Abyssinia, Tripolitania, and Heaven knows what else. Italy had honourably rejected these baits and what was the result? She was attacked in Abyssinia, and had to stand by, powerless, while France set up a state in North Africa." (47) Blanc, Rome's Foreign Minister predicted revolution in his country, the fall of the monarchy and the erection of a republic, unless Germany and Austria would support her occupation of Tripoli. But Berlin and Vienna remained silent. (48) Neither was Italy successful in obtaining British aid for this plan and for the time being remained frustrated.

When tensions increased in South Africa between Boers and Britishers in 1895, Wilhelm II easily managed to upset Great Britain with his aforementioned, ill-advised telegram of January 3, 1896, which congratulated Boer President Kruger to his accomplishments in driving out English raiders. A few months earlier he had demanded in a conversation with the British Military Attaché in Berlin that England "take up a clear position either with the Triple Alliance or against it, adding that 'the former alternative would require a formal undertaking such as was customary between continental Powers, i.e. sealed and signed guarantees.'" (49) The same invitation he extended in writing to the new Prime Minister Lord Salisbury in London on December 20, 1895, who, however, failed to acknowledge receipt. Given that Wilhelm knew Britain's disinclinations perfectly well, one is left to wonder about his state of mind.

Meanwhile Italy's Prime Minister Francesco Crispi complained to Bülow, then Ambassador in Rome, that "France makes war on us everywhere. Whatever may be said about the Triple Alliance being concluded to maintain peace, for us it has been the opposite. For us the Triple Alliance is war. Our position is intolerable. And I repeat, for us this state of affairs is worse than war." (50) There was, of course, no true war going on, except for a few ruffled feathers in Italy's excitable nature, but Crispi's complaint depicts the psychological dimension of the imperial age. In reply, Chancellor Hohenlohe pointed out that the alliance was a defensive league to maintain peace, not a clique of robbers. (51) Italy's frustration continued, although she was able to come to an agreement with France over Tunisia in late 1896.

In the Balkan, Austria continued the attempts to enlarge her domain of influence further east than Bismarck's old division of influence spheres had suggested, chiefly driven by her State Department that was occupied by a Russophobe Hungarian camarilla; the result, increasing tensions with Russia, irritated Berlin, which made clear that it would not support an Austrian strike at Constantinople. Austria then attempted to enlist England's aid, but, again, Salisbury replied in the name of Her Majesty's government that "it was impossible to take any engagement involving an obligation to go to war "and Vienna got nowhere." (52)

A change in the German government brought the replacement of Foreign Minister Marschall by Bülow and the appointment of Alfred von Tirpitz to the post of Secretary for the Navy in June 1897. This substitution would prove fatefully important, for not only were here the origins of Germany's naval race with England, but the notorious Pan-German League, founded in 1893, began to exert political influence as well.

Alike many naval officers of the time, Tirpitz had become a follower of A.T. Mahan, an American naval captain, whose book *THE INFLUENCE OF SEA POWER ON HISTORY* had become a military bestseller. It argued that, as England's example proved, it was necessary for an empire to maintain sea power, that is, a battle fleet superior to her competitors, to project global influence and protect its economic interests. Tirpitz relished the idea very much, not in the least because it would much improve the prestige of the German navy, that is, his own office, which up to then had been a small department for coastal defence. Tirpitz had Mahan's book translated and distributed to everybody he knew.

He was anti-British, too, which put him in the emperor's good graces; a feeling that was largely reciprocated in England. Luigi Albertini cites the *SATURDAY REVIEW* of September 11, 1897, which argued that "in all parts of the earth English and Germans jostle each other. Were every German to be wiped out tomorrow, there is no English trade, no English pursuit, that would not immediately expand," and recommended that "Germania est delenda." (53)

Numerous Italian, Austrian and German appeals to England in the last decade or so, inviting her to the Triple Alliance, had failed to impress her much, but from 1898 on the situation reversed itself; now Whitehall sought German attention. At the same time, renewed Russian scepticism over the Entente with France led the Tsar to propose a continental alliance of all powers against "the ambition, the implacable egoism, and the avidity of England." (54) A Bismarck might have been able to square this diplomatic circle; Wilhelm, Chancellor Hohenlohe and Bülow were not.

Suddenly China appeared in the German focus. When General Obruchev arrived from St. Petersburg with the anti-England proposal in the autumn of 1897, Bülow succeeded, while stalling Obruchev's original mission, to win the Tsar over to assist Germany in the acquisition of a combined port, trading post and coaling station on the Pacific Coast. With the Tsar's connivance, taking advantage of the weakness of the Chinese government, German troops landed at Jiao Xian in China's Shandong peninsula, over which they acquired a ninety-nine year concession in March 1898. The Russians, meanwhile, had obtained their own Pacific harbour in Port Arthur, which became the principal port for their Far Eastern fleet after they had thrown out some nosy Britishers. Russian admirals had read Mahan's book as well.

In the eyes of Her Majesty's government, the Russian activities were quite close to poaching in England's own back garden, for Great Britain controlled more than eighty percent of the Chinese trade. She was not likely to allow Russian expansion - the German colony was too small to matter. In the Mediterranean, Austria-Hungary and Italy, to a degree, counteracted the spread of Russian influence, but who could aid Britannia against Russia in the Far East?

In the opinion of Joseph Chamberlain, head of the British Liberal Unionists and Secretary for the Colonies, it might be Germany. Unlike Salisbury, he saw dangers in England's isolation. Already French expeditions probed the White Nile from the south and had established a base near Fashoda (today's Kodok in the Sudan). Chamberlain used Salisbury's absence from the Foreign Office on account of a spa visit to Europe after March 25, 1899 to advance his ideas, but, not being a diplomat, it would seem that he approached his pleadings to Germany, as Luigi Albertini commented, "in the manner of a business deal." (55) Strangely enough, after all earlier German overtures to England, now it was Bülow who prevaricated, citing concerns over Germany's relation to Russia, which might suffer from a flirt with her mortal enemy. Bülow summarized his position in writing to Wilhelm that we "must hold ourselves independent between the two; be the pointer on the scales, not the pendulum swinging from left to right." (56)

When Salisbury returned to Whitehall in late April 1898, he had to find out that Chamberlain had meanwhile made his demand of an alliance with Germany public, for instance in a speech on May 13 in Birmingham. Chamberlain's reasoning, however, failed to convince Salisbury and the issue remained open. Suddenly Wilhelm took action.

... on 30 May 1898, the Kaiser took the step of writing to the Tsar telling him that three times in the last few weeks England had talked of an alliance, the last time requiring the answer within a brief time limit. As the Triple Alliance, Japan, and the United States were all to be included, the alliance could only be directed against Russia.

"I beg you to tell me what you can offer and what you will do if I refuse."

Before answering, the Kaiser wanted to know the Tsar's proposals. Let the latter not hesitate on account of France which could enter into any combination he desired. By this indiscretion the Kaiser offered the prospect of reviving the Continental league against England. The Tsar, however, did not rise to the bait, but answered on 3 June that a few months earlier England had made attractive proposals to him too, and that he was not in a position to answer the question whether or not it was advantageous to Germany to accept these repeated English offers. (57)

At this point, the reader might be excused if the suspicion arose that any system that depended on puerile aristocrats who habitually engaged in pissing contests was doomed to end in global war. Wilhelm and his advisors concluded that "any agreement with England would appear directed against Russia and would lessen the security of Germany to east and west, while any agreement with Russia would appear directed against England and would lessen the chance of colonial acquisitions." (58) The compulsiveness of imperialist reasoning reared its head again; had Bismarck been in office, he would have counselled that, in the worst case, a treaty with Russia might cost a few thousand square miles of torrid African steppe, but would prevent the annihilation of the Fatherland.

In the autumn of 1898, through Lascelles, her Ambassador in Berlin, England put the quite unheard-of proposition on the table - apparently secured by Chamberlain in a cabinet vote - that the two countries could reach agreement on mutual assistance if either one were attacked by two other Powers, but Bülow again prevailed in counselling against it by writing to Wilhelm, in a variation of his old theme, that, by declining any alliance with England or Russia, "Your Majesty can be present as arbiter mundi at the eightieth birthday celebrations of H.M. Queen Victoria." (59) That no one would ask notoriously unreliable Wilhelm to assume this role never entered Bülow's mind.

Meanwhile trouble brewed in the Sudan. Lord Kitchener had massacred the followers of the Mahdi at Omdurman and hoisted the Union Jack in Khartoum. Then he embarked on Fashoda with a small party, to challenge the French under Captain Marchand who had established a camp there. No one yielded, and both British and French flags flew in Fashoda while the diplomats in Paris and London ministrated on the matter. Escalation followed, to a degree at which war seemed to become a distinct possibility, until on November 4, 1898, the French Foreign Minister Delcassé informed London that the French troops had been ordered to leave Fashoda.

France's giving way may have been influenced by the liberal Dreyfusard movement, which deplored the reactionary leanings of the Tsar and the Kaiser and advocated rapprochement with Albion. On the other hand, the French Right, convinced that the Dreyfus scandal was a British machination to weaken her eternal enemy, inflamed the patriots. The journalist Cassagnac wrote that "if Germany is an object of hatred, it is for a definite past which can be wiped out. ... But England's hatred against us is inextinguishable; England is the enemy of yesterday, tomorrow, and forever." (60)

On December 11, 1898, the Tricolore was lowered at Fashoda but the crisis was not yet over. (61) To bring it to a negotiated ending, Paul Cambon became the new French Ambassador at the Court of St. James, a post he would hold until 1920. Eventually, a treaty was signed that recognized England's claims on Egypt and the Upper Nile valleys yet allowed France expansion toward the west and south. That, however, seemed to infringe an earlier Anglo-Italian agreement over the latter's right in the Tripolitan hinterlands and the problem was not resolved until two years later, when by mutual declaration, France signaled disinterest in Tripolitania while Italy admitted the same for Morocco. That the Italians completely managed to botch their eventual invasion in Libya twelve years later is a different story, and will be related below.

Meanwhile, in August 1898, the new Tsar of Russia, Nicholas II, had proposed an international conference to discuss "the most effective means of assuring to all peoples the benefits of a real and lasting peace and in particular to put an end to the progressive development of existing armaments." (62) Although rumours held, perhaps truthfully, that all that Russia wanted was a temporary slowing down of the armaments race for the purpose of rebuilding and modernizing her own artillery, (63) the conference eventually took place at The Hague, in the Netherlands, from May 18 to July 29, 1899.

The first instance of discussion was a Russian proposal to freeze conscription numbers for five years, which was easily shot down by Germany and Italy. The second proposal was to introduce international arbitration to conflicts, but,

again, German opposition could not be overcome until the final version of the arbitration agreement amounted to making the process voluntary.¹⁰ Although a few innocent formulations were eventually developed, which graced the final deposition of the conference, the occasion had not accomplished much.

Perhaps as a reaction of Wilhelm's unyielding opposition to the conference aims, Delcassé travelled to St. Petersburg a week after its conclusion, to renegotiate, if possible, the terms of the Entente Cordiale. He was received favourably, and proposed to correct the political agreement of August 27, 1891, in that now not only the maintenance of peace but also "the equilibrium among the European forces" (64) became its objective. This was agreed on, and the French government's unofficial propagandist Pierre Renouvin, a historian by trade, had no problem to recognize that the formula about the equilibrium "is a device to make Russia take into account the question of Alsace-Lorraine, which she affects to ignore It is thus accurate to say that the spirit of the Franco-Russian alliance is changed." (65) It had changed indeed, for now it could be interpreted to cover attack, too, and the subsequent modifications in the Military Convention took this into account. Luigi Albertini tallies them up:

The [old] military convention of 1892 did not create obligations for France in case of a war of Russia against England. But the possibility of such a war was discussed at a meeting held in July 1900 between the Russian and French Chiefs of Staff, who drew up a protocol in which it was stated that if England attacked France, Russia would create a diversion against India with 300,000 men, when the construction of the Orenburg-Tashkent railway was completed; if on the other hand England attacked Russia, the French General Staff would concentrate 150,000 men on the Channel coasts and threaten a landing in the British Isles.

For several months these terms remained a simple proposal of the two General Staffs; after a fresh visit of Delcassé to St. Petersburg in April 1901, it was laid down in an exchange of letters between Delcassé and Lamsdorf [the new Russian Foreign Minister, ¶] on 16-17 May that the two Governments agreed to them in case of a war "imposed on Russia and France by England alone or by England supported by the Triple Alliance". The agreement even began to be implemented when the French Government authorized a loan to Russia of 425,000,000 gold francs destined for the construction of strategic railways, in particular the one from Orenburg to Tashkent. (66)

There was no doubt that the two general staffs also discussed other scenarios, say, a war with Germany or Austria. Meanwhile on the British Islands, Chamberlain resumed his efforts to bring about an Anglo-German understanding. The occasion of his renewed attempt was the aforementioned birthday celebration of Queen Victoria, where, alas, no one yet had asked Wilhelm to arbitrate anything. Apparently there was a conference at Windsor Castle, in which Wilhelm, Bülow, Asquith and Chamberlain participated and laid out a road map. It was resolved that Chamberlain would smooth the way, which he attempted to do in a speech at Leicester on November 30, 1899. He opined that:

"I cannot conceive any point which can arise in the immediate future, which would bring ourselves and the Germans into antagonism of interests. On the contrary, I can see many things which must be a cause of anxiety to the statesmen of Europe, but in which our interests are clearly the same as the interests of Germany and in which that understanding of which I have spoken [previously] in the case of America might, if extended to Germany, do more, perhaps, than any combination of arms in order to preserve the peace of the world.

If the union between England and America is a powerful factor in the cause of peace, a new Triple Alliance between the Teutonic race and the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon race will be a still more potent influence in the future of the world. I have used the word 'alliance', but again I desire to make it clear that to me it seems to matter little whether you have an alliance which is committed to paper, or whether you have an understanding in the minds of the statesmen of the respective countries." (67)

¹⁰ Upon a letter forwarded by the German delegation to Wilhelm, in which the Kaiser was asked to allow a small concession or two in the question of international arbitration, Wilhelm simply wrote "No." (68)

That was frank, perhaps too frank, and the proposal was received in neither country on its merits. In England, the affair over the Kruger telegram was not forgotten, and the papers had a field day; in Germany the speech caused an unprecedented storm of indignation. The influential journalist Theodor Wolff of the Berliner Tagblatt vowed that Germany "was not going to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for England" (69); the Navy League fulminated that the offer was only directed at diverting money from the German fleet program to Albion's sole benefit. Hastily, Bülow repented, and when laying before the Reichstag the Second Navy Law, he avowed that "in the coming century Germany will be either hammer or anvil," (70) as if he had not been present at Windsor Castle.

The naval bill was truly enormous: it provided for the building of thirty-four battleships, fourteen heavy and thirty-eight light cruisers and eighty torpedo boats within sixteen years, (71) and necessitated the construction of three new harbour facilities to service all these ships. William explained to the world that he had never been to England in the first place, but if he had been, he would have been misunderstood. Not only had he never known of any English proposals, he was sure that, as he told the Russian Ambassador in Berlin, "'Russia alone could paralyze English power and deal her, if need be, the mortal blow. Should the Tsar send his army against India, he [Wilhelm, ¶] would personally guarantee that nobody in Europe should move. He would mount guard along the French frontiers. ... In England they well know this I have never concealed that in the Far East I shall never be on their side.' The astonished Ambassador asked if he were to report this conversation. 'Certainly', replied the Kaiser." (72) It would seem that Wilhelm's megalomania was doing well.

After Bülow and Holstein repeatedly disavowed an English alliance, the renewed, tacit advances of new Foreign Minister Lansdowne and Lord Salisbury - now Prime Minister - found no positive reply. Finally, the latter stated the long and short of his government's refusal to enter alliances in the memorandum of May 29, 1901.

"The British Government cannot undertake to declare war, for any purpose, unless it is a purpose of which the electors of this country would approve. If the Government promised to declare war for an object which did not commend itself to public opinion, the promise would be repudiated, and the Government would be turned out.

I do not see how, in common honesty, we could invite other nations to rely upon our aid in a struggle, which must be formidable and probably supreme, when we have no means, whatever, of knowing what may be the humour of our people in circumstances which cannot be foreseen." (73)

When Lansdowne talked to the new German Ambassador Metternich on January 19, 1902, whether, despite the basic inability of Whitehall to enter in a military treaty, other mutual problems could be resolved, the new Ambassador replied that they could not; England would have to choose between all and nothing. We may reflect here on the words of the German historian Erich Brandenburg:

"In trying, by means of carefully balanced paragraphs to escape the danger of being exploited by England and then left in the lurch, our political leaders conjured the far greater peril of driving our natural allies into the arms of our opponents and leaving ourselves isolated. Yet they constantly cherished the conviction that they had acted wisely because England must and would eventually return. The English never came back to us. They went instead to our enemies." (74)

Anglo-German talks largely ceased, and the attention of Wilhelmstrasse turned to the important matter of the renewal of the Triple Alliance, on the calendar for summer 1902. Italy had experienced another change of government, and under the aegis of the new Foreign Minister Prinetti and the influence of King Victor Emmanuel III, whose anti-Austrian and anti-Wilhelm feelings were well known, plus the sympathies of new Prime Minister Zanardelli for the Irredentists,¹¹ the country seemed to lean more and more on France, especially since Prinetti was a Lombardist, who were traditionally friendly towards France. In one of his earliest interviews, with the NEW YORK HERALD, Zanardelli explained that "if the treaties¹² are renewed, they can have no other aim than peace. We shall have to divest them of all suspicion, which unfortunately has

¹¹ The Irredentists demanded the return to Italy of all Italian-speaking provinces, essentially those remaining with Austria, i.e. Friuli, Trentino and Trieste.

¹² That is, including the commercial adjuncts to the Triple Alliance.

several times arisen, of animosity toward France. It is our duty to work in that sense, because Italy and France must remain friends." (75)

Such talk was not suited to mollify either Berlin or Vienna, and when an Italian navy squadron visited Toulon, the principal French warship base in the Mediterranean, Bülow was reported to have told his Italian mother-in-law that "Italy will have to decide soon to make her choice between matrimony and concubinage." (76) Most surprisingly, Italy subsequently decided to reveal her agreement with France over Tripolitania, which had been concluded in the aftermath of the Fashoda affair but had been kept secret.

In Bülow's parlance, Italy's tried the squaring of the circle; to retain matrimony to the Triple Alliance but to lust, perhaps, for an extended French affair. Italian politicians routinely disavowed such notions but were unable to convince their allies. To these vexations was added the problem of the Pope, who sought to be given back a secular state. While the overall situation was that Italy could not really afford *not* to prolong the alliance, differences with Germany arose over the question of eventual changes which were advocated by Prinetti.

He envisioned three modifications. The first regarded Italy's desire for the conquest of Tripolitania and the Cyrenaica; a new Article XI should be inserted in the treaty, in which "the allies of Italy [Austria-Hungary and Germany] declare their disinterestedness towards any action which she [Italy] might undertake at her own risk and peril in Tripolitania or in Cyrenaica." (77) Demand number two was that the members of the alliance should guarantee the status quo in the Balkans, for if Russia were to come into possession of Constantinople and the Straits, Italy would be reduced to the level of a second rate Power in the Mediterranean, helplessly wedged in between France and Russia." (78) The last demand was that, without a previous agreement on the commercial issues, the Alliance would not be prolonged.

Bülow prevaricated, and nothing moved until Austria proposed that, once the treaty was renewed in the original form, she would promise Italy not to interfere in "Italian action in Tripoli or in Cyrenaica, in the event that the existing status quo in this region should, as the result of particular circumstances, undergo a change, and Italy were to find herself forced to resort to such measures as her own interest might dictate." (79)

This Prinetti appreciated, but insisted on the primary importance of the commercial treaty, a matter which Bülow, however, refused to discuss. On April 26, 1902, Bülow told Lanza, the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, that it would have to be yes or no - like he had instructed Metternich to cold-shoulder Lansdowne in London. The Italians had to give in, and, on June 28, 1902, the unchanged contract was signed, although an annex incorporated the declaration in the matter of Tripoli that Austria had promised.

Earlier in the year, an indiscretion of Prinetti had led France on the track of a secret agreement outside of the treaty itself, concluded in January 1888 between the General Staffs of Germany and Italy, which stipulated that in the case of a war of the Alliance against France and Russia, Italy were to send six army corps and three cavalry divisions to Germany's assistance at the Rhine front. Later, the obligation was reduced to five army corps and two cavalry divisions. (80)

In 1901, the military convention had become a matter of bilateral talks, initially separate from the more political issues, and the German Military Attaché in Rome, Major von Chelius, was told at an audience with the King that His Majesty had reservations against the dispatch of so many of Italy's best troops north, where they could not protect the Italian borders and coast. It was clear that, between the lines, Italy sought to slip out of the potentially dangerous obligation, and Chelius reported the matter to Bülow, who gave Chelius' report to the German Chief of Staff, Alfred von Schlieffen, for evaluation.

Schlieffen knew his Italians well, and had to calculate whether the retention of the obligation would actually strengthen Germany or not, or might further estrange the Italians from the Alliance. They even might defect to the enemy. If they did, France could throw the approximately 150,000 men who guarded the Italian border to the Rhine Front, and Austria would have to spare troops from her eastern borders vis-a-vis Russia and send them south to guard the Italian frontier in the Alps.

Overall, Schlieffen decided that he could do without the Italians and Chelius informed Saletta, the Italian Chief of Staff, that Germany regarded the obligation as repealed. But the incident renewed doubts in the German and Austrian General Staffs whether Italy would fulfil any military obligations in the event of the *casus foederis*, and these doubts, as it will turn out, were justified.

Prinetti, who was a businessman and industrialist by trade, not a politician - and a diplomat much less - seems to have taken Bülow's refusals of his proposed modifications to the heart. Albertini, a fellow Italian, commented that "having before one's eyes the vision of the man with his outbursts, his rages, his wild utterances, one can measure the resentment that must have remained in his spirit after being obliged to bow to refusals, so intolerable to him, inflicted by Bülow and Goluchowski [Kalnoky's successor as Austrian Foreign Minister, ¶].” These refusals played into the hands of Barrère [French Ambassador in Rome, ¶], the tempter standing by his side, who had acquired a considerable ascendancy over the Italian Minister and took advantage of it at a favourable moment to induce Prinetti to sign an agreement of great scope and gravity." (81)

Barrère's original idea was to neutralize the parts of the Triple Alliance that regarded France. "In other words," says Albertini, "that the *casus foederis* should occur for Italy if Germany were attacked from two sides, i.e. by France and Russia, but not if she were attacked by France alone; in this case Germany was to content herself with Italian neutrality." (82) We note here that this is a provision for a French offensive, exactly what the Triple Alliance was conceived to prevent. Prinetti declined the first proposal, but on June 30, 1902, two days after the renewal of the Triple Alliance, exchanged letters with Paris in which he avowed that:

"In the case that France were to be the object of a direct or indirect aggression on the part of one or more Powers, Italy will maintain strict neutrality.

The same will happen if France, in consequence of direct provocation, should find herself compelled in defence of her honour and her security to take the initiative in the declaration of war. ...

To remain faithful to the spirit of friendship which has inspired the present declaration, I am further authorized to confirm that there does not exist on the part of Italy and will not concluded by her any protocol or military international disposition such as would be in disaccord with the present declaration." (83)

Pressed by Barrère to define "direct provocation", Prinetti gave examples of *casi belli* that included, for example, Wilhelm I's refusal to receive Benedetti in Bad Ems in 1870. Diplomatic slights, real or imagined, could thus become sufficient grounds for war.

The advantages for France were obvious, for she had removed a potential opponent in her pursuit of *revanche* against Germany, but it was less clear what Italy won in the trade, except that France now promised not to hinder Italian expansion into Tripolitania and the Cyrenaica. This was nice, but did not change the fact that all other Powers still objected to Rome's intentions in North Africa. Thus overall, the Franco-Italian understanding lessened, not improved, the chances for peace.

Meanwhile in the East, a thaw seemed to have taken place in the Austro-Russian relations. In the autumn of 1902, one of the more effective Balkan conspiracies, undertaken by Bulgaria to come into the possession of Macedonia had played out, and a Bulgaro-Macedonian cohort of irregulars succeeded in cutting off northern Macedonia temporarily from the outside. It was less the activities of these bands that Austria, its northern neighbour, feared, than that Italy would use the opportunity to invade and occupy Albania, west of Macedonia, via the Adriatic Sea. To forestall such a development, Goluchowski alerted St. Petersburg about the danger both nations faced from possible Italian interference and Austria and Russia concluded an agreement that reaffirmed both countries' intentions in the Balkan: trilateral consultations including the Ottomans were agreed on and outside influences, i.e. Italy's, rejected. Germany, France and Great Britain were notified of the understanding without delay and accepted it on the same day; Italian assent trundled in a day later.

On February 23, 1903, the Russian government gazette MESSENGER published a communiqué that assured the Slavic Balkan states of unyielding Russian assistance but also warned them that they

"... must not lose sight of the fact that Russia would not sacrifice a drop of blood of her own sons nor the smallest fraction of the possessions of the Russian people if the Slav States, in defiance of the counsels of wisdom given them beforehand, were to seek, by revolutionary and violent means, to change the established order of things in the Balkan peninsula." (84)

That was clear enough, one would think, but in celebration of Slavic stubbornness the Macedonian revolt not only resumed but branched out to Turkey in early 1903. A Turkish bank in Salonika was blown up by Bulgarian terrorists on April 29, 1903, and soon Austrian and Russian troops as well as Austrian and Italian warships resumed stations near the borders of Bulgaria and Turkey, who might go to war any moment, for they were already calling up reservists. A concerted démarche by Austria and Russia eventually stopped the Bulgarian mobilization, but the Macedonians continued, and by August 1903 about 30,000 of their irregulars took to the field yet were beaten, in a nasty three-month campaign, by superior Turkish regulars.

At the occasion of Wilhelm II visiting Vienna on September 18 and 19, 1903, Goluchowski reiterated to Bülow Austria's position that she would never allow an effective partition of the Balkan peninsula between her and Russia, because claiming the eastern Balkan would give Russia a common border with Turkey and might tempt her to go for Constantinople and the Straits; neither was Austria able to allow the formation of a big Slavic state on the Balkans, for the Slavic people of Austria-Hungary could not be kept from attempting to join it and the monarchy would have to resort to arms to suppress such a desire, which, in turn, might lead to war with Russia and general conflagration. For these reasons Austria's policy would remain to maintain the status quo on the Balkan and allow changes only in the smallest of increments. Finally, Italy was to abstain from the annexation of Albania, for this would bottle up the Habsburg realm's entry to the Mediterranean via the Adriatic Sea and would constitute a casus belli. (85) These Austro-Italian tensions raised the question whether the Triple Alliance could be preserved at all, and if it were to break up, it should quickly be replaced by a renewed form of the Dreikaiserbund, as far as Goluchowski was concerned.

On October 4, 1903, Nicholas II, Francis Joseph and their Foreign Ministers met at Mürzsteg in the Alps to prepare suggestions for the aforementioned trilateral consultations with the Porte, i.e. a program for Turkey's internal reforms, and the result of the meeting, the so-called MÜRZSTEG PUNCTATION was officially transmitted to the Turks and the governments who had signed the underlying provisions for the arbitration of Balkan affairs in the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 on October 24, 1903.

The contents advocated government reform, especially of the police, to re-establish peace in the Turkish possessions in Europe, a redrawing of the internal borders of Macedonia was envisioned "in the direction of a more regular grouping of the various nationalities," (86) other frontiers might be redrawn as necessary, careers in the public service should be made available to Christians and international committees would observe and, if the need arose, improve local measures. Commissions of inquiry, containing equal numbers of Christian and Muslim, were to be set up to investigate and prosecute the numerous political crimes that had been committed during the last thirty years of trouble.

All this was perfectly in the spirit of the Treaty of Berlin, except that Italy, again, felt slighted by the prominent role played by Austria and Russia in the convention; her indignation, as one would expect, only motivated Austria and Russia to improve their cooperation in regards to Turkey. This found expression in a secret agreement between Austria and Russia, signed on October 15, 1904, in St. Petersburg.

"... the two Powers have come to an agreement to observe a loyal and absolute neutrality in case one of the two parties signatory to this declaration should find itself alone and without provocation on its part in a state of war with a third Power which sought to endanger its security or the status quo; the maintenance of which constitutes the basis of their understanding, as pacific as it is conservative.

The engagement between Austria-Hungary and Russia stipulated in the above naturally does not apply to the Balkan countries whose destinies are obviously closely attached to the agreement established by the two neighbouring Empires. The said engagement is understood to remain valid as long as these two Great Powers shall pursue their policy of an understanding in the affairs of Turkey; it shall be kept secret and cannot be

communicated to any other Government, except after a previous understanding between the Cabinets of Vienna and of St. Petersburg." (87)

The parties agreed to let Berlin know about this essentially anti-Italian agreement but, naturally, not Rome; for in the case of war with Italy, the contract would secure Austria's back, her Russian border.

Fifteen months earlier, in June 1903, events in Serbia had permeated the headlines of the international press. King Alexander, son of King Milan - whom we have met last in his unsuccessful war against Turkey in 1876, which gave rise to the Congress of Berlin two years later - had followed his father on the throne in 1889, but in the first years of the new millennium made several decisions that estranged him from his subjects. In 1900, he "married his mistress, Draga Masin, a widow of doubtful reputation, much older than himself," and in "1903 he suspended the Constitution granted by himself in 1901, and nominated a military Cabinet." (88) His reign grew erratic and authoritarian, until one more conspiracy, featuring the same Dragutin Dimitrijević who would become the organizer of the assassination of Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo 1914, succeeded in murdering the royal couple, the queen's brother and various ministers, and installed on the throne Peter Karageorgević, great-grandson of the Serbian liberation hero Karageorge, who had obtained for his country limited autonomy from the Ottoman Empire in the Napoleonic era.

The new king was readily acknowledged in both Austria and Russia, which had led contemporaries and historians alike to speculate that both governments had been aware of the Dimitrijević plot; on the other hand, Great Britain and the Netherlands broke off diplomatic relations with Serbia over the incident. After a period of adjustment, the Pan-Slavic Radical Party dominated the government and initiated pro-Russian, anti-Austrian policies, seeking to create a Greater Serbia by liberating, and then absorbing, their fellow Slavs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and the Turkish provinces, but not allowing into the fold Croats and Slovenes, that is, refusing a Yugoslavian¹³ solution.

What was Austria's response to the Serbian plans? Much as the Hungarians wanted to neutralize all supposedly traitorous Slavic organizations in the realm, the more cautious Austrians were aware that suppression might only provoke insurrection. The parties were thus much at odds, which added to the political instability of the Dual Monarchy. In late 1905, the Hungarians undertook an about-face and tried to enlist, by promises of eventual recognition of their claims, the aid of the southern Slavs against Vienna, towards which they tried to present a united front. When the Slavs pledged their support but the Hungarians subsequently "forgot" their earlier assertions, the Slavs further distanced themselves from the cause of the Habsburgs.

Meanwhile the new Serb government had reached the beginnings of a rapprochement with Bulgaria, which was met with sympathy by Italy - which counted on the negative effect this would have on Austria. Yet Russia's opposition, which, in doubt, valued the status quo over aiding her fellow Slavs, could not be overcome until Russia's subsequent weakening in the aftermath of the lost Russo-Japanese War of 1904/05. When Serbia's prime minister Pasić secured a French loan and began to order weapons from France and Germany instead of the Austrian Skoda works, and Bulgaria agreed to a limited Customs Union with Serbia in June 1905, the country's fortunes were on a high and she went with optimism into the scheduled negotiations with Austria for a new commercial treaty in November 1905.

Yet when an indiscretion revealed the Bulgaro-Serbian customs agreement to Austria, she closed all negotiations, and the borders, and the two countries engaged in a commercial war, known as the "pig-war"¹⁴ of 1907/08, before reason prevailed and a new treaty was agreed on. Yet Austro-Serbian relations remained struck with mistrust and suspicion and became one of the kindlings for the great conflagration of 1914.

Meanwhile in Western Europe, a new English policy decided to overcome the United Kingdom's relative isolation, which the new century had made her more concerned about. First, she began overtures to Japan for an eventual transcontinental alliance. Japan, however, had to accommodate a not insignificant faction which preferred an

¹³ The "Yugoslav", i.e. 'Southern Slav' concept was the idea to unify Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in a single federation, but to exclude Bulgaria, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and the Herzegovina.

¹⁴ Like Hungary's, Serbian agriculture was renowned for her pigs, who were the providers of meat for the goulashes, sausages and salami the Austro-Hungarian cuisine was famous for. Closing the border to pigs was, obviously, Austria's way of hurting Serbia economically, but the latter eventually marketed them through Bulgaria and found different buyers.

understanding with Russia and thus her reaction was somewhat delayed. Yet, on January 30, 1902, the two countries felt able to sign a convention in which they acknowledged mutual interest in the furtherance of peace. This laudable goal was expressed in a treaty that held that "if in defence of these interests Great Britain and Japan were to become involved in war with another Power, the other contracting party would maintain strict neutrality and would use all its efforts to prevent other Powers from joining in hostilities against the Ally The agreement was to last for five years and be tacitly renewed every five years unless denounced before expiry." (89)

This took care of the Russian East; what could be done to overcome England's relative isolation from the continent - which the new century and German naval bills had made her more concerned about? It was a diplomatic amateur who was to transcend the fissure that the Hundred Years War, the Sun King, and Napoleon had dug between England and France - the English King Edward VII. The French journalist Andre Tardieu observed that "the English King was the initiator of the rapprochement. He it was who both conceived and facilitated it, while many still believed that the moment was premature." (90)

The addresses Edward delivered on the occasion of his state visit to France in May 1903 left no doubt as to his intentions. "The friendship and admiration which we all feel for the French nation and their glorious traditions may, in the near future, develop into a sentiment of the warmest affection and attachment between the peoples of the two countries. The achievement of this aim is my constant desire," he affirmed. (91) On the next day, at a State banquet at the Élysée Palace, he declared: "I am glad of this occasion, which will strengthen the bonds of friendship and contribute to the friendship of our two countries in their common interest. Our great desire is that we may march together in the path of civilization and peace." (92)

Only two months later, on July 6, 1903, the French President Loubet responded with a reciprocal visit to London. Diplomatic negotiations had already begun on July 2, and on April 8, 1904, after nine months of negotiations, agreement was reached on a public convention, two confidential declarations and a few secret articles. (93) The convention dealt with exchanges of overseas possessions in Canada, Gambia and Guinea. The declarations regulated the parties' interests in North Africa, mutually asserting obeisance of English rights in Egypt and French rights in Morocco. The secret annexes dealt with issues of eventual Franco-Spanish tension in Morocco, established Franco-British zones of influence in Thailand, discussed Madagascar, and laid down agreements on sharing influences or demarcating borders in other relevant places.

Now that the British horse had bolted, Bülow in Berlin began to lock the barn door; as did the Kaiser, who telegraphed to Bülow on April 19 that he believed that England would from now on, secure of French backing, be less declined to extend her attention to Germany than ever before. A lack of attention was the last thing Wilhelm could cope with, and to nobody's surprise but general dismay among the cognoscenti, he began to weave dark insinuations to the war of 1870/71 into his public addresses. From Georges Bihourd, his ambassador in Berlin, Delcassé in Paris received a warning:

"The German press approves Wilhelm's raising his voice in this way, and, ceasing to echo the Chancellor's pacific modulations, it too assumes a tone bordering on menace. It contrasts the Kaiser's trumpet call with the somewhat snug optimism of Count Bülow. It stresses the allusions to Worth, Weissenburg, and Sedan [places of German victories in 1870, ¶] as a warning addressed to French policy, the activities of which, by re-establishing good relations with England and above all with Italy, give rise to the most serious apprehensions." (94)

To forestall Wilhelm's well known penchant for hasty decisions, King Edward paid an extended visit to Germany in June and July and talked repeatedly to both Wilhelm and Bülow in an attempt to unruffle German feathers. Back in London he spoke of his experiences to Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador, who replied to His Majesty:

"The true cause of the nervousness which seems to have afflicted Wilhelm for several months is that he never would believe in the possibility of an Anglo-French accord; he continued to speculate on the misunderstanding between our two countries as he did on all the germs of discord that exist between the Powers; he had sought to get himself regarded as supreme arbiter of Europe, the defender and guarantor of the general peace; in a word, he expected to play the leading role everywhere. And he sees with bitterness Your Majesty taking this role from him." (95)

And then the whole fabric of European treaties and conventions built up since 1890 threatened to collapse at the occasion of the Russo-Japanese War [February 5, 1904 to September 5, 1905, ¶]. When Wilhelm broke German neutrality by allowing the Russian Navy to use German coaling stations, England threatened to fulfil her obligations with Japan and enter the conflict on her side. Wilhelm continued to "egg on", as Albertini called it, the Tsar by devising, in a telegram to Nicholas II on October 27, 1904, the following entirely absurd scenario:

"The result aims at by such a threat of war [by England] would be the absolute immobility of your fleet and inability to proceed to its destination from want of fuel. This new danger would have to be faced in community by Russia and Germany together, who both would have to remind your ally France of obligations she has taken over in the treaty of Dual Alliance with you, the casus foederis.

It is out of the question that France on such an invitation would try to shirk her implicit duty towards her ally. Though Delcassé is an Anglophile 'enragé', he will be wise enough to understand that the British Fleet is utterly unable to save Paris! In this way a powerful combination of three of the strongest continental Powers would be formed, to attack whom the Anglo-Japanese group would think twice before acting." (96)

This remarkable piece of advice seems to indicate that Wilhelm believed that the Franco-Russian Dual Alliance was conceived solely with a war against England in mind - which was certainly one of Russia's vexations - against which, however, the French could not be of military assistance. That the French treaties with Great Britain and Russia were both directed against Germany - whom else - did not seem to enter his mind.

Just before Wilhelm sent his telegram, an incident near the North Sea's Dogger Bank made international headlines. A Russia warship, headed for Japan - more than 10,000 miles distant - had, as reported, confused English fishermen with Japanese torpedo boats and opened fire, killing seven English sailors. The fresh incident had an impact on Nicholas's mind, who replied to Wilhelm on October 29:

"Naturally, it [the incident] changes completely the character of the event. I have not words to express my indignation with England's conduct. It is certainly high time to put a stop to this. The only way, as you say, would be that Germany, Russia and France should at once unite upon an arrangement to abolish Anglo-Japanese arrogance and insolence.

Would you like to lay down and frame the outlines of such a treaty and let me know it? As soon as accepted by us, France is bound to join her ally. This combination has often come to my mind. It will mean peace and rest for the world." (97)

Immediately Wilhelm sent the draft of a treaty composed by Bülow, which would ally Russia and Germany in the case of the attack by a third Power, but, in its seminal third article, anticipated that "both Powers would, in case of need, act jointly to remind France of its duties under the terms of the Franco-Russian treaty." (98) That France would not be willing to be drawn by Germany and Russia into a war with England - especially since the recent Franco-British understanding - Nicholas eventually admitted to himself and the proposal died.

But Bülow did not easily let go, and in late 1904 he decided that it was a good time to attack France politically while Russia, at war with Japan and losing, was effectively neutralized. The French had delivered a suitable pretext in that they had signed earlier in the year "a preliminary understanding over Morocco with Italy, Spain, and England but not with Germany, which received no official communication of the agreement reached in London." (99)¹⁵ In his memoirs, Bülow admits that Wilhelm advocated restraint in the Morocco issue, so that a busy Marianne would forget Alsace and Lorraine. "The wish to be reconciled with France was a constant obsession with the Kaiser from the day he ascended the throne to 1914," writes Bülow -- the honesty and accuracy of his memoirs are, of course, an entirely different matter. (100)

To inflame French opinion, Bülow recommended that Wilhelm - apparently on a plan devised by Holstein - was to arrive in a warship at Tangier, land, and noisefully demand compensation for the violations of German rights. How such a

¹⁵ The signatories of the 1880 Treaty of Madrid regarding Morocco, Germany among them, had all obtained equal most-favoured nation status; hence Germany had obtained a commercial right which the agreement of 1904, mentioned above, had overlooked.

show would endear observers or third parties to Germany's claims remains obscure. At any rate, the Kaiser told the Sultan's uncle, who received him after successful debarkation, that "My visit to Tangier has the aim of making it known that I am resolved to do all in my power adequately to safeguard German interests in Morocco, since I consider the Sultan an absolutely free ruler. It is with him that I wish to reach an understanding as to the suitable means of safeguarding these interests." (101) Unfortunately, the Sultan was all but a free ruler, and Wilhelm's statements not only overlooked the older rights of Spain and France in Morocco, the puerile antics of his mission occasioned further discussion of his mental health. Then Bülow's - or rather, Holstein's - script called for Wilhelm to demand an international conference to compensate Germany for her (purely hypothetical) injuries, soothe her pride and, most important, humiliate the French. In his memoirs, Bülow admitted his intentions

... to confront her [France, ¶] with the possibility of war, cause Delcassé's fall, break the continuity of aggressive French policy, knock the continental dagger [i.e. France, ¶] out of the hands of Edward VII and the war group in England and, simultaneously, ensure peace, preserve German honour and improve German prestige." (102)

Exactly how petty complaints were to improve his country's prestige Bülow did not explain. In actuality, nothing worse had happened than that a few inattentive diplomats in Paris had forgotten to secure German approval of a minor, preliminary accord that regulated, with British and Italian consent, Moroccan police matters and internal reforms, which were to be supervised by France and Spain; there was little that Germany actually could complain about except that she had not been consulted. But it was, technically, a violation of the Treaty of Madrid, and it was Bülow's plan to direct a public drama of Germania wronged by the Gauls. It never crossed his mind that nobody was keen on buying tickets.

The harebrained plan might have remained stillborn had not France herself resuscitated it. Bülow's conference call encountered the equal disinterest of the Great Powers, except that Delcassé came under sudden attack by both the French Right, who disliked his courtship of England, and the pacifist Left, who accused him of "not being willing to have talks with Germany." (103) A shaken Delcassé barely survived the first attack. Yet when Prime Minister Rouvier offered Bülow comprehensive Franco-German talks on all colonial issues, the German declined and insisted on a conference. Aiming squarely at giving Delcassé the last push, he had his forgers transmit a fake alarm to the Foreign Offices of Italy and Spain, which claimed that Delcassé was threatening the Sultan of Morocco with war should he refuse any French demands. Tittoni, the Italian Foreign Minister, passed the canard to Camille Barrette, the French Ambassador in Rome, who passed it on to a surprised Delcassé in Paris who, on the next day, June 4, was asked by Rouvier whether he wanted to drive France to war with Germany all on his own. Although Delcassé protested his innocence he was forced to resign at the next cabinet meeting, on June 6, 1905.

If Rouvier believed that with this Queen's gambit he could soften the German position on the Morocco problem he was mistaken; Bülow simply reiterated his demand. It did not help the situation of the French that Russia was momentarily paralyzed, having lost on May 26, 1905, almost her complete Pacific Fleet to the Japanese in the Battle of Tsushima. Thus Rouvier was outmanoeuvred.

On 8 July 1905, on the advice of Roosevelt, Rouvier gave way, having first ensured that at the conference Germany would recognize the special position France had acquired in Morocco because of the proximity of her Algerian possessions and the relation between the two adjacent lands resulting therefrom, and also because of France's special interest that order should prevail in Morocco, the latter concession revealing the wide scope of the conference, the agenda of which, after long discussion, was signed on 28 September. (104)

While the particulars of the conference were grimly hashed out in the capitals of Europe and the USA, Wilhelm, ostensibly ecstatic over the humiliation of the French - but we must ask, had not Bülow written that the Kaiser sought détente with France? - "conferred princely rank [on Bülow] and hoped to render the success still more substantial by a return to his plan, frustrated in 1904, of isolating England by making an alliance with Russia, and, through Russia, with France." (105) Thus when Wilhelm met Nicholas - "Willy" met "Nicky", they were cousins - in Björkö on July 24, 1905, he carried in his pocket the draft of a treaty, apparently of his own design, in which "Germany and Russia pledged themselves with their total forces to mutual defence in Europe against the attack of any European State and not to conclude peace

separately. Russia further undertook to inform France of this treaty, inviting her to sign it as an ally." (106) In a letter to his wife, Wilhelm described the events of the meeting:

"I drew the envelope from my pocket, unfolded the paper on Alexander III's desk in front of the picture of the Dowager Tsarina Once, twice, and a third time he read through the text which already has been sent you. I uttered a short prayer that God might be with us and guide the young ruler. There was no sound, only the murmur of the sea, and the sun shone brightly and serenely into the cosy cabin and straight before me, glistening white, lay the HOHENZOLLERN [the royal yacht, ¶], and aloft her imperial standard fluttered in the morning breeze; I was just reading on its black cross the words 'Gott Mit Uns' ['God With Us', ¶], when the Tsar's voice behind me said: 'That is quite excellent. I quite agree.'

My heart beat so loudly that I could hear it; I pulled myself together and said casually: 'Should you like to sign it? It would be a very nice souvenir of our entrevue!' He scanned the paper again. Then he said: 'Yes, I will.' I opened the lid of the inkwell, handed him the pen, and he wrote in a firm hand 'Nicholas', then he handed me the pen and I signed, and as I rose he clasped me in his arms, deeply moved, and said:

'I thank God and I thank you; it will be of most beneficial consequence for my country and yours. You are Russia's only real friend in the whole world, I have felt that through the whole [Russo-Japanese] war and I know it.'

Tears of joy stood in my eyes -- to be sure, drops of perspiration were trickling down my brow and my back -- and I thought [that] Frederick William III, Queen Louisa, Grandpapa, and Nicholas I. must surely be near in that moment." (107)

Wilhelm was convinced that his action had opened a new chapter in the history of mankind. The combination of Germany and Russia would be unbeatable. He wrote to "Nicky" soon after the meeting:

"The Dual Alliance combining with the Triple Alliance gives a quintuple alliance well able to hold all unruly neighbours in order and to impose peace, even by force, if there should be a Power hare-brained enough to wish to disturb it (i.e., England, from any agreement with whom France must be detached).

Marianne must remember that she is wedded to you and that she is obliged to lie in bed with you and eventually to give a hug or a kiss now and then to me, but not to sneak into the bedroom of the ever-intriguing touché tout on the Island." [I.e. England] (108)

We have had the opportunity to observe Wilhelm's propensity to hastiness before; in the case of his and Holstein's patent treaty it turned out, as Nicholas informed him on October 7, that it could not be effected unless the French approved it. France, however, had absolutely no inclination to enter Willy's bed or to dispense hugs or kisses, and hence the treaty was not only, in Albertini's words, "still-born", but its quick burial also meant that with it "failed the last German attempt to repair the mistake of not renewing the Bismarckian Reinsurance Treaty," and ban the spectre of a two-front war with Russia and France. (109)

Meanwhile the preparations for the Algeiras Conference, which was to adjudicate the Morocco business, moved ahead, and Italy found herself caught in a vise. As a signatory of the Triple Alliance, Italy was obliged to support Germany - and here the ostensibly secret agreement with France to split north-western Africa into zones of influence (Morocco for France, Tripolitania and the Cyrenaica for Italy) - came back to haunt Rome. Bülow was perfectly aware of Italy's problem but nonetheless pressed Tittoni for support, which the Italian Foreign Minister could not publicly refuse. He manoeuvred a few days between Scylla and Charybdis, until his Austrian colleague Goluchowski came to his aid and, on June 6, saved everybody's face by expressing "Austrian willingness to join the conference on condition that the other Powers did the same, as *she* 'would have serious objections to a rump conference.'" (110) Two days later, a German-French agreement on the conference was hammered out, and international tensions further relaxed when, on August 29, 1905, Russia and Japan concluded peace.

Prior to the beginning of the actual negotiations, Bülow had assumed that he could not only depend on the support of the Triple Alliance partners Austria and Italy, but that Russia and the USA also would be on his side, for in theory they had equal rights to commercial access in Morocco. England and France would thus be isolated. As Luigi Albertini summarizes below, this was a complete misreading of reality.

In preliminary notes exchanged between Rouvier and the German Ambassador Radolin on 8 July 1905, it had been agreed that the conference should develop on the following lines of principle: 1. sovereignty and independence of the Sultan; 2. integrity of Morocco; 3. free trade on a footing of complete equality; 4. advisability of police and finance reforms; 5. recognition of the special position of France in view of the contiguity of Algeria and Morocco, of the special relations existing between those two adjacent countries, and of French concern that order should reign in Morocco.

At the opening meeting of the conference on 16 January 1906, the three first points were at once ruled out by the chairman as being already unanimously recognized by the States represented at the conference.¹⁶ The conference thus had to concern itself with the State Bank and above all with the organization of the police.

As regards police organization, France put forward the view that the policing of the frontier region had been entrusted to her in the conference agenda and thus fell outside its purview; as regards the remaining areas - ran Rouvier's instructions to the French first delegate, Revoil - France, as a neighbouring ... Power, was the obvious choice for the whole system of policing, and was prepared to share this task with Spain. Revoil was to reject any solution distributing this mandate between several Powers or entrusting it to a minor Power or to officers of neutral Powers.

Bülow's instructions to the German first delegate, Radowitz, were that he should oppose the French claims to the mandate as endangering the economic equality granted by treaty [of Madrid, 1880, ¶] to all the other nations, and thus annulling the principle of the open door. Bülow cherished the hope that the representatives of the other nations would support his ... proposal ... for a joint mandate for France, Spain, Italy, and Germany or, failing that, for Italy alone. (111)

It was never clear what Bülow - who knew perfectly well that Italy had abrogated any influence in Morocco by her agreement with France - intended by putting Italy on the spot like this. Rumours continued to emanate from the Wilhelmstrasse; on February 10 Bülow complained that "according to reports coming from Algeciras, Visconti Venosta¹⁷ had adopted the French point of view and that he [Bülow] much deplored such an attitude." (112) Not only was this not true; to the contrary, Venosta had worked with the Austrian delegate Welsersheim and the American Henry White on a draft for a police reform that favoured Germany's position somewhat, which was, however, curtly rejected by Bülow. (113)

A shipwreck threatened, and attempts were undertaken at the highest levels to prevent it - by the Russian Foreign Minister Lamsdorf, the American Secretary of State Elihu Root and even by Emperor Francis Joseph in Vienna, but Bülow remained intransigent. From the beginning, he had seemed unable to perceive the reality that "Spain and Italy were pledged to France, who would also receive the support of England and Russia. Indeed, for Germany the conference opened in unfavourable conditions; if she dug in her heels, she would bring about a European conflagration, while if she gave way, she would suffer a diplomatic defeat." (114)

That was what happened. After tiring weeks of proposals and counter-proposals, of which Venosta admitted that, "I confess I do not understand why the Berlin Cabinet insists on Italy's undertaking to mediate on proposals which its own representatives at the conference know to have no chance of acceptance by the other side." (115) The frustrating business continued until, on March 31, a formula was agreed on that essentially entrusted the police powers to France and Spain - with a minimum of international oversight - as everybody except Bülow had expected they would.

¹⁶ Or, rather, unanimously ignored.

¹⁷ Italy's Chief Delegate at Algeciras - her grand seigneur of foreign policy - who had been Foreign Minister from 1869-1876 and 1896- 1900.

Hence the conference turned out to be one more of these Bülow follies that cost more than they could ever hope to bring in; for "while France had won for herself and Spain the mandate for the police, Germany had won recognition for the principle that the Moroccan question was a concern of all the Powers. This in the following years enabled her to keep the question open and brought about the crisis of 1911," (116) as will be discussed below. The influential German journalist Theodor Wolff, diagnosed

"... that the Chancellor's action silenced the French pacifists who had worked for better relations with Germany, while it added fuel to the flame of French nationalism.

In Paris, where the ENTENTE with England had at first been received unwillingly and with pessimism, it was now regarded a salvation. And not only England had supported France. Russia, Italy, Spain, the United States had from the beginning intervened in her favour, and even Austria had not outstepped the limits of mediatory "neutrality", making it clear to Germany's adversaries that she had no intention of going the whole way with her ally.

All to no avail! When Germany realized her defeat and measured the isolation in which she stood, instead of drawing the lesson that she must avoid the error of seeking salvation in inflamed and aggressive nationalism, she gave full rein to the spirit of violence and plunged forward into fresh blunders." (117)¹⁸

Wilhelm fired a few salvos of comments¹⁹ into the direction of Rome; not truly unwarranted, for it is clear that Italy had misled Monts, the German ambassador in Italy, over the exact nature of the Franco-Italian treaty of 1901. Monts complained "that he had been kept in the dark over Italian pledges to France in regard to the Mediterranean. Had it only been known from the beginning that it was a question not only of désintéressement but of an actual written promise by Italy not to raise the least opposition to French action in Morocco, Germany perhaps would have dropped the conference." (118) Italian attempts to wiggle out of this complaint by raising matters of interpretation were, on the whole, unpersuasive, but the true question -what had Bülow known of the Franco-Italian compact *before* the conference - remained unanswered because now it was Bülow who tried to wiggle out. The Triple Alliance was to renew itself by July 8, 1907, unless it was denounced by a signatory, and he could not afford to botch the big one. After a lot of further diplomatic to-and-fro the Algeiras debacle was ironed over in the interest of the greater picture.

Notwithstanding the recent fauxpas, the open question regarding the renewal of the Triplíce was whether Italy would ask for a clause that would rule out the casus foederis in the case of a conflict with England. This had been of no concern ten years earlier, when England was considered a natural friend of the Triple Alliance and was at times suspected of entering it one day. Now British-German relations had cooled considerably, and Italy might choose the allure of English assistance in the Mediterranean over trouble with her partner Austria, against which she had complaints regarding the return of the Italian-speaking provinces of the Habsburg Empire as well as disaccord over the Balkan. Or, to improve her English relations, she might enlist "the support of Austria, who regarded Anglo-German friction as a disaster and showed more appreciation of the Italian alliance than did Germany." (119) Yet Italy failed to demur, and the Triplíce thus prolonged itself for ten years without changes. It is possible that Italy's failure to speak her mind caused unfounded expectations on the part of her allies that she would remain by their side in July 1914.

On the broader issue of the continental equilibrium, in early 1906 Great Britain leaked a proposal that she would make at the Second Hague Peace Conference scheduled for June to October 1907, which envisioned a general agreement

¹⁸ We must, however, briefly caution here that the "aggressiveness" of German foreign policy was mostly a matter of perception - much amplified by the foreign press; a case of the bark being worse than the bite. Much of the unfavourable impressions came on account of Kaiser Wilhelm II. "Willy" was loud, "a bore and an exhibitionist", as his cousin Nicholas II called him; (120) he was impulsive, capricious and indiscreet, but not a warmonger. As we shall find out once or twice, he was more of a cautious character in these regards, at times an outright hesitator. Even Jules Chambon, French Ambassador in Berlin 1907-1914, felt compelled to admit that "it is a curious thing to see how this man, so sudden, so reckless and impulsive in words, is full of caution and patience in action." (121) We shall discuss actuality vs. image of German foreign policy after Algeiras more extensively in the following chapter.

¹⁹ On March 8, Wilhelm adorned a telegram from Monts in Rome with the following comments on Italy: "The Bible says 'no man can serve two masters,' much less three! France, England, and the Triplíce! [Triple Alliance] It is absolutely impossible. It will end in Italy's taking her stand with the Anglo-Gallic group. We shall do well to take this into account and to write off this ally in smoke." (122)

on the limitation of naval armaments. The Crowe Memorandum,²⁰ as it was called, argued that, for her national security, England could not afford to give up the domination of the seas and hence all other nations, especially Germany, had to limit their fleets. The memorandum articulated at length the services Great Britain rendered to humanity with her dominion of the oceans.

"[It is but natural] ... that the power of a State supreme at sea should inspire universal jealousy and fear and be ever exposed to the danger of being overthrown by a general combination of the world. Against such a combination no single nation could in the long run stand, least of all a small kingdom not possessed of the military strength of a people trained to arms."²¹

*The danger can in practice only be averted on condition that the national policy of the insular and naval State is so directed **as to harmonize with the general desires and ideals common to all mankind**, and more particularly that it is closely identified with the primary and vital interests of a majority, or as many as possible of the other nations.*

*Now the first interest of all countries is the preservation of national independence. It follows that England, more than any other non-insular Power, has a **direct and positive interest in the maintenance of the independence of nations**, and therefore must be the natural enemy of any country threatening the independence of the others, and the natural protector of the weaker communities It has been well said that every country, if it had the option, would, of course, prefer itself to hold the power of supremacy at sea, but that, this choice being excluded, it would rather see England hold that power than any other State. ...*

A German maritime supremacy must be acknowledged to be incompatible with the existence of the British Empire, and even if that Empire disappeared, the union of the greatest military with the greatest naval power in one State would compel the world to combine for the riddance of such an incubus." [Emphases added] (123)

These winged words seemed to argue that the world's biggest navy, Great Britain's, whose naval budget in 1904 was three times that of Germany, (124) had no choice but to ask for the implementation, by fiat of the world, of the wisest of principles - that the restriction of competitors ensures the superiority of the master. Whether "German maritime supremacy" was a theoretically viable scenario could never be ascertained, for even at the eve of war, in 1913, Great Britain spent more than twice as much as Germany on her fleet. (125) Neither was the allusion to the "greatest military" quite correct, for "militaristic" Germany in 1912 still spent less of her national budget on defence, 3.8%, than France's 4.0% or Russia at 4.5%. (126)

Yet the true purpose of the Crowe Memorandum was propaganda, not information, and in this regard it succeeded brilliantly. Its words could not fail to impress all those who were unaware that "already in January 1907 practically all the Powers had accepted the Russian program [for the Hague conference] which ruled out discussion of the question between political relations between States, of the limitation of armaments and of existing treaties." (127) Of the few issues that were left over after the important ones had been excluded, a proposal for compulsory arbitration of conflicts by an international body to be created some day, was relegated to an expression of principal approval and the exhortation that the governments of the participants should "study further the principles of its constitution." (128) The failure of any tangible result of the conference was easily blamed on Germany - although the worst that could be said about her was that she voiced her "no" more indiscreetly than the other Powers, none of whom were willing to cede one iota of their sovereignty. Still, Theodor Wolff commented that:

"The attitude of Germany at The Hague was not only anti—pacifist but impolitic, since in the eyes of delegates from all countries near and far, in the eyes of the world of democratic sentiments, we appeared as the obstacle to a better organization of the world. Certainly not all of them were pure at heart; there were

²⁰ Sir Eyre Crowe, Senior Clerk at the British Foreign Office 1906-1912, was a member of Sir Edward Grey's anti-German faction.

²¹ A reference to the fact that England did not have military conscription.

among them not only gentle dreamers and disinterested friends of humanity; but they could at least maintain that they did not regard the struggle for existence as an affair of fisticuffs.

All that they had heard from afar of a militarist Germany, steeped in the spirit of caste and of barrack discipline, bowed under the absolute will of a monarch, rigid in its mighty armour, found confirmation under their very eyes." (129)²²

While the conference at The Hague took tedious turns around the issues declared off limits by the Great Powers - not only Germany - Edward VII was able to appreciate the extraordinary outcome of another of his missions as Albion's top supernumerary ambassador. In 1904, he was visiting King Christian of Denmark and the family of his own wife, Queen Alexandra, at Copenhagen, and capitalized on a meeting with then-Russian Ambassador Alexander Izvolsky by letting him know that

"... since by mutual goodwill a solution has been found to the disputes which had dragged on for years between England and France, this gives me the hope of arriving by the same method at still more important results, i.e., a similar agreement with Russia. ...

My new Ambassador, Sir Charles Hardinge, is to have instructions to work for the establishment of the most cordial relations with the Russian Government and to seek means of reaching agreement on the questions dividing us at the different points of the globe." (130)

The chances of the proposal were much improved when Izvolsky was made Foreign Minister of Russia on May 12, 1906; being a Liberal and speaking English fluently, he entered forthwith into negotiations with the new English Ambassador in St. Petersburg, Sir Arthur Nicolson. After fifteen months of discussion, an English-Russian agreement was signed on August 31, 1907, that specified (I) the division of Persia into three zones, a larger Russian zone of influence in the north, a smaller British zone in the south, the two divided by a neutral zone in the centre, (II) the Russian acknowledgement of Afghanistan

²² The problem of perception vs. reality is much in evidence here. The above was written by a German journalist, a government-friendly Rightist to boot; the anti-German press in Paris, London and St. Petersburg employed the same arguments in less polite fashion. Yet if Wolff was unwilling to note, much less decry, the militarism of "democratic" France and England, who used military threats as an almost normal means of diplomacy - we'll get to that later - if he was unwilling to admit -- as he was perfectly aware of - that Wilhelm's "absolute will of the monarch" did not matter much in forming German policies - as we will see in Chapter XVII - or that, if there was one Power to be singled out for chauvinistic illiberalism, it was Russia, not Germany - who, then, was to acknowledge reality?

As a matter of fact, Germany had not waged war since 1870/71, when France had declared on her; unlike England, who had recently slaughtered the locals in the Sudan and South Africa, or the USA, who had lead a brutal war of expansion against Spain and annexed Cuba, Guam, the Philippines and Puerto Rico, as well as, in an unrelated case of private entrepreneurship, Hawaii, or, only a year earlier, Russia fighting Japan - were these the nations who had renounced "fisticuffs"?

As far as being "an obstacle to a better organization of the world" is concerned, such a charge could be laid much more properly at the door of, say, Russia, or, of course, the United States of America, who, in little more than two hundred years of national existence elevated the business of sabotaging international goodwill to a form of art -- may it suffice here to mention the Monroe Doctrine, the refusal to join the League of Nations in 1920, more than two hundred wars, "police actions" and "incidents" since 1789 - among them the singularly ill-advised wars on "terror" and "drugs" as well as the atomic bombardment of Japanese towns and, most recently, the routine violations of other nations' airspace and executions of supposed "terrorists" via remote-controlled drones - unless, of course, cooperation is understood as the victims' liberty to follow "American exceptionalism". Indeed, one may hope that such exceptionalism remains the exception, so to say, rather than becomes the rule.

Yet, as we shall see in the Great War as well, it was England and the USA that realized the importance of the world opinion and proved adept at winning its support - after all, politics is perception. The Allied press fed its readers a diet of perpetual German frightfulness - shooting Belgian civilians, raping nuns or sinking the "Lusitania" - yet declined to draw comparisons to Kitchener's concentration camps during the Boer War or the British continental blockade against Germany, which starved to death a quarter million Germans or more and was prolonged far beyond the armistice of November 1918. As then, in the case of the Hague Conference Germany failed to understand that to show support for a powerless international body was de rigueur, a matter - again - of perception, independent of the actual outcome.

being a British zone of influence, and (III) a concord on the independence of Tibet under Chinese suzerainty. All further questions would be addressed amicably.

As it had happened in the case of the Anglo-French Entente, the nationalist zealots of both sides were not entirely satisfied with the outcome, but for the governments in question, the course had been set irrevocably on détente.

In Germany - despite Bülow's official congratulations - the news was met with dismay, and many old hands in the Wilhelmstrasse remembered what Bismarck had written in a letter to Wilhelm I in 1885: that a Russo-British alliance joined by France would "provide the basis for a coalition against us more dangerous for Germany than any other she might have to face." (131)

**BEGIN THE WORLD
ALL OVER AGAIN**

*The shortest and safest
operational route to Constantinople
runs through Vienna
and Berlin.*

Russian Quartermaster-General Yuri Danilov¹

Compared to, say, the year 1880, when Bismarck had still been in office, the economic situation of Germany had improved by quantum leaps - the same, however, could not necessarily be said about her diplomatic status, although the question posed itself to what degree Chancellor Bülow himself was aware of the shortcomings. While he seemed to believe that his policy was that of an open door, interlocutors were known to describe it as one of perpetual change and frequent non sequiturs. Thus he found himself increasingly circumvented by Holstein and Kaiser Wilhelm.

Germany's inflexibility in the naval issue had drawn Great Britain away from Prussia respectively Germany - her traditional ally - and motivated her to seek détente with her traditional opponents France and Russia. This was the worse for Germany since Russia was lost to her due to the lapse of the Reinsurance Treaty under Bismarck's successor Caprivi. The most counterproductive move yet, however, had been the deputizing of swashbuckling Wilhelm to Tangier in 1905; what Holstein had conceived as a measure against an impending Anglo-French agreement precipitated exactly what it was sought to forestall.

The Triple Alliance meanwhile remained paralyzed by Austria's and Italy's inability to find common ground on Balkan policy, while the coalition's Mediterranean policy was compromised utterly by Italy's presumably secret treaty with France over the division of Northern Africa. Although Germany not truly threatened war over Morocco, as L.C.F. Turner once wrote,² the result of the ill-advised Algeiras Conference was that "Germany drove Britain and France together, and the sanctioning of military conversations between the British and French General Staffs by the new Liberal Government in January 1906 gave the Entente some of the characteristics of an alliance.

Russia remained faithful to her ties with France - largely because of her desperate need of loans on the Paris market - while on taking office Sir Edward Grey, the [British] Foreign Secretary, informed his ambassador in Paris that "if France is let in for a war with Germany arising out of our agreement with her about Morocco we cannot stand aside, but must take part with France." (1)

The outlines of the 1914 coalitions were beginning to take shape. Yet what makes the examination of politics, in particular foreign politics of the age comparatively cumbersome is that official as well as informal decision processes played out opaquely on a multitude of levels, and it is difficult, nay, impossible, to assign each its proper importance. The crowned heads certainly had influence, but how much and how directly was quite different in every nation, as were the

¹ The second-highest position in the Russian General Staff.

² Norman Rich put it this way: "Neither the Kaiser's nor Holstein's was a war policy; it was merely a stupid policy." (2)

legal or actual relations of the higher bureaucrats and ministers to the monarchs, cabinet, or parliament. A country's foreign policy was further complicated by small but loud ultra-nationalist fringe groups who much influenced press and courts alike; to a degree that, for example in Serbia, genuine opposition against their insane demands was simply not an option - where kings and ministers were assassinated as a matter of political custom, newspaper editors were loath to take personal risks. Christopher Clark sensibly posed the difficult question outright: "Who governed in St. Petersburg?", or Paris or Berlin, and we shall follow his inquiry. He began with a look at the personal influence of the monarchs on the foreign policies of their nations.

An overview of the early twentieth-century monarchs suggests a fluctuating and ultimately relatively modest impact on actual policy outcomes. Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary read vast quantities of dispatches and met with his foreign ministers regularly.

Yet for all his stupendous work as the "first bureaucrat" of his empire, Franz Joseph, like Nicholas II, found it impossible to master the oceans of information that came to his desk, little effort was made to ensure that he apportioned his time in accordance with the relative importance of the issues arising. Austro-Hungarian foreign policy was shaped not by the executive fiat of the Emperor, but by interaction of factions and lobbies within and around the ministry. (3)

Other monarchs were less industrious or suffered setbacks: in the case of Nicholas II, the catastrophe of his Asian policy and the Russo-Japanese War resulted in his almost wholesale isolation from future foreign policy-making, whereas Wilhelm's "initiatives", as Christopher Clark observed, "were in any case too disparate and ill coordinated to provide any kind of alternative operational [foreign policy] platform." (4)

Patterns comparable to Vienna evolved at all courts; bureaucrats became adept at managing their titular sovereigns. Rather than being able to effect their own imprint on foreign politics, monarchs found themselves limited to try to retain or resume authority by juggling ministers, courtiers and personal favourites, with or against their own government, parliament or press - often, "the king or emperor was the sole point at which separate chains of command converged." (5) And the right kind of influence could easily become more decisive than actual command - in twenty-seven years of service at the German Foreign Ministry (1880-1906) and a career that saw his rise to Chief of the Political Section, Holstein seems not to have appeared at Wilhelm's court at any time. In an age of informal decision-making, however, everybody who had a voice felt entitled to be heard. This complicated matters further.

Edward VII was the clear exception of the catholicity of monarchical impotence; his successful initiatives led to the Anglo-French entente and the agreement with Russia of 1907. But, for reasons discussed below, it was not even necessarily the case that the foreign minister of a country indeed had the ability - which is altogether a different thing than the legal authority - to dictate foreign policy. The relations between ministries and other governmental departments, the crown, the military, press and industry were divergent enough in each nation to result in an individual decision-making process, whose details tended to remain obscure.

Russia, for example, had no cabinet before 1905, that is, no governmental roundtable where the ministers' tasks would be organized and compliance supervised by the prime minister; actually, there was no prime minister. Every minister's portfolio was independent - except that the finance minister had a certain position as *primus inter pares* because he controlled his colleagues' budgets to a degree - and the better a minister's relation to the Tsar, the greater his departments - and his personal fortunes. But the aforementioned Russo-Japanese War and the attempted Revolution of 1905 - suppressed only with difficulty - put the writing on the wall: a modernization and streamlining of governmental functions was necessary.

A group of powerful ministers moved to establish a more concentrated decision-making structure that would enable the executive to balance domestic and foreign imperatives and to impose discipline on the most senior officials. How exactly this should be achieved was a matter of controversy.

The most energetic and talented of the reformers was Sergei Witte, an expert on finance and economic policy who had resigned from the government in 1903 because he opposed its forward policy in Korea. Witte

wanted a "cabinet" headed by a "prime minister" with the power not only to discipline his fellow ministers, but also to control their access to the Tsar. The more conservative sometime finance minister Vladimir Kokovtsov viewed these proposals as an assault on the principle of tsarist autocracy, which he took to be the only form of government suitable to Russian conditions.

A compromise was struck: a cabinet of sorts was created in the form of the Council of Ministers, and its chairman or prime minister was granted the power to dismiss an uncooperative minister. But the "right of individual report" - in other words, the right of ministers to present their views to the Tsar independently of the chairman of the council - was retained. What resulted was a somewhat unresolved arrangement in which everything depended on the balance of initiative between the successive chairmen, their ministers, and the Tsar. (6)

In 1906 a "progressive" government - for Russian standards at least - was formed, with Pyotr Stolypin as chairman of the council and Alexander Izvolsky as foreign minister. We shall encounter the latter's adventures soon.

Yet, meanwhile, who governed in Paris? The Quai d'Orsay, the French Foreign Ministry -- like the Wilhelmstrasse named for its whereabouts - enjoyed traditional autonomy, especially under the weak presidents of the Troisième République. Pre-1914, the three main ambassadorships were in the hands of a single influential clan within the office - Paul Cambon was ambassador in London, his brother Jules in Berlin, and their brother-in-law Maurice Paléologue became Russia's envoy in St. Petersburg after a stint as Political Director of the Bureau. (7) Paradoxically, the higher officials tended to be more influential than the ministers, their titular bosses, whose principal weakness was their brief tenures. Between January 1, 1913, and the outbreak of war in August 1914, no less than six ministers had come and gone. (8) As a consequence, few of them commanded the authority of, say, a Theophile Delcassé, who managed to remain in office for seven years (1898-1905) and "established his mastery over the ministry not only through tireless work, but also by ignoring his permanent officials in Paris and cultivating a network of like-minded ambassadors and functionaries from across the organization." (9) In the face of weak ministers, the ambassadors and higher clerks thrived; the more important the post, the greater the ego. Christopher Clark introduces us to one of them.

Paul Cambon is a characteristic example: he remarked in a letter of 1901 that the whole of French diplomatic history amounted to little more than a long list of attempts by agents abroad to achieve something in the face of resistance from Paris. When he disagreed with his official instructions from the capital, he not infrequently burned them.

During a tense conversation with Justin de Selves, minister of foreign affairs from June 1911 until January 1912, Cambon somewhat tactlessly informed de Selves that he considered himself the minister's equal. This claim looks less bizarre if we bear in mind that between 1898, when he became ambassador in London, and the summer of 1914, Cambon saw nine ministers enter and leave office - two of them did so twice. Cambon did not regard himself as a subordinate employee of the government, but as a servant of France whose expertise entitled him to a major role in the policy-making process.

Underpinning Cambon's exalted sense of self was the belief - shared by many of the senior ambassadors - that one did not merely represent France, one personified it. Though he was ambassador in London from 1898 to 1920, Cambon spoke not a word of English. During the meetings with Edward Grey (who spoke no French, he insisted that every utterance be translated into French, including easily recognized words such as "yes".

He firmly believed - like many members of the French elite - that French was the only language capable of articulating rational thought and he objected to the foundation of French schools in Britain on the eccentric grounds that French people raised in Britain tended to end up mentally retarded. (10)

The Quai d'Orsay remained a bulwark of intransigence and chauvinism - LA GLOIRE DE LA FRANCE was to be preserved at all cost. It were the Germanophobes of the informal *Centrale*, the old boys' network, that maintained French hostility toward

the Central Powers until their designs, perhaps, came to fruition in 1914. Maurice Herbette, head of the ministry's communication department from 1907 to 1911, was one of their principal operators.

Herbette was an excellent example of an official who managed to imprint his own outlook on French policy-making. In a memorandum of 1908 that resembles Eyre Crowe's famous British Foreign Office memorandum of the previous year (except for the fact that whereas Crowe's document fills twenty-five pages of print, Herbette's stretches to an astonishing 300 pages of chaotic manuscript), Herbette painted the recent history of Franco-German relations in the darkest colours as a catalogue of malign ruses, "insinuations" and menaces.

The Germans, he wrote, were insincere, suspicious, disloyal, and duplicitous. Their efforts to conciliate were cunning ploys designed to trick and isolate France; their representations on behalf of their interests abroad were mere provocations; their foreign policy a repellant alternation of "menaces and promises". France, he concluded, bore absolutely none of the responsibility for the poor state of relations between the two states, her handling of Germany had always been unimpeachably "conciliatory and dignified": "an impartial examination of the documents proves that France and its governments cannot in any way be made responsible for this situation.

Like Crowe's memorandum of the previous year, Herbette's memorandum was focused on the ascription of reprehensible motives and "symptoms" rather than on naming actual transgressions. (11)

As we will see below, the influence of the *CENTRALE* reached its apex in 1911, when it precipitated another Morocco crisis. But first we shall attempt to find out who actually governed in Berlin.

The constitution of 1871 had created an administrative behemoth in the office of the Imperial Chancellor. He was not only the head of the federal government but also the Reich's Foreign Minister. There was an Imperial Secretary of State who titularly headed the department of foreign affairs at the Wilhelmstrasse, but this was a subaltern position directly responsible to the chancellor, who usually was also the minister-president and foreign minister of Prussia - the state that accounted for almost two thirds of the country's area and population. It is clear that the power of the office had been designed by Bismarck himself, to fit his own large personality, and his private rooms -- to be inherited by his successors - were actually in the same building, Wilhelmstrasse 76, as the Foreign Office. (12) Yet under his successor Caprivi, the system broke down; it was designed for strong chancellors, not weak ones. Christopher Clark explains:

Caprivi's epoch-making decision not to renew the Reinsurance Treaty was in fact driven by a faction within the German Foreign Office which had secretly opposed the Bismarckian line for some time.

Led by Friedrich von Holstein, director of the political department at the Foreign Office, a highly intelligent, hyper-articulate, privately malicious and socially reclusive individual who aroused admiration but not much affection in his fellows, this faction had little difficulty in winning over the new chancellor.

Just as in France, in other words, the weakness of the foreign minister (or in this case, chancellor) meant that the initiative slipped towards the permanent officials of the Wilhelmstrasse, the Berlin equivalent of the Centrale. ... It was Holstein, not the chancellor or the imperial foreign secretary, who determined the shape of German foreign policy in the early and mid 1890s. (13)

It was in the same decade that Wilhelm's best friend Philipp von Eulenburg, who had been ambassador in Vienna 1894-1901, joined forces with Holstein in directing German foreign policy and "managing" the Kaiser. In 1900, they lifted Bernhard von Bülow, ambassador in Rome from 1893-1897 and Foreign Minister from 1897-1900, to the chancellorship, a man who "more than any chancellor before him ... deployed all the arts of the seasoned courtier to draw Wilhelm into his confidence." (14)

The Bülow tenure was characterized by Holstein's aggressive attempts to forestall Anglo-French as well as Anglo-Russian Entente; none of which worked and which so seriously misfired at the Algeiras conference. The unmitigated disaster called for a course correction, and Wilhelm, temporarily enjoying freedom of action due to his chancellor's

weakness, was able to stage a comeback of some sort and appointed, with his friend Heinrich von Tschirschky, a Foreign Minister of his own choice over Bülow's protestations. Bülow fiercely fought the decline of his power but was eventually replaced by Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg as chancellor in July 1909. The latter's tenure will be discussed below.

The last station of our inquiry on who truly governed in the European capitals leads us to London. The position of Sir Edward Grey, foreign secretary from 1905 until 1916, was neither endangered by renegade bureaucrats nor his sovereign King George V nor his titular boss, Prime Minister Herbert Asquith. His somewhat imperialist outlook on proper English foreign policy belied his origins as a Liberal MP, but secured him cross-party appeal with the conservatives, who steadily backed him. This support gave his office clout and durability. Christopher Clark observes:

Grey quickly secured unchallenged control over the policy-making process, ensuring that British policy focused primarily on the "German threat". ... But Grey's plenitude of power and consistency of vision did not entirely protect British policy-making from the agitations characteristic of the European executives. The anti-German position adopted by the Grey group did not enjoy wide support outside the Foreign Office. It was not even backed by the majority of the British cabinet.

The Liberal government, and the Liberal movement more generally, were polarized by the tension between liberal imperialist and radical elements. Many of the leading radicals, and they included some of the most venerable figures in the party, deplored the foreign secretary's policy of alignment with Russia. They accused Grey and his associates of adopting a pose towards Germany that was unnecessarily provocative. They doubted whether the advantages of appeasing Russia outweighed the potential benefits of friendship with the German Empire. They worried whether the creation of a Triple Entente might not pressure Germany into adopting an ever more aggressive stance and they pressed for détente with Berlin. A further problem was the complexion of British public opinion, especially within the cultural and political elite, which, despite intermittent Anglo-German "press wars", was drifting into a more pro-German mood during the last few years before the outbreak of war. Antagonism to Germany coexisted across the British elites with multi-layered cultural ties and a deep admiration of the country's cultural, economic and scientific achievements.

*Grey met these challenges by shielding the policy-making process from the scrutiny of unfriendly eyes. ... Consultations on important policy decisions - notably regarding the deepening commitment to France --were confined to trusted contacts within the administration. Cabinet was **not informed**, for example, of the discussions between France and Britain in December 1905 and May 1906, in which **military representatives** of both countries **agreed in principle the form that a British military intervention in support of France would take in the event of war**. This mode of proceeding suited Grey's elitist understanding of politics and his avowed view of the Entente, which was that it should be cultivated "in a loyal and generous spirit" ensuring that any pitfalls arising would "strengthen" rather than weaken the "Agreement", and that the gradual advance into a deepening commitment should always be insulated from "party controversy".*

*In other words, Grey ran a double-track policy. In public, he repeatedly denied that Britain was under any obligation to come to France's aid. London's hands remained absolutely free. Pressed by hostile colleagues, he could always say that the **interlinked mobilization scenarios of the military** were mere **contingency plans**. By means of these complex manoeuvres, Grey was able to impart a remarkable **inner consistency** to the management of British foreign policy.*

*Yet it is easy to see how this state of affairs -- driven by the shifting balance of power between factions within the British government and the political elite -- gave rise to confusion. To those French interlocutors who dealt directly with the foreign secretary and his associates, it was clear that "Sir Grey", as some of them quaintly called him, would stand by France in the event of a war, notwithstanding the official insistence of the **non-binding character of the Entente**. But to the Germans, who were not privy to these conversations, it looked very much as if Britain might stand aside from the continental coalition, especially if the Franco-Russian Alliance took the initiative **against Germany**, rather than the other way around. [Emphases added]*

(15)

One might, of course, find other words for such a policy than "double-track". We may imagine what such a scheme would have been called had Germany availed herself of it. The German Foreign Minister, say, allows the German and Italian General Staffs to plan common war against Austria, Switzerland or France, authorizes the generals to develop "interlinked mobilization scenarios" for military interventions - without telling the chancellor, the cabinet or the Kaiser.

In furtherance of this policy, he informs parliament as well as press that no mutual German-Italian military planning exists and that all relations to the ally in question, i.e. Italy, are "non-binding", mere "contingency plans" of defensive nature, for the case that the Swiss or Austrians attacked.

There seems no doubt that such a German Foreign Minister would have been accused of fomenting war, at the very least, and German historians who would have called such a policy one of "remarkable inner consistency" would have become the laughingstock of the trade. Yet the fact that such a characterization of Grey's policy does not cause puzzlement in most contemporary readers says a lot about the difference in perception that persists in comparisons of British and German policies.

In summarizing the above, we must conclude that no clear pyramid of authority or responsibility for the formulation and execution of foreign policy existed in any of the Great Powers, and the vagaries of influence that courtiers and generals exerted on decision-making not only limited the viability of Clausewitz's principle of the primacy of politics over military matters, "the fluctuation of power across different points in the decision-making structures amplified the complexity and unpredictability of interactions in the European international system." (16) These fluctuations caused particular instability in the aftermath of the "Young Turks" revolt of 1908.

A program of internal reform had been launched in the Ottoman Empire in 1839 that, aimed at reorganizing the obsolete military and introducing compulsory elementary education. A relatively liberal constitution granting civil rights and proposing representative government was adopted in 1876, but the putsch and subsequent establishment of the autocracy of Sultan Abdul Hamid II in the same year resulted in a return of Islamic absolutism. This did not exactly reduce tensions on the Balkan, which were stoked by Slavic nationalist insurgencies and the religious opposition of the mostly orthodox Balkan Christians against the Islamic Sultanate.

On July 6, 1908, a revolt planned by the Young Turks of the "Committee of Union and Progress" [CUP] broke out in Macedonia and quickly spread over the Balkan Peninsula. Troops sent by Constantinople either refused to fight the revolutionaries or even sided with them, and soon the public "demand was made for a restoration of the Constitution of 1876 ... and all Ottoman subjects were called upon to unite in saving their common homeland." "It was not long," Albertini comments, "before there appeared processions of soldiers and citizens who marched through the streets [of Salonika] acclaiming the Constitution." (17) Only three weeks later Abdul Hamid gave up; the constitution was restored and key demands of the CUP - a purge of corrupt courtiers, the muzzling of the secret police and the appointment of a new Grand Vizier - fulfilled. Elections were called, and by mid-September resulted in a parliament among whose 278 members were 44 Christians and 4 Jews. (18)

The revolt provoked intensive scrutiny and consummate diplomatic activity not only in Russia and Austria but in the capitals of the other Powers as well. The Turkish Balkan provinces became the focus of international attention. What would Greek, Serbs and Bulgarians do -- or rather, what would St. Petersburg allow them to do?

The Young Turks revolt became the first major challenge for the new Austrian Foreign Minister Baron Alois von Aehrenthal, who had succeeded Goluchowski in October 1906. Aehrenthal was ambitious and somewhat ruthless, a conservative who during his tenure as Austrian Ambassador in St. Petersburg from 1899 to 1906 had sought the renewal of the Dreikaiserbund, and who longed to advance Austria's power and prestige; Albertini described him as being "more passionate than clear sighted." (19)

At the beginning of his tenure, Aehrenthal seems to have realized that the southern Slavs of the monarchy could only be persuaded to disengage themselves from Serbia and the hard-core Slavic nationalist movements by a policy of gradual appeasement which would, one day, give them a status similar to that of the Hungarians and extend the Dual

Monarchy to a Triple Monarchy with a strong federal flavour. Alexander Musulin von Gomirje, the Croatian Head of the Chancery at the Foreign Ministry, often discussed the subject with his minister and described his attitude as follows:

"It did not escape Aerenthal's attention that in the South Slav peoples of the Monarchy, though living separated in three different administrative territories, thought of unity was beginning to develop, and he was of the opinion that this thought of unity, loyal to Austria as it was and devoid of all irredentist tinge, deserved the friendly regard and favour of those directing the affairs of the Monarchy.

Since the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy could not withdraw from Bosnia-Herzegovina without committing a sort of political hara-kiri, while, on the other hand, without Bosnia-Herzegovina the Monarchy's South Slav problem could not be solved in the way indicated above [by giving them a degree of autonomy comparable to that the Hungarians enjoyed, ¶] Aerenthal recognized that the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina was the pre-condition of any further step towards a satisfactory solution of the Monarchy's Southern Slav question."
(20)

Aerenthal's idea was that, since the Hungarians would not give up the provinces with Hungarian minorities they controlled since the Ausgleich of 1867 - Transylvania east of the Danube and Croatia plus Fiume, today's Rijeka, southwest of the Danube - the southernmost regions Bosnia and Herzegovina, which Austria administered under the 1878 Treaty of Berlin although these areas technically remained under Ottoman suzerainty, might form the nucleus of a Southern Slav federation that was to constitute a third Austrian monarchy. The Habsburg heir apparent, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, was a supporter of this idea, and hence was perceived as a grave threat to the designs of the nationalist-chauvinist Slavs in Serbia, Bosnia and Macedonia.

It was clear that an Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina could only be pursued with the consent of Turkey, the owner, Russia, big brother of the Balkan Slavs, and the other signatories of the Berlin Treaty. In furtherance of this thought, Aerenthal contacted the new Russian Foreign Minister, the aforementioned Alexander Izvolsky, former ambassador in Copenhagen.

Izvolsky's pet project was the old Russian dream of the conquest of Constantinople and control over the straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles, and, although the subsequent developments turned out essentially chaotic, it would seem that Aerenthal and Izvolsky arrived at some sort of mutual understanding that, if Russia consented to an Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, she would, in turn, receive Austrian support for a renegotiation of the Straits Conventions in Russia's favour.

It has never been established how detailed exactly Aerenthal and Izvolsky's initial understanding on connecting the Bosnian and Straits issues truly was or not, but Aerenthal was sure enough of his quarry to bring the proposal to the attention of a meeting of the Joint Austro-Hungarian Ministers on December 1, 1907. The ministers adopted a plan that laid out, "under nine headings, the conditions and legislative steps relative to the annexation." (21)

Now Aerenthal had to address the question how to obtain the consent of the Turks as well as the assent of the other signatories of the Treaty of Berlin, Germany, France and England. The lure he laid out was the offer

... to renounce the right, granted to the Dual Monarchy under Article 25 of that treaty, "to maintain garrisons and possess military and trading roads over the entire area" of the Sanjak of Novibazar.³ This was a central point in Aerenthal's scheme.

In itself, the military occupation of the Sanjak had no value, but it was regarded in Europe as the spring-board for further Austrian advances in the Balkans. Its abandonment was to appear an important concession to the Great Powers, especially to Russia and Italy, as signifying the renunciation of all further expansion by the Monarchy, i.e. of the March to Salonika and the ambitions of Andrassy. (22)

³ The Sanjak of Novibazar was a small Ottoman province, the area between Serbia and Montenegro along the Durmitor and Zlativor mountains in the Dinaric Alps, from about 50 miles southeast of Sarajevo extending some 80 miles in south-eastern direction.

Having informed the ministers of the planned annexation but not yet of the Novibazar gambit, Aerenthal proceeded to discuss his plans with Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, the Chief of the Austrian General Staff. The general thought that, if Bosnia was to be annexed anyway, the Serbian problem should be tackled at the same time. "The solution to the Yugoslav problem is to be found only in Serbia and by a bold course, the ultimate aim of which would be the annexation of Serbia," he wrote Aerenthal. (23) Russia's agreement would have to be secured by diplomatic means, while Italy, a probable enemy", should be neutralized by a pre-emptive strike. (24)

Aerenthal's design was, however, unnecessarily complicated by his next manoeuvre. On January 27, 1908, he informed the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin that he had obtained from the Ottomans a concession for a new railway line through the Sanjak of Novibazar; what for was not entirely clear - didn't he want to give up the area anyway? Albertini thought that perhaps he might have wanted to "enhance the value of this renunciation in the eyes of the Great Powers." (25)

Yet Izvolsky in St. Petersburg interpreted the railway plan as a move to directly connect Austrian with Turkish railways, in which case Austria-Hungary could mass troops against western Serbia were she to prepare a surprise attack. Hence the railway plan, in Izvolsky's opinion, constituted a change of the status quo in the Balkan, which had to be approved by Russia as per the Austro-Russian Balkan agreements of 1897 and 1903. (26) When he refused to grant approval, irrespective of what his earlier understanding with Aerenthal might have been, Austro-Russian relations soured and London and Paris expressed astonishment over Aerenthal's move. But then, "in a bewildering move", Izvolsky "invited Aerenthal to what amounted to a discussion of the terms on which Russia would consent to the annexation not only of Bosnia-Herzegovina but also of the Sanjak of Novibazar, while Austria would consent to the opening of the Dardanelles to Russian warships." (27)

Thus Russia might finally gain access to the Mediterranean Sea. Izvolsky formulated the interrelation of the issues in a note to Vienna on July 2, 1908, as follows:

"We continue to be of the opinion that the question of changing the state of things laid down in Article 25 of the Treaty of Berlin, i.e. the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sanjak of Novibazar, is eminently a European concern and not of a nature to be settled by a separate understanding between Russia and Austria-Hungary.

On the other hand, we are ready to recognize that the same reservation applies to the question of Constantinople, its adjacent territory and the Straits. However, in view of the extreme importance to our two countries of seeing the above-mentioned questions settled in accordance with their mutual interests, the Imperial Government would be prepared to enter into the discussion of them in a friendly spirit of reciprocity." (28)

Aerenthal was delighted: for his support of the Straits issue, he would not only receive Bosnia and the Herzegovina but the Novibazar Sanjak - at the moment still under titular Ottoman suzerainty - as well, and he instructed Count Leopold Berchtold, the Austrian ambassador in St. Petersburg, to signal his interest and preliminary approval to Izvolsky. But now the revolt of the Young Turks complicated matters.

Aerenthal suspected that the new Ottoman government - "full of enthusiasm and belief in themselves" (29) - would resist the cession of its provinces more intensely than the old one, if given half a chance, and hence speed was of the essence. In addition, prompt action would give local Slav nationalism less of an opportunity to organize itself. On July 28, Aerenthal and Conrad had another meeting, in the course of which the general reiterated his opinion regarding the annexation of Serbia. Yet, if the incorporation of Bosnia could not proceed without giving up the Sanjak of Novibazar, he was prepared to give his consent to its abandonment.

Then Aerenthal went in medias res. He ordered his chef de cabinet Musulin to "draft the two notes to Turkey and the Powers respectively, justifying and explaining the annexation, to which, reluctantly, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand also assented," as long as it was assured that Hungary was not allowed to pick up the two new provinces. (30) Aerenthal proposed that they would be administered separately from both Austria and Hungary. Yet he still prevaricated over the

Sanjak: were Austria to relinquish it, it might fall to Serbia, which then would have a common border with Montenegro and the emergence of an independent Pan-Slav state was to be dreaded. But, Aerenthal mused, the proper diplomacy might succeed in preserving Balkan discord to Austria's favour. He noted:

"We shall only secure safe frontiers by making up our minds to tear the evil up by the roots and put an end to all Pan-Serb dreams for the future. Already now the antagonism between Bulgars and Serbs is a factor to be counted on. In Bulgaria the conviction prevails that the road to Macedonia must pass across the body of the Serbian State and it is certain that over the possession of Uskub the most violent struggle will break out between Serbia and Bulgaria.

If in this struggle we favour the Bulgarian cause and the creation of a Big Bulgaria at the expense of Serbia, we shall have completed the necessary preparation for laying hands on what remains of Serbia as soon as a propitious star is in the ascendant in Europe.

Then we should possess the safe frontiers of which I have spoken, an independent Albania under our aegis, a Montenegro on friendly terms with us, and a Big Bulgaria bound to us by ties of gratitude.

I conclude, therefore, that an annexation of the Sanjak would be of no advantage to us and we can achieve the final aims of our Balkan policy by passing, not by Novibazar, but by Belgrade." (31)

Thus he decided on the annexation of Bosnia and the Herzegovina simultaneously with the renunciation of the Sanjak of Novibazar, and presented this scenario to another meeting of the Joint Ministers on August 19, 1908. He prophesied favourable reactions from the Great Powers, and Conrad, asked for the military point of view, opined that no true risks were manifest: Russia was still reeling from the loss against Japan, and Italy could, if necessary, be defeated. Yet the matter was adjourned - on various Hungarian objections - until the next scheduled meeting in Budapest on September 10.⁴ But on August 27, i.e., before that meeting occurred, Aerenthal sent to St. Petersburg a formal reply to Izvolsky's note of July 2 [see n. 28] that ended with:

"If however, imperious circumstances obliged Austria-Hungary to annex Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Russian Government would give an assurance that it would maintain a benevolent and friendly attitude towards her. The Austro-Hungarian Government on its side would undertake, as soon as the annexation was proclaimed, to withdraw its troops at the same time from the Sanjak and to renounce all occupation of this territory.

The Austro-Hungarian Government is convinced that the Government of St. Petersburg will see in this course of action only a fresh confirmation and a visible manifestation of the principle of désintéressement which inspires the accord between the two Empires. The Russian Government having raised the question of Constantinople, its surrounding territories and the Straits, we declare ourselves ready, in the event, for a confidential and friendly exchange of views on this topic." (32)

It has been argued that, by technically unlinking a successful solution of the Straits question from Russia's promised support for Austria, Aerenthal, in Albertini's words, "prepared a trap into which Izvolsky was eventually to fall." (33) But such a judgement presupposes that Izvolsky had made success in the Straits question an explicit precondition for supporting Austria's annexation policy, and there is simply nothing in the documents to support this view. Thus when, on August 28, 1908, even before Aerenthal had informed Italy, Austria's ally in the Triple Alliance, the Vienna daily REICHSPOST announced the day of the annexation as December 2 and the BERLINER TAGEBLATT confirmed the news in the German capital a day later, astonishment ruled the day in Rome. But the leak also put Aerenthal under pressure to advance the actual date of the takeover. (34) Italian newspapers complained, and took the side of Serbia and the Pan-Slavs, which they believed, perhaps correctly, threatened by Austria. Now the aforementioned meeting of the Joint Austro-Hungarian Ministers of

⁴ "Conrad," writes Albertini, "who attended this Council meeting, relates that [the Hungarian Prime Minister] Wekerle, fearing that the annexation might lead to trialism, asked for an assurance that the dualistic form of the state would be preserved and reasserted the historic right of the Hungarian Crown to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Aerenthal and [the Austrian Prime Minister] Beck denied the existence of these historic rights and Beck said that the two provinces should not be assigned to Hungary and that the annexation must be carried out in the name of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy." (35)

September 10 in Budapest took place, at which Aerenthal affirmed again that he expected no complications from the other Powers. But when he "told the Joint Ministers that no difficulties were to be expected from Russia over the annexation, he was putting the cart before the horse, since he had not been in touch with Izvolsky." (36) After some diplomatic to and fro, Aerenthal and Izvolsky agreed to meet at Ambassador Berchtold's castle at Buchlau for an exchange of views.

Unfortunately it never came out what exactly they agreed on. They worked on and apparently reached consent on mutual Balkan and Turkey policies; resolving that Izvolsky should compose and send to Aerenthal a synopsis of these understandings and a notice of intent as soon as possible.

Izvolsky had asked Aerenthal to be informed as soon as possible about the new date of the annexation, so that he could make the necessary preparations. Aerenthal did not yet have a concrete date but promised Izvolsky timely notice. The Russian then proceeded on a holiday that included visits in Berlin, London and Paris, where he received, on September 30, Aerenthal's message that the annexation would be executed on October 7. But meanwhile the secret had leaked, the scandal exploded, and on British demands for an explanation, Izvolsky chose to profess ignorance and represented himself as a victim of Austrian deception.

It is rather too tedious to list in detail the accusations and counter-accusations that now followed. Izvolsky essentially denied Russian participation in the scheme, claimed that he had insisted on a full conference of the Treaty of Berlin Powers to decide the issues in question and that Austrian impertinence risked the very peace of the region which Russia was so eager to maintain. Aerenthal had told him, he said, that the annexation issue was "the concern solely of Austria and Turkey," but that he had replied "that Russia could not accept this thesis and that we regard the annexation as the concern of all the powers signatory to the Treaty of Berlin and as a violation of that treaty." In addition, he warned that "if you [Aerenthal] abolish a clause of the Treaty of Berlin onerous to yourselves, you must be prepared for Russia and the Balkan States onerous to them." (37) Russia, Izvolsky wrote, would ask for the opening of the Straits, Bulgaria for her independence, Serbia for frontier rectification, Montenegro for the abolition of the restrictions [imposed on her by the Berlin Treaty], and Russia would support all these demands. In short, Izvolsky was an innocent lamb and Russia certainly not guilty of having cavorted with Austria over the Balkan issues. (38) Aerenthal had tricked him.

Yet the British did not quite believe his protestations, and became suspicious when Izvolsky suddenly visited Tittoni, the Foreign Minister of Italy, to whom he reiterated the representations he had made to the British. In London, Grey suspected a Russo-Italian conspiracy. Tittoni, however, suggested that a tripartite Austro-Italo-Russo agreement could settle the matters in question without the need for an international conference. Things remained in diplomatic suspension for a few days until Bulgaria entered the picture.

Prince Ferdinand of Romania, who had an urgent desire to become king of his nation, which technically still was a Turkish province, arrived in Vienna on September 23 to visit Francis Joseph, who greeted him with royal honours. Soon thereafter, Aerenthal informed Germany, on September 26, and England, on September 28, about the annexation, but without naming the day. The actual date, October 7, Albertini remarks,

... he named in a letter of 30 September to be handed by Khevenmueller [the Austrian ambassador] to Izvolsky as soon as he reached Paris; which, as already mentioned, Izvolsky did on 4 October. Aerenthal further prepared, in advance, autograph letters of Francis Joseph dated 29 September, addressed to the reigning heads of the Great Powers, which the Austrian-Hungarian Ambassadors were to present on 5 or 6 October, and also a note of 3 October to the Governments of the Great Powers, to be delivered on the actual day the annexation was proclaimed.

Lastly, he prepared a note of 7 October for Turkey. This note stated that, since Turkey had been consolidated especially after the recent national movement, it was no longer necessary for the Monarchy to maintain its garrisons and its rights in the Sanjak of Novibazar; and that the progress made by Bosnia and Herzegovina justified the granting to those two provinces of the benefits of an autonomous and constitutional regime which, however, made it necessary to regularize their position, i.e., to annex them. (39)

Austria, so to say, would do them a favour. But the British picked up rumours that in a surprise move, Bulgaria was to declare its independence, and attempted "to stop this proclamation as it might have grave consequences." (40) Yet it was too late, for on October 5, 1908, Ferdinand declared Bulgaria's independence and assumed the title of Tsar. That made for big headlines, and nobody believed Aerenthal, "who gave his word of honour" to Sir Goschen, the British ambassador in Vienna, and a few other diplomats, "that he had no idea the proclamation of Bulgarian independence was so imminent and that he expected it for a few weeks later." (41)

Francis Joseph's proclamation to the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which informed them of their good fortune of having become Austrian citizens, was issued a day early, on October 6, as was His Majesty's order for the evacuation of the Austrian garrisons in the Sanjak of Novibazar. Two days later, Aerenthal called a meeting of the Viennese ambassadors and explained that "the withdrawal of the troops from the Sanjak proves that Austria aims at no territorial acquisitions beyond what she possesses." (42) On the background of the recent annexations, this statement was met with silence. Unperturbed, Aerenthal addressed Italian concerns with the cheerful message that:

"Remaining firmly united with Germany and Italy we contribute to maintaining the peace and equilibrium of Europe. As regards Italy, I successfully pursue, with the loyal support of Signor Tittoni, my endeavours to continue the intimacy of our relations, which happily grow more and more cordial." (43)

Unfortunately, Signor Tittoni was somewhat unaware of the loyal support he had presumably rendered and had remarked ominously, on October 6, the day the annexations were proclaimed, that "in any case, Italy can calmly await events, for however they may develop, they will not take her by surprise nor find her unprepared and isolated." (44) In Russia, reactions were more disruptive, for Izvolsky had failed to inform anyone about the agreement he had reached with Aerenthal in Buchlau, and the annexation came as a complete surprise. The public was astonished, to say the least, and Prime Minister Stolypin protested earnestly to the Tsar that the annexation of Slavic soil by a German respectively Hungarian state could not be tolerated.

The worst effect news of the annexations produced in Serbia, where a panicked army command ordered mobilization, the parliament passed war credits, and a mysterious organization, the NARODNA ODBRANA (National Defence), was formed, which was to play a big role in the events that led to the Great War of 1914. But the Crown Council advocated moderation, in the pious hope that by protesting to the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin territorial compensation could be gained, and on October 12 [old style, i.e. October 25 by our reckoning, ¶] "defined the desired compensation as the cession of a strip of territory along the northern frontier of the Sanjak of Novibazar in such a way that the two Serb countries should have a common frontier and that the Sanjak should be completely severed from Austro-Hungarian territory. Thus Serbia would have gained secure access to the Adriatic." (45)

Now it was Russia upon whom it was to lend support to the Serbs' claims, but she was still in recuperation from the Japanese War and thus counselled moderation on her Slavic brethren. Neither was Turkey able to put up much of a resistance; the Young Turks of the CUP and the administration of the aged Pasha Kiamil were still vying for power, and at any rate the emergence of independent Bulgaria on her border was closer to her attention than the retention of Bosnia which she effectively had lost a hundred years earlier. Hence when the Ottomans protested at the address of the Berlin Treaty powers, they only raised the Bulgarian issue; about the annexations they directly remonstrated in Vienna and organized a boycott of Austrian goods; "... the Turks did not enter Austro-Hungarian shops, in the ports the cargoes of the Monarchy were not unloaded, deposits were withdrawn from the banks. The losses sustained by Austrian commerce and industry were serious, amounting to over 100,000,000 Kronen." (46) On October 22, the Sublime Porte expressly denounced the annexations.

On October 4, Izvolsky had arrived in Paris, where he received not only the aforementioned letter by Aerenthal, giving the datum of the annexations as October 7, but also a most disapproving notice of Stolypin, who expressed the Tsar's and the peoples' astonishment over his failure to report the agreements with Aerenthal at Buchlau. Izvolsky's found himself in a bind; he could not truly deny the gist of these agreements, for Austria had his note of July 2 [see n. 28, ¶], in which he himself had created the quid pro quo over Bosnia and the Straits, thus he could not escape the suspicion of

having sanctioned the annexations and thus sold out his Slavic brethren; on the other hand he could not now successfully "prepare the ground in Paris and London for the compensation at which he aimed - the opening of the Straits." (47)

He chose to repeat his earlier claims of Austrian trickery and denied having consented to the annexation. Naturally, Paris and London condemned Austria's move and proposed an international conference over the matter - which was the only way for Izvolsky to save his own position. He could point at his statement in the July 2 paper that the Bosnian question was properly a matter for arbitration while in secret remain committed to supporting Austria in the conference-to-be, and he could keep Serbia in check by promising them to support territorial compensations.

Meanwhile Paris and London quibbled on whether to propose a conference outright or first lay down its agenda, while unofficially greeting Izvolsky's portrayals of Austrian deceit as a welcome affirmation of the Triple Entente, Russia, France and Great Britain. But in tangible terms, Izvolsky received little. As far as *Realpolitik* was concerned, Paris and London knew that the annexation had changed little; Austria had administered these provinces before and would continue to do so without much change, except that the garrisons that formerly had been guarding the Sanjak of Novibazar would move closer to the homeland. This was in essence also the position of Bülow, who established the guideline that "the more difficult the situation of the Austro-Hungarian Minister - and the more doubtful the attitude of Russia and Italy - the more Aerenthal and the Dynasty behind him must receive the impression that we shall remain faithful." (48) Against the advice of both the new German Foreign Secretary Wilhelm Schön and the German ambassador in London, Paul von Metternich, he rejected to mediate between Aerenthal and Izvolsky, who now, after Austria had pocketed her prize, claimed his end of the bargain. Meanwhile Conrad in Vienna once more urged war against Serbia, but could not prevail against Franz Ferdinand, who, in rare agreement with his uncle Francis Joseph, decided on moderation: "Once again: no war with Serbia and Montenegro and no hasty steps, mobilization, etc." (49)

The need for a conference was maintained by Tittoni, but although an inordinate amount of diplomatic mail and telegrams crisscrossed the continent, no agreement over location and agenda could be reached, and it was Aerenthal who was the principal saboteur. On October 19, he sent Tittoni a letter containing a copy of Izvolsky's note of July 2 [see n. 28] and his reply of August 27 [see n. 32] and maintained that:

"This exchange of views prepared the ground for my Buchlau conversations, in which, as you know from Izvolsky and myself, we arrived at certain points which were to enable Austria-Hungary and Russia to maintain the same attitude towards future eventualities in the Balkans.

You, my dear Colleague, at Desio [where, on September 18-20, Tittoni had met Izvolsky, ¶] associated yourself with our point of view and by your letter of 4 October outlined the possible basis of a tripartite understanding. I, on 6 October, hastened to inform you that I accepted it and regarded the understanding as established in principle. Subsequently, I brought it to your knowledge, through Count Lützow, that Izvolsky also recognized the results of the Buchlau and Desio exchanges of views as achievements and as capable of defining in advance the main lines of the attitude to be taken up by Russia, Austria—Hungary, and Italy at the coming conference.

The idea of this conference will, I anticipate, take more precise shape after the impending return of Izvolsky to St. Petersburg. It is particularly in view of this eventuality that I was anxious to inform you more fully. I have the firm hope that at the future conference our understanding will become manifest in a manner beneficial to the general peace and advantageous to the good relations between our two countries." (50)

Essentially, Aerenthal aimed at Tittoni the charge of complicity, who countered by maintaining that a refusal of his conference proposal, to which England absolutely subscribed, would lead not only to his resignation and the breaking up of the Triple Alliance but to England's termination of diplomatic relations with Vienna and the dispatch of a British battle fleet to the Adriatic Sea. Tittoni also instructed the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, Alberto Pansa, to convey these apprehensions to Bülow and ask him to use his influence to convince Austria of the conference's inevitability. In short, Tittoni was upping the ante, but Bülow was not impressed. He wrote to Monts in Rome:

"The only danger threatening Italy at this moment is a break with Austria. ... Austria can inflict incalculable damage on Italy. ... France will not move a finger for Italy, even if she has promised to do so, and will rejoice to see her rival in the Mediterranean paralyzed. England cannot help Italy, because Austria, with her minimal coastline with only one single port, is invulnerable to England. Russia at the moment cannot let herself in for a war, among other reasons because the Russian army was disorganized in the war against Japan.

On the other hand, in the opinion of all competent observers, the Austrian army is in better condition and morale than for the last sixty years. Italy can be only one of two things, the ally or the enemy of Austria. The cessation of allied relations would be a first step towards a conflict in which Italy would stake all on one card. I beg you to convey this with quiet gravity, not only to Tittoni and Giolitti [the Prime Minister, ¶], but also to other suitable persons at your discretion." (51)

Aerenthal, whom Tittoni presented the same scenario - rupture of the Triple Alliance and Italian support for Great Britain in an Anglo-Austrian conflict - was no more impressed than Bülow; nor, he said, would he be affected by a few English ships showing up in the Adriatic Sea, for Austria was "not to be put on the same level as hoary-headed Turkey, who is used to being intimidated by such means," and added that he had "no objection to a conference, but I must make our participation conditional on a previous and complete agreement with Turkey and the Governments [of the Berlin Treaty signatories, ¶],"⁵ (52) This, of course, would obviate the need for a conference in the first place.

After Tittoni's bluff had been called without much risk, Izvolsky showed up in Berlin on his way back to St. Petersburg in dire need of some diplomatic succor. He asked Bülow, as Tittoni had done, to convince Vienna to recognize the annexations and eventual compensations to Serbia and Montenegro as topics of the planned conference. In his memoirs, Bülow described his reaction to Izvolsky's proposal:

"I replied that I honestly and keenly desired peace and unity among the Powers and especially between Russia and Austria, that in principle we are not opposed to the conference but that we cannot force the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and its aged Sovereign to let themselves be hauled before a conference as before a law court, and still less to give the suggested compensations to the small States of Balkan bandits.

We cannot desert Austria, on grounds both of loyalty and of prudence. I do not understand the attacks on Aerenthal, since he has always given me the impression of being not only a gentleman but also a sincere friend of good relations between Austria and Russia." (53)

Bülow's refusal further aggravated Izvolsky's position, who in addition found in Berlin more messages from Stolypin - demanding explanations - waiting for him. Lacking other options, he told Nicholas Pasic, the Serbian Prime Minister, after his return to St. Petersburg that "Germany and Austria formed a solid block and the other Powers only wanted peace; Serbia, by her behaviour, made Russia's position difficult; the territorial compensations to which she aspired would be asked for, but there was no prospect of obtaining them." (54)

During his previous visits in London and Paris, Izvolsky had obtained the requisite agreement of England and France to a conference, but when he sent Berchtold, the Austrian ambassador in St. Petersburg, the relevant documents, he received in reply Aerenthal's warning that, if he were to continue to deny the Buchlau agreements, Austria would not only publicize their correspondence of July 2 and August 27, but also the secret Austro-Russian agreement of July 13, 1878.⁵

Now Aerenthal had to overcome a tactical problem: he could not very well refuse a conference a priori, without stating his reasons. Thus, on December 8, he suggested that the conference was to be preceded by an exchange of views, which...

⁵ The understanding promised that Russia would not object if "in consequence of inconveniences which might arise from Ottoman administration of the Sanjak of Novibazar, Austria-Hungary were to find herself obliged to occupy definitively that territory as well as the remainder of Bosnia-Herzegovina." (55)

... would, it may be hoped, lead to certain formulae which would lay down precise limits for the discussion. Thus, as regards Point 2 of the agenda: 'Bosnia-Herzegovina', the St. Petersburg Government will certainly agree not to call in question the fact of the annexation of these two provinces.

This attitude on the part of the Imperial Government will seem to us the less in doubt as the eventuality of the annexation had been foreseen and agreed in various previous treaties concluded between the two Empires." (56)⁶

Aerenthal had the upper hand, for he could always publish the papers that proved Izvolsky's connivance in the annexation affair. In an effort to save face and find a solution, the Russian subsequently offered in a note of December 7, that an exclusion of the annexation as a topic of the conference "the Imperial Cabinet, desirous of showing proof of its conciliatory spirit, is prepared not to oppose ... if the other Powers are disposed to accept it." (57) That is, Austria and Russia would be permitted to arrive at a bilateral solution - if the Powers agreed. Perceiving a way out of his troubles, Izvolsky posted a note to the Powers on December 19 - the Russian papers published it four days later - which said in pertinent part:

"We think that, in the event of the Powers arriving at an agreement over the Bosnia-Herzegovina question, Article 25 of the Treaty of Berlin should be not only abrogated but replaced by a new clause containing an exact definition of the new status of these two provinces." (58)

Yet, if they were not to become organic parts of Austria-Hungary, the status Izvolsky proposed for Bosnia-Herzegovina could only be one of autonomy, to which Austria could not agree for two reasons: the Hungarians would see autonomous Slav provinces as a first step to trialism, or the areas might fall under Serbian control and become the core of a future Pan-Slav state on Austria's borders. The most highly regarded Vienna newspaper, the *NEUE FREIE PRESSE*, wrote:

"The idea of autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina has as its author Pasić [the Serbian Prime Minister, ¶], who thinks of Bosnia as a sort of Austrian Eastern Rumelia, to be annexed to Serbia when the suitable moment comes.

Whether or not Izvolsky adopts the Pasić program, the fact remains that we cannot allow terms to be dictated to us for the validity of the annexation already carried out, and we shall tolerate no discussion of the manner in which the two provinces are to be governed." (59)

Although Aerenthal knew that autonomy was out of the question, conference or not, he used Izvolsky's blunder to put on the screws. On Christmas Eve, he posted an Aide-Mémoire to London, Paris, Rome and Berlin, that, oops!, included copies of his and Izvolsky's correspondence of November and December and thus referenced in detail the whole history of and Izvolsky's complicity in the annexation affair.

Belatedly, Izvolsky realized that documents cut both ways and in a speech to the Duma defended his acts by informing parliament, and thus Russia as a whole, of the Austro-Russian agreements and policies that predated his tenure and which he simply had believed were his duty to continue. But when Viennese newspapers leaked documents which in passing referred to the - still secret - Austro-Russian Balkan agreement of 1897, he used the breach of confidentiality to convince the Tsar to write a personal letter to Francis Joseph. Nicholas was furious.

"It remained understood [between Austria and Russia, ¶] that the exchange of views between the two Ministers had first of all to be brought to my knowledge, and the draft of an agreement had to receive my approval. Now, without receiving a reply from me, without giving us twenty-four hours' notice, without taking into any account the reservations formulated by my Minister, Baron Aerenthal confronts us with a fait accompli, which did not prevent him from declaring that he had acted in full agreement with us; at the same time, your Ambassadors abroad maintained that the annexation was no concern of the Powers and that

⁶ Here Aerenthal not only refers to the agreement of July 13, 1878, but also the Budapest Convention of 1877, in which Russia and Austria had pre-emptively agreed on the annexation of Bessarabia by Russia and Bosnia-Herzegovina - except the Sanjak of Novibazar - by Austria, and the Dreikaiserbund of 1873.

Austria-Hungary would not go before a conference. You know what perturbation has been caused all over Europe by this abrupt method of procedure. ...

Despite this, my Government has not ceased for a moment to use all means to calm down spirits both in Russia and among the Balkan peoples; amid all these difficulties my Government has not for a moment departed from the most conciliatory and correct attitude.

It is therefore with the most pained amazement that I have learned what methods Baron Aerenthal has used towards us. Contrary to all diplomatic usage, he has thought good, without consent from us, to communicate to other Governments the confidential documents recently exchanged between our Governments; some of these documents refer to earlier conversations connected with our secret arrangement of 1897; this agreement I regard as a personal pact, concluded between you and myself, in which our Ministers only took part as witnesses. I am not unaware that already on a previous occasion Baron Aerenthal had communicated to a foreign Government a document referring to this agreement [documents communicated to Tittoni].⁷

I cannot conceal from you, my dear friend, that I see a lack of consideration towards me in the procedure of your Minister. No confidential relationship being possible in such conditions, I have found it necessary to command my Foreign Minister to restrict henceforward the relations between our two Cabinets to strictly official communications." (60)

It was, perhaps, typical for Aerenthal that the unprecedented personal condemnation seemed to make no impression on him; he calmly instructed Prince Emil Fürstenberg, his Chargé d'Affairs in St. Petersburg, to practice official restraint, commenting that "after our experiences we have no desire or interest in continuing confidential relations with M. Izvolsky," as if it had been the Russian and not Aerenthal himself who had leaked secret documents. (61)

In early January 1909, Austro-Italian relations, which had remained tense - for Tittoni was clearly aware that both Austria and Russia had first deceived him over the background of the annexation and then denied to discuss the compensation Italy - as always - demanded, further deteriorated over the long disputed issue of the opening of an Italian university for the Italian-speaking minority of the Danube monarchy. It did not speed up matters that Italian politicians in both Rome and Vienna could not agree on the location where the faculty should be established nor who should pay for it. Yet the debate over this particular issue as well as the general diplomatic atmosphere was upset much for the worse by an outbreak of military paranoia on account of, it was whispered, the Chief of Staff, Conrad, himself, whose thoughts were believed to be represented in the following lead article printed by DANZER'S ARMEE ZEITUNG, an Austrian military journal, on January 7, titled "The Eve of War":

"The hour has struck. War is inevitable.

Never was a war more just. And never yet was our confidence in a victorious issue more firmly grounded.

We are being driven into war: Russia drives us, Italy drives us, Serbia and Montenegro drive us, and Turkey drives us.

Russia drives us: With the uncivilized bluntness of the thoroughbred Russian, Izvolsky on 25 December showed his hand: Russia today is not ready for a war of offence; so for the time being she recognizes the Austrian claim to Bosnia ... but, says Izvolsky, Russia is preparing to fulfil in time her historic mission in the Balkans and will in the meanwhile use all means to promote a league of all the Balkan states against Austria-Hungary. ...

Italy drives us: for if officially we still see Italy at our side, this is only in order that she may later the more effectually spring all her mines against us. Gnashing her teeth, Italy feigns to be a loyal ally only because she knows herself not yet to be ready. But with giant strides she is repairing the neglect of two decades. Are we to wait until Italy sees the favourable moment for the war against us? ...

⁷ Tommaso Tittoni, Italian diplomat and Foreign Minister at various times.

Serbia drives us: The Serbian Prime Minister's speech needs no further commentary. A jaw like his asks for the answering fist and any officer of the Imperial and Royal army would be ashamed of the sword he wears, if the state he serves submitted to such provocation without protest.

Turkey drives us: Our representatives in Constantinople are treated with scorn and derision. Our prestige there is down to a mere remnant. The boycott against us is nothing else than a never-ending underhand war. Turkey is now in the hands of a clique of traitors, bribed with English money and working for the interests of England. ...

If our power were as organized, as unchallenged, and as impressive as that of the German Empire, we could lightly dispense with an ultimatum and wait for things to take their course, standing at ease.

But because our prestige in foreign eyes is undermined, because we are thought to be weaker than we are, because we are measurelessly underrated, we cannot for that very reason do otherwise than invoke the anima ratio of nations, seizing the favourable occasion, and in the first place replying to Serbian provocation with the sword as forcefully and emphatically as our self-respect and interest demand.

On the speed and success of this first move will depend whether or not it will end the military operations of this fateful year.

We have formally taken possession of Bosnia which has long been ours. Under the stress of circumstances we shall now lay hand on Serbia and, by our protection, give that sorely-tried land the chance of beginning a new life under our protectorate and of growing mature for the Pan-Serb idea -- for a Greater Serbia under the Hapsburg sceptre. Montenegro, after the necessary rectification of our frontiers, we shall give back to Turkey, if the Porte remains neutral. Montenegro can then enjoy in full measure the blessings of a free rejuvenated Turkey.

Full of the zest of battle the army awaits the tasks to which it is called.

We go into battle with the consciousness that on us depends the future of our Empire. If we return victorious, we shall not only have conquered a foreign land: we shall have won back Austrian self-respect, given new life to the Imperial idea and vanquished not only the foreign enemy but the enemy in our midst.

Our blood throbs in our veins, we strain at the leash.

Sire! Give us the signal!" (62)

As one would assume, the article provided ample ammunition for anti-Austrian assemblies in the Slavic areas of the Balkan, as well as diplomatic indignation in Vienna. That was, perhaps, an overreaction; the article was simply another example of a tract that, like the British Crowe memorandum of 1908 or Herbert's long essay on German wickedness, was short on detail and long on generalization. It was a piece of propaganda, not an actual plan for war. But if Russia, Italy, Serbia and Turkey truly drove Austria to war, would she take on all of them alone? Nobody thought so: without German support, which was not forthcoming under the defensive character of the Austro-German Dual Alliance of 1879, she could not proceed. But the article, in bemoaning the lack of Austrian prestige in the world, was one of the earliest to foster the resigned perception that the Habsburg Empire might be condemned to rather perish honourably at war than to continue to decay in shame.

Yet the article further upended Austro-Italian relations, which were suffering at the same time from the university debate, and resulted in Tittoni's demise in early 1909; he is quoted to have told Monts, the German Ambassador in Rome that "Aehrenthal has been the ruin of me. I could have survived either the annexation or the university, but the two combined have been too much for me, as they would have been for anybody else in my place." (63)

The Austro-Italian crisis afforded Conrad an opportunity to improve, as he understood it, the Austro-German military agreements. On November 3, 1908, he had mentioned in a note to Francis Joseph the possibility of a campaign

against Italy for the first time, addressing her disposition in an eventual Austro-German conflict with Russia. The Germans agreed that Italy was not likely to fulfil her military obligations; she might be a burden from the very onset of hostilities. Both Monts and Count von Lützow, the Austrian Ambassador in Rome, agreed that, in the case of war, "Where would certainly be a partial mobilization of the Italian Army and a massing of troops on the north-east frontier, against which Austria would need to hold South Tyrol and Istria strongly occupied." (64) This in turn alarmed Bülow, for every Austrian soldier guarding the Italian border would sorely be missed against Russia. On the other hand, Bülow mused, Italy was not likely to attack at once:

"If we talk too much to the Austrians of Italian unreliability and faithlessness, we shall bring about the opposite of what we must wish for. We shall make the Austrians hesitate, and increase their desire to immobilize an unnecessary number of troops at the Italian frontier."

I have talked these matters over fully with Holstein, Kiderlen, Jagow, and, on the military side, with the Chief of Staff, Moltke. They all unreservedly concurred in this way of thinking. Jagow especially, who knows Italy and has many contacts there, is of my opinion that if Austria were involved in a Russian war, Italy will in no case fall on Austria forthwith but will at first take up a waiting attitude." (65)

Aerenthal did not believe that Italy would attack Austria in a Russian war, but thought it proper that, during the winter months, the Chiefs of Staff Moltke and Conrad, should have "a written exchange of ideas on such an eventuality and should examine the hypothesis of Italian neutrality." (66) Bülow agreed, and Conrad opened his correspondence with Moltke on the likelihood that, were Austria to invade Serbia, Russia would come to the latter's aid and attack Austria. In this case, Germany was obliged to come to the aid of her ally, which would ensure that France joined the fray with an attack on Germany's western border. The question was, Conrad asked, whom would Germany attack first: Russia or France? Moltke replied, on January 21:

"I think that only an Austrian invasion of Serbia ... could, in the event, lead to active intervention by Russia. This would provide the casus foederis for Germany. The ensuing military operations would be based on the information given by Your Excellency that Austria at the beginning could not muster more than thirty divisions in Galicia against Russia."

The moment Russia mobilizes, Germany also will mobilize, and will unquestionably mobilize her whole army.

It is outside my knowledge how far the agreements into which France has entered oblige her to give active help to Russia in a military conflict between the latter and Germany. That such agreements exist I regard as certain, since present-day Europe is so much shot through and through and interwoven with mutual agreements, ententes, and alliances, that scarcely any of the European Great Powers can draw the sword without the obligation arising for the one Power to attack the other over the whole continent.

I therefore think that if Germany mobilizes against Russia, she must also reckon on a war with France." (67)

As we shall see in Chapter XVIII, most of the operational plans developed by the German General Staff after 1900 - facing the overwhelming probability of a two-front war - concentrated the bulk of the German army in the west, to defeat France quickly - if possible, within forty days - and then send the main body of the forces to the eastern front, frustrating the anticipated Russian offensive into East Prussia.⁸ The strategy was based on the assumption that Russian mobilization could not be finished in less than six weeks or so, which would give the German forces the time necessary for a quick decision in the West. The strategy in itself was, of course, not a secret, and its tactical ramifications are discussed in Chapter XVIII as well.

Conrad's memoirs relate that in their correspondence of 1909, the two chiefs of staff reached an understanding that, if Russia declared war on Austria - over some Balkan issue, it was assumed - the *casus foederis* would arise, Germany

⁸ Wilhelm agreed. He commented on a report by the Foreign Minister in February 1909: "In no case can the [German] army allow itself to be placed in a situation in which it would engage itself half against Russia and half as cover against an uncertain France. We must stake all against the west or all against the east." (68)

would mobilize, and, leaving only a token force to guard East Prussia, attack and attempt to defeat France quickly and thereafter come to the aid of the Austrians who would be attacking the Russians in Galicia. There is, however, the problem that no documents substantiate the presumed agreement, which has been held by Albertini and the Fischer school as proof that "by this step Germany was transforming the defensive [Austro-German] alliance created by Bismarck in 1879 into an offensive alliance." (69neu) Albertini asserts that:

In 1909 the younger bearer of the great name [Moltke, ¶] draws up with Conrad a joint war plan, filling many printed pages, laying down in advance the course of operations day by day for week after week, and taking a decisive victory of Germany over France within four weeks for granted. (70)

Alas, no such plan has ever been found, much less published. Quite like the elusive "Schlieffen-Plan" -- see Chapter XVIII - the purported Austro-German "offensive alliance", against which France and Russia, nolens volens, had to defend themselves, appears to be an invention of the post-1918 "war guilt" debate. While mutual Franco-Russian General Staff conferences began soon after the conclusion of their military convention of January 1894 and Anglo-French military conversations on the highest levels inaugurated in 1906, no Austro-German staff talks were held, nor were the Austrians privy to any details of the German war plan and vice versa. Moltke is on record to have complained as late as July 1914 that the Austrian plans enacted then differed completely from the little he had been told by Conrad before.

Indeed, the popular prejudice of Germany's particular militarism does not survive even a careful analysis, as will be discussed below.⁹ Yet the mutual Austro-Russian mishandling of the annexation affair produced a situation in which Germany, or, rather, Bülow was drawn to commit an exceptional mistake. It occurred in the aftermath of Aerenthal's reply to Serbia's claims for compensation arising from the Bosnia affair -- why she should be entitled to any was a question that could never be satisfactorily explained. Aerenthal informed Bülow of his plans as follows:

"I intend to await the final form of the protocol of agreement with Turkey [over the annexation, ¶] and also the results of the Italian elections, and then, towards the middle of March, I will instruct our Minister in Belgrade to approach the Government there to obtain a decision. In firm but friendly tones I will declare to the Serbian Government, as I explained a month ago to the Delegations, that, in the absence of all legal right, I cannot admit of Serbia's taking up a position on the annexation question.

Henceforth the question is closed, even in the formal sense, by the final draft of the protocol of agreement between the two interested Powers: Austria-Hungary and Turkey. Serbia must give up all her claims and make a formal declaration that she does not harbour any aggressive intentions towards the Monarchy and will, therefore, at once suspend her [purchase of] armaments which have no justification and are ruining the country.

In this case, in return for the declaration by Serbia that she will live in peace and friendship with us, [the Austro-Hungarian Minister in Belgrade] Forgach will be instructed to give the Serbian Government the assurance that the Monarchy is ready to retain, with slight modifications, the existing commercial agreement with the Kingdom and the connection between the Serbian railway system and the Bosnian to facilitate Serbian transport communications with the [Mediterranean] sea." (71)

That was certainly an admission of planning to strong-arm Serbia, for if she would refuse to give up compensation and to furnish the desired declaration of peace and friendship, Aerenthal would "send an ultimatum" to Belgrade, "which would carry our relations to their last and decisive phase." (72) That meant war. Russia would not take recourse to arms, Aerenthal wrote Bülow, for his man in St. Petersburg, Berchtold, reported that Tsar and government were "ready to do anything to avoid being involved in a war." (73) Perhaps this can be seen in the light of recent Russian experiences in the war against Japan.

⁹ L.C.F. Turner comments: "Contrary to popular belief, Imperial Germany was not a super-militarized state. For many years she had been conscripting barely fifty per cent of her manpower of military age, while France was conscripting over eighty per cent and also drawing heavily on North African manpower. In spite of their great superiority in populations -- sixty-eight millions against forty millions -- the Germans could only count on a slight numerical superiority over the French Army and had to reckon with Russia as well." (74)

Meanwhile in St. Petersburg, Izvolsky received the inevitable Serbian complaints over Aerenenthal's strong-arming and his veiled war threats and mobilized Great Britain and France over the prospect of an Austro-Serbian war. The reactions were subdued, for while London and Paris condemned Aerenenthal's manoeuvres against Serbia, they did not want to go to war over it. Izvolsky slowly realized this, and hence counselled Serbia, in a telegram of February 27, 1909, "to give up the demand for territorial compensations, which found no favour with the Powers, to whose decision she must also submit all other questions pending." (75)

One day earlier, Aerenenthal in Vienna had received the Turkish signature on the annexation agreement, in which Austria paid a recompense of 2,200,000 Pound Sterling to the Porte. This bilateral agreement Aerenenthal represented as legitimate enough to demand its *de jure* recognition from the Berlin Treaty signatories as well as from Serbia, which was, of course, a specious claim: the Berlin Treaty had made any change of the status quo in the Balkan subject to the treaty parties' prior approval. If Russia's, that is, Izvolsky's acknowledgement were not immediately forthcoming, Aerenenthal instructed Berchtold on March 8 to threaten the Russian, again, with the publication of the notes of July 2 and August 27 of the previous year. Understandably, Izvolsky complained but eventually capitulated, as did Serbia, on his behalf, transmitting to Austria the required waiver of compensations and expression of peace and friendship on March 10. The note acknowledged:

"Having always submitted to the point of view that the Bosnia-Herzegovinan question is a European question and that it rests with the Powers signatory to the Treaty of Berlin to decide on the annexation and the formulation of Article 25 of the Treaty of Berlin, Serbia, relying on the wisdom and equity of the Powers, entrusts to them, as the competent tribunal, her cause unreservedly, hence without claiming on this head from Austria-Hungary any compensation, whether territorial, political or economic." (76)

Izvolsky's retaliation was a renewed call for a conference of the Powers, in which he acquired British and Italian support, but this time it was Berlin that stopped the project in its tracks. A week after Berchtold's note conveying Aerenenthal's threat, on March 14, Izvolsky appealed, via his ambassador Count Osten-Sacken in Berlin, to Bülow, asking him to persuade Aerenenthal not to publish documents compromising him," which Bülow promised on the condition that Izvolsky made Serbia behave. (77) As for the question what consequences an Austro-Serbian war would entail, Bülow was informed by his man in St. Petersburg, Count Pourtales, that a conference at the Tsar's summer residence in Tsarskoe Selo on March 13 had decided against a Russian intervention and that she would remain neutral in the case of an Austro-Serbian conflict.

From Rome, Tittoni circulated his latest idea on the conference to the Powers, arguing that, as Serbian claims were now off the table, the proposed conference might confine itself to the simple registration of the Austro-Turkish protocol, Bulgarian independence and other small changes as might have accrued by then. Aerenenthal agreed in principle to such an agenda, although he remarked that for Tittoni's proposal no conference would be necessary; such agreements could be validated by a simple exchange of notes between the relevant governments. In Berlin, Bülow agreed. On March 18, Aerenenthal replied to Tittoni's proposal that "in principle", he "was not against the idea of a conference," and would accede if Germany did as well, which, he thought, she would as soon as Russia would declare her willingness to forgo support of Serbian claims. (78) But Aerenenthal was not aware of a note that the new acting German Foreign Minister Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter - substituting for Baron Schön, who had fallen ill - had composed for Bülow, from whose office it was sent to Pourtales, the German Ambassador in St. Petersburg, who was to inform Izvolsky. The note read:

"Please tell M. Izvolsky that we are prepared to propose to the Austro-Hungarian Government an appeal for the Powers' consent to the abrogation of Article 25 of the Treaty of Berlin in connection with the Austro-Turkish agreement already brought to their knowledge. But before making such a proposal to Austria-Hungary, we must be certain that Russia will return an affirmative answer to the Austrian note and declare, unreservedly, her agreement to the abrogation of Article 25.

Your Excellency will make clear to M. Izvolsky that we expect a definite answer: Yes or No; any evasive, involved, or vague answer would have to be regarded by us as a refusal. We would then withdraw and let things take their course; the responsibility for all further eventualities would fall entirely on M. Izvolsky after

our making a last, sincere effort to be of service to M. Izvolsky in clearing up the situation in a manner acceptable to him. ...

The question of the conference has nothing to do with our démarche; as to its needfulness and usefulness, it will be for the Powers in discussion to decide. An appeal to them in the present concrete question would necessarily be regarded by us as an attempt at evasion and thus as a refusal of our proposal." (79)

This telegram is usually called the "German Ultimatum to Russia", and may well be lambasted not only for its unfortunate resemblance to blackmail, it seems to have been unnecessary to begin with, for Izvolsky knew that he had the worse hand, had already calmed Serbia and was clearly willing to accept any solution that would allow him to save face. Bülow's message made this impossible. In his diary, Kiderlen-Wächter engaged in visions of Bismarckian greatness.

"At last I have got Izvolsky spoken to clearly and unmistakably! The Imperial Chancellor has today signed my note to St. Petersburg for Izvolsky by Pourtales. ... I hope that through it I shall bring about a decision." (80)

It is clear that Bülow was aware of Russia's decision not to go to war over Serbia and the annexation business, but this knowledge should have taught him more circumspection, not less; threats were counterproductive when hints might have sufficed. Many historians agree with L.C.F. Turner, who remarked that "the documentary evidence is not conclusive, but the Chancellor's objective seems to have been to let Austria loose against Serbia and frighten Russia with a display of the 'mailed fist.'" (81)

We should pause here for a moment and remind ourselves that Serbia was not guilty of anything other than, perhaps, of having a nasty national press and daring to demand compensations she had no chance to receive. Austria's aggressiveness was in reality contingent on Conrad rather than Aerenthal, for the general spotted an opportunity to fulfil his vision of punishing Serbia. Military measures to be taken against her were discussed during a Council of the Joint Austro-Hungarian ministers on March 27 in Vienna. In his memoirs, Conrad recalls:

"Decided on forcible solution of the (Serb) question, hence recourse to so-called Yellow (partial, Case B) mobilization, i.e. of troops to be sent against Serbia and Montenegro. Aerenthal now reckoned on war.

The meeting was long, and when it was over, the Foreign Minister detained me for several minutes to ask questions on mobilization, on the disposition of troops and the beginning of operations, to which I gave reassuring answers. I left the Ballplatz [seat of the Austrian Foreign Ministry, ¶] with the feeling of a decision taken." (82)

Yet the decision was overturned, when early in the next day London declared her willingness to assent to the abrogation of Article 25 without reservation - Asquith, the Prime Minister, was as disinclined as the Tsar to go to war over Bosnia. Two days later in Belgrade, the ambassadors of the Powers presented the note Great Britain and Vienna had agreed on to the Serbs, who "had the good sense not to attempt resistance and not to mobilize." (83) In accepting the note,

"Serbia recognizes that she has not been injured in her right by the fait accompli created in Bosnia-Herzegovina and that consequently she will conform to such decisions as the Powers shall take in regard to Article 25 of the Treaty of Berlin.

Submitting to the advice of the Great Powers, Serbia undertakes already now to abandon the attitude of protest and opposition which she has maintained in regard to the annexation since last autumn and undertakes further to change the course of her present policy towards Austria-Hungary to live henceforward with the latter on a footing of good-neighbourliness.

Conformably to these declarations and confident of the pacific intentions of Austria-Hungary, Serbia will reduce her army to the position of spring 1908 as regards its organization, its distribution, and its effectiveness. She will disarm and disband her volunteers and bands and will prevent the formation of new units of irregulars on her territory." (84)

In the short run, Aerenthal had won a victory for Austria by annexing the two provinces without having to submit to the arbitration of her peers at an international conference and eventual compensations, but at a cost too dear. All Austria had gained was an official title to provinces she was already governing for decades, at the expense of provoking enmity in Russia, Great Britain, France and Italy - the Powers she would face at war only five years later. More detrimental to international relations, the German government, Bülow and Kiderlen-Wächter, had compromised themselves with the note to Izvolsky of March 21, and thus buried the remainder of the old friendship. Pourtales summarized, in a letter to Bülow on April 1 the impressions Russia had gained from the German manoeuvre:

"By skilfully exploiting the situation and the weaknesses of the Russian national character, our Russian and non-Russian enemies here have coined the slogan: Germany has used Russia's present weakness and the general European wish for peace to humiliate Russia and force her capitulation to Baron Aerenthal by the clumsy threat that otherwise she will impose her will by force of arms. ..."

This talk, for the moment, does not fail to have effect. The legend that Germany threatened her with the 'mailed fist' finds credence in wide circles and has for the moment made feeling run high against us, even in circles usually well-disposed towards us." (85)

Not surprisingly, the pursuit of revenge quickly surfaced in St. Petersburg. Nelidov, the Russian Ambassador in Paris, opined in a letter to Izvolsky that Russia must attach herself "still more closely to France and England in combined resistance to further Austro-German penetration in the Balkans," yet, somewhat contradictorily, expressed the hope that

"Such resistance will not necessarily in all conditions lead to an armed conflict with the Triple Alliance. Just as Austria, with German support, concentrated her fighting strength and threatened Serbia without listening to the legitimate demands of Europe, so we, too, once we had recovered our military power, could, in concert with France and England, at the opportune moment compel Austria-Hungary to renounce her Balkan schemes and restore freedom of action to the now subjected Serbia."

The experience of the recent crisis has proved that, if military measures are already prepared in time of peace, diplomatic questions may be solved by threats and the exercise of strong pressure." (86)

It is hard to overlook the almost prophetic quality Nelidov's scenario possessed in regards to the years 1912 to 1914. Serbia did regain freedom of action - as the two Balkan wars, discussed below, prove - and it was the Triple Entente - Russia, France and Great Britain - that stood against the Dual Alliance in 1914.

But the worst result of the Bosnian affair, respectively Bülow's note to Russia, was that it, as Nelidov realized, opened the door to bluff as a means of international diplomacy; indeed, bluffing with military measures "already prepared in time of peace" became a hallmark of continental policy until the bluff was called - to everybody's subsequent grief - in 1914. Military planning for certain eventualities became an interdependent twin to foreign policy-making, but - and here was the rub - generals and diplomats hardly ever talked to each other, which made misconceptions all too likely. As late as on the eve of war itself, July 31, 1914, Kaiser Wilhelm, for example, evidenced a complete unfamiliarity with the military planning of his own nation.

Bülow certainly believed his policy having netted nothing less than a complete triumph: he had destroyed, he believed, the net of encirclement Edward VII had drawn over Germany by his successful flirtations with France and Russia. Russia was humiliated, Austria elated - for a moment; at the scheduled meeting of the Joint Ministers on September 14, Aerenthal announced that "We have regained our rightful rank among the Powers," which seems exaggerated in the light that nothing truly had changed except pride on one side and prejudice on the other. (87) Conrad still railed over the missed opportunity to discipline Serbia and prophesied the very worst of consequences for his country's failure to exploit the proper opportunity.

"As long as mankind has not reached those celestial heights at which there is no more war, there will be three kinds of wars, the reasonable, waged when it is seen that sooner or later they will be necessary and the odds are in one's favour, the unreasonable, waged when the opposite is the case. Finally there are the unavoidable

wars, forced on us by the enemy, and these usually happen when one tries to avoid the wars of the first category." (88)

Conrad was a realist and knew that the Serbian note promising peace, love and understanding wrested from its government at gunpoint was worthless. Consequently, he continued to propose war against Serbia until 1914. But for the time being, the diplomats took over in an attempt to restore the mutual relations. One part of the country's early response to the annexation affair had been the foundation of the aforementioned SRPSKA NARODNA ODBRANA [Serbian National Defence, ¶], a paramilitary, nay, quasi-military insurgency, which "organized guerrilla bands, recruited volunteers, established espionage networks within Bosnia and lobbied the government for a more aggressive national policy." (89) It had been one of Austria's demands that the terror cadres be broken up, and in late 1909 the organization transformed itself into a "cultural society." (90) The change of costume, of course, did not change the body within; the organization's pamphlets - technically illegal, hence published "underground", but available in every Belgrade café - circulated unhindered, and various schemes Aerenthal used to discredit the group as well as a Serbo-Croat faction of deputies in the Croatian Diet at Agram [today's Zagreb, ¶], who appeared to support them - trials for treason based on forged documents - fired back and, as always, only provided the insurgency with gratis propaganda. Although in the wake of the annexation affair Austria and Serbia worked on to normalizing their relations, "a deep awkwardness had settled over the two states' relations that seemed impossible to dispel," and which led straight to the crises of 1912 and 1914. (91)

The annexation crisis provoked, and its unsatisfactory ending deepened the antagonistic developments in the relations of the European powers that had steadily arisen in the post-Bismarck era, but its worst peculiarity was that it had been triggered by so trivial a cause. To summarize its effects, we must go back to Izvolsky and Aerenthal's early correspondence and the agreements of Buchlau. We know that they agreed on the essential quid pro quo - the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina for Austrian support in the Straits question - at the meeting at Buchlau on September 15 and 16, but when the scandal broke, Izvolsky denied having reached any agreement with Aerenthal. He subsequently even denied that he had been advised in advance of Aerenthal's intentions, and demanded that an international conference be convened to clarify the status of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The resulting crisis dragged on for months, and Aerenthal continued to evade Izvolsky's call for a conference that had not been foreseen in the agreement at Buchlau. The issue was resolved only by the "St. Petersburg Note" of March 1909, in which the Germans demanded that the Russians at last recognize the annexation and urge Serbia to do likewise. If they did not, Chancellor Bülow warned, then things would "take their course". This formulation hinted not just at the possibility of an Austrian war on Serbia, but, more importantly, at the possibility that the Germans would release the documents proving Izvolsky's complicity in the original annexation deal. Izvolsky immediately backed down.

Aerenthal has traditionally carried the lion's share of the responsibility for the annexation crisis. Is this fair? To be sure, the Austrian foreign minister's manoeuvres lacked diplomatic transparency. He chose to operate with the tools of the old diplomacy: confidential meetings, the exchange of pledges, and secret bilateral agreements, rather than attempting to resolve the annexation issue through an international conference involving all the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin.¹⁰ This preference for furtive agreements made it easier for Izvolsky to claim that he, and by extension Russia, had been hoodwinked by the "slippery" Austrian minister.

Yet the evidence suggests that the crisis took the course that it did because Izvolsky lied in the most extravagant fashion in order to save his job and reputation. The Russian foreign minister had made two serious errors of judgement. He had assumed, firstly, that London would support his demand for the opening of the Turkish Straits to Russian warships.¹¹ He had also grossly underestimated the impact of the annexation on Russian nationalist opinion. According to one account, he was initially perfectly calm when news of the annexation reached him in Paris on 8 October 1908.¹² It was only during his stay in London a few days later, when the British proved uncooperative and he got wind of the press response in St. Petersburg, that he realized his error, panicked, and began to construct himself as Aerenthal's dupe.

¹⁰ After the Algeiras debacle, the question was of course whether a conference offered Austria a chance of success in the first place.

¹¹ Any Russian admiral could have informed him about the fallacy of this idea, but then, diplomats and soldiers rarely talked to each other.

¹² That of Sir Arthur Nicholson, British Ambassador at St. Petersburg 1906 - 1910 (92)

Whatever the rights and wrongs of Aehrenthal's policy, the Bosnian annexation crisis was a turning point in Balkan geopolitics. It devastated what remained of Austro-Russian readiness to collaborate on resolving Balkan questions; from this moment onwards, it would be much more difficult to contain the negative energies generated by conflicts among the Balkan states. It also alienated Austria's neighbour and ally, the Kingdom of Italy. There had long been latent tensions between the two states - Italian minority rights in Dalmatia and Croatia-Slavonia and power-political rivalry in the Adriatic were the two most important bones of contention - but the annexation crisis prompted calls for Italian compensation and kindled Italian resentments to a new pitch of intensity. In the last years before the outbreak of war, it became increasingly difficult to reconcile Italian and Austrian objectives on the Balkan Adriatic coast.

The Germans were initially noncommittal on the annexation question, but they soon rallied energetically to Austria-Hungary's support, and this, too, was an ambivalent development. It had the desired effect of dissuading the Russian government from attempting to extract further capital out of the annexation crisis, but in the longer run, it reinforced the sense in both St. Petersburg and London that Austria was the satellite of Berlin - a perception that would play a dangerous role in the crisis of 1914.

In Russia, the impact of the crisis was especially deep and lasting. Defeat in the war with Japan in 1904-5 had shut off all prospects of expansion in the Far East for the foreseeable future. The Anglo-Russian Convention signed by Izvolsky and the British ambassador Sir Arthur Nicolson on 31 August 1907 had established the limits of Russian influence in Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet. The Balkans remained (for the moment) the only arena in which Russia could still pursue a policy focused on projecting imperial power.

Intense public emotions were invested in Russia's status as protector of the lesser Slavic peoples, and underlying these in the minds of the key decision-makers was a deepening preoccupation with the question of access to the Turkish Straits. Misled by Izvolsky and fired up by chauvinist popular emotion, the Russian government and public opinion interpreted the annexation as a brutal betrayal of the understanding between the two powers, an unforgivable humiliation and an unacceptable provocation in a sphere of vital interest. In the years that followed the Bosnian crisis, the Russians launched a programme of military investment so substantial that it triggered a European arms race. (93)

While Austria and Turkey were bargaining over the amount of the Bosnian indemnity, the former's troops evacuated their garrisons in the Sanjak of Novibazar. The Ottomans, their attention diverted by continuing internal struggle, were anxious that the area might fall to Serbia, which subsequently, united with Montenegro, would not only establish herself as the principal attractor of southern Slav nationalism, but would also gain access to the Adriatic Sea. Hence the Ottomans asked Austria to continue the occupation for three more years, after which they would be able to deploy their own troops, keeping Serbia and Montenegro geographically separated. Yet to everybody's surprise, Aehrenthal denied the request - he thought that Serbian-Bulgarian enmity by itself would guarantee a stalemate; none of the two would allow the other to seize foreign territory. This, however, proved an unfortunate misconception, as 1912 was to prove.

That the Russian public did not know the real story of the annexation did not nullify the Russian government's serious loss of face, and during a visit of the Tsar to the Italian royal couple in October 1909, Izvolsky contacted Tittoni on the subject of a possible Italo-Russian understanding. They quickly reached consensus and on October 24 concluded a secret protocol, in which Italy and Russia agreed on the maintenance of the status quo on the Balkan, vowed that eventual changes must follow the principle of nationality, i.e. excluding third-party annexations, that they would cooperate in opposing any power that attempted to disturb the status quo, that they would consult each other before entering into new diplomatic commitments and that, for Russia's goodwill in the Tripolitania and Cyrenaica questions relevant to Italy, she would receive Italian support for a change in the topic of the Turkish Straits. The objectives of the agreement would have been familiar to Aehrenthal; they were an Italian version of the Buchlau compact - support in territorial questions in exchange for Italian help in opening the passage through the Sea of Marmara.

Not even her ally France would learn of the Italo-Russian agreement until November 1912. But since accident or treason might reveal the pact - which Italy could not hope to explain to Germany and Austria's satisfaction - Tittoni attempted to pre-emptively obscure its effects on Austria by, somewhat hastily, entering into a treaty with the latter over

the Sanjak - in regards to which Italy, for the moment, made no territorial demands. In the future, however, things might change.

"If ... in consequence of the impossibility of maintaining the status quo in the Balkans, Austria-Hungary were obliged, by the force of events, to proceed to a temporary or permanent occupation of the Sanjak of Novibazar, this occupation will only take place after a previous accord with Italy, based on the principle of a compensation." (94)

The compensation Italy desired, if she were to support Austria in the Sanjak, or against Serbia, by either neutrality or the force of arms, was stipulated by Giuseppe Avarna, the Italian ambassador in Vienna, in a note to his superior, the new Italian foreign minister Count Francesco Guicciardini (1909 - 1910), as that Austria would "give us suitable compensation by the cession of the regions of Austria inhabited by populations of Italian tongue," and "that it makes a more definite agreement with us on Albania, neutralizing her, so that she will be forever immune from all Austro-Hungarian supremacy or occupation." (95)

If it is hard to understand what motivated Aehrenthal not only to give up the Sanjak in the first place, despite Turkey's exhortations to keep it - and with it the power to keep Serbia and Montenegro geographically separated - it is even more of an enigma why he made an eventual repossession of the area contingent on Italian approval, which he could not at all count on as certain. Indeed, on November 9, 1910, perhaps in imitation of Bismarck's famous declaration, he informed the Powers in a circular that, with the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Austria-Hungary had "reached saturation point, from the territorial standpoint." (96) This all but invited Italy to further her designs on Albania.

Yet the Bosnian crisis was not the sole diplomatic affair to occupy the headlines of the German and Austrian press in late 1908; the Kaiser himself provided entertainment for reporters and readers alike. On October 28, 1908, the DAILY TELEGRAPH published an interview with Wilhelm over the state of Anglo-German relations, in which the monarch successfully reinforced the prejudices of those who believed that he had some screws loose. Asked about the nation's opinion of England, he declared that "the prevailing sentiment amongst my own people is not friendly to England," and that "it may even be that England herself will be glad that Germany has a fleet." (97) Such extremely unlikely predictions caused an outcry in a Germany that was at the end of her tether tolerating Wilhelm's role as the "irresponsible chatterbox" of the nation. (98) Bülow tendered his resignation, which the Kaiser declined to accept, but the chancellor found clear words in his memoirs:

"All the warnings, all the dismal prophecies of the man he [Wilhelm, ¶] had dismissed from office, Prince Bismarck, returned to the public mind. A dark foreboding ran through many Germans that such incautious, overhasty - such stupid, even puerile speech and action on the part of the Supreme Head of State could lead only to one thing - catastrophe." (99)

But Bülow drew no consequences from the matter - although the Kaiser was, for a moment, ready to abdicate or, at the least, open to submit to a future supervision of his public statements. Bülow convinced him to remain in office, if only to prevent the succession of the Crown Prince, who was deemed an even greater danger to the nation. Yet the opportunity to correct Wilhelm's statements and, perhaps, come to a naval understanding with Albion passed, and Bülow resigned on July 14, 1909, after losing his parliamentary majority. He was replaced by Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg.

The new man was of different ilk than the aggressive but fumble-prone Bülow; the Crown Prince described the new chancellor as "a bureaucrat whose soul was full of melancholy and irresolution ... prone to passive fatalism, who checked all initiative with the saying that we are dependent on God's will." (100) That was, perhaps, a bit too harsh, for Hollweg tried his best - how much his best was worth, however, was a different question altogether. He continued the Anglo-German negotiations Bülow had opened during his last year in office, but since Tirpitz would not consent to a mutual Anglo-German ship-building holiday, nothing came out of it.

The focus of European foreign policy then shifted back to Morocco. In early 1911, the Sultan felt threatened by hostile tribes and asked Paris for military assistance. His request had barely landed on the minister's table at the Quai d'Orsey when Germany filed her first objections. She regarded an eventual French intervention as violative of the only

recently concluded Franco-German agreement of February 9, 1909, in which France affirmed the territorial integrity of Morocco and the Sultan's sovereignty while promising economic equality to German firms; Germany in turn recognized France's special interest in the area and her authority in the maintenance of law and order.

In April 1911, the French sent a few troops to Fez in order to stabilize the Sultan's regime, and Jules Cambon in Berlin informed Kiderlen-Wächter, who had succeeded Schön as Foreign Minister in 1910, as a matter of routine. Kiderlen replied obliquely that, in his opinion, France's unilateral step nullified the Algeciras treaty and restored "to the signatory Powers their freedom of action." (101) It was a nebulous statement that seemingly neither affirmed nor denied the French policing rights in Morocco, and initially neither the German nor the French government paid much attention to the sentiments of the new foreign minister.

In a memorandum he sent to Wilhelm on May 3, 1911, however, the freshman unveiled a plan. If the French would not speedily withdraw their troops - Kiderlen was fairly sure that they could not, for it would mean to abandon the Sultan - Germany should declare a violation of the Treaty of Algeciras and demand territorial compensation. In the meanwhile, she would occupy the harbours of Agadir and Mogador as collateral.

The protection of local German businessmen and residents would necessitate that the occupation of the ports be secured by the presence of warships, for whose subsequent removal the French would, naturally, have to pay extra or give up more territory. Kiderlen's plan promised the acquisition of land without the risk of war and hence easily met with Wilhelm's approval.

It started well enough. Although the French declared their eventual occupation of Fez, beginning on May 21, 1911, a temporary measure, their instructors were to remain in the country for some time to train the Sultan's troops. Kiderlen protested but quickly settled with Cambon on German compensation in the form of some land in the French Congo. But when the ambassador travelled to Paris for consultation with his superiors, Kiderlen received Wilhelm's consent to an armed demonstration and sent the old German cruiser PANTHER to Agadir, where she dropped anchor on July 1.

The dramatic gesture alarmed the world in general and France, England and Russia in particular, but Paris's surprise turned to anger when Kiderlen demanded nothing less than the whole French Congo "in return for waiving Germany's claims in Morocco, and indicated his readiness to 'proceed very forcibly.'" (102) The Kaiser, alarmed by Albert Ballin, forbade the use of threats in an urgent telegram, and Kiderlen had to back down when France indicated her disinclination to accede to such outrageous demands and informed London and St. Petersburg of the German minister's histrionics.

Initially, the responses to the French complaints were subdued, in England as well as in Russia, none of whom showed interest to go to war over some colonial issue. Izvolsky, now the Tsar's ambassador in Paris, counselled restraint, and Grey, seconding the Russian's disinterest, wrote to Bertie, his man in Paris, that:

"We are bound and prepared to give [France] diplomatic support, but we cannot go to war in order to set aside the Algeciras Act and put France in virtual possession of Morocco. If she can get that for herself, we are bound not to stand in her way. ...

But if we go to war it must be in defence of British interests. An attempt by Germany to humiliate France might affect British interests so seriously that we should have to resist it, but there is no case for that at present. ...

The best solution would be a deal between France and Germany based upon some concession in the French Congo. The next best would be a tripartite partition of Morocco between France, Spain, and Germany. France would get the lion's share." (103)

Nicolson, now Permanent Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, saw it different: he warned that Germany might turn Agadir into a fortress capable of blocking British trade with Central and South America. On July 21, a hawkish David Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, threatened war:

"If a situation were to be forced upon us, in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated where her interests were vitally affected as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure." (104)

Then things went topsy-turvy in London, made worse by the fact that Metternich, the German Ambassador, seemed to receive contradictory instructions for his subsequent meetings with Grey. These instructions apparently forced Metternich's statement to Grey of July 25 that Germany insisted upon her conditions "even by force of arms." (105) Whatever the truth of this announcement, war seemed to approach and the English government alarmed the military. From July 20 on, British and French general staffs discussed the moving of the British army to the continent, while a few days later, on July 25, Grey alarmed the fleet via McKenna, the First Sea Lord. Neither France nor Germany followed the British example. To the contrary: Wilhelm's counsellors warned him of the possibly serious consequences of Kiderlen's follies, and the Kaiser seems to have disciplined his foreign minister by the blunt threat of firing him. At any rate, when Jules Cambon met Kiderlen on August 2 and offered compensation in the Congo basin, Kiderlen accepted the offer as a basis for negotiations. (106)

The horse-trading which followed took many weeks until an accord was signed on November 4, in which Germany received a corridor in the Congo that connected her colony Cameroon to the Congo River and France received, in exchange, a tiny bit of the Cameroon itself. The outcome of Kiderlen's design was a complete failure; as Luigi Albertini remarked, Kiderlen had "aroused English mistrust and strengthened the Entente without enhancing German prestige," and all that for the gain of 100,000 or so square miles of useless African forest. (107)

France was the true winner, for she had now acquired Morocco - except for a slice in the north, opposite of Gibraltar, which belonged to Spain - and was able to consolidate the new acquisition with Algeria and Tunisia and thus create a French-speaking Northwest Africa. Nonetheless, the affair brought down the French Prime Minister Joseph Caillaux, whose initial handling of the crisis had been found wanting, who was replaced by Raymond Poincaré, France's great revanchist, who went on to become President of the Republic in 1913. The importance of the Agadir affair lay not at all in itself; the crisis acted as a catalyst for the tumultuous years of local European conflicts that would eventually coalesce in the outbreak of the catastrophe of 1914. "The first and most obvious consequence," wrote L.C.F. Turner, "was Italy's decision to assert her right to 'compensation', promised in the Franco-Italian agreement of 16 December 1900, which laid down that Italy could occupy Tripolitania and Cyrenaica if France extended her influence in Morocco." (108)¹³

Never mind that Tripolitania and the Cyrenaica belonged to the Ottoman Empire and that, of course, neither France nor Great Britain nor Russia were legally entitled to pass it on to Italy; more or less discrete inquiries by Italian diplomats in London, Paris and St. Petersburg ensured that these nations were cognizant of Italy's intentions and abetted in the matter, for the pious reason that if they did Italy a favour now, they obtained a chip they could redeem later. To create a pretext for her interference, Rome proposed to Constantinople that an Italian company was to receive an order for the extension of the port facilities at Tripoli, and when the Turks declined the offer, Italy counterclaimed that they mistreated her nationals and sabotaged her investments. On September 23, 1911, Rome sent a formal note of cease and desist to the Ottoman Ambassador, claiming violations of her sovereign rights, and in the night of September 26 to 27 issued an ultimatum, "which intimidated to Constantinople that consent must be given within twenty-four hours to an Italian military occupation of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica." (109)

When the Turks failed to reply in time, the Italian government feigned surprise and declared war early in the morning of September 29. Italian warships attacked Turkish small craft at Preveza on the same day, and on October 3, 1911, "at exactly 3.13 in the afternoon, the [Italian cruiser] BENEDETTO BRIN fired the first shell at the Red Fort that stood on

¹³ Earlier already, Turner remarked, "The Triple Alliance had conceded Italy's right to take such action, in the various renewal agreements since 1887. The Russo-Italian secret agreement at Racconigi in October 1909 had agreed on common action to preserve the status quo in the Balkans, and had recognized Italian interests in the Libyan shore." (110) Since Libya belonged to the Ottoman Empire, it was, for diplomatic purposes, a part of the Balkan.

the spit of land enclosing Tripoli harbour. ... The city of Tripoli fell after perfunctory resistance and was occupied by 1,700 Italian marines only forty-eight hours after the commencement of hostilities." (111)

Yet the war that had begun so well proved difficult in its continuation. "The populations on or near the coast proved hostile," Albertini observed, "and were effectively organized with reinforcements of men, arms and money. Thus the Turkish garrison by degrees transformed itself into a vast framework of armed Arab bands, and both regulars and irregulars who, profiting by their knowledge of the difficult terrain, showed themselves to be foes who could go on fighting for a long time." (112) Soon the Italian occupation force numbered 100,000 men.

The campaign "dragged on amid hair-raising reports of Italian atrocities against the Arab population," and the delay changed the perceptions of the international community. (113) The initial reactions of the Powers had been mixed: England was cautious, France cordial, Russia supportive, Germany and Austria critical. But the increasing inconsistency between Italy's military difficulties and her optimistic press releases began to trouble many observers. Turkey countered Italy's proclamation of the annexation of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica of November 5, 1911, with a circular to the capitals of the Powers, protesting Italian violations not only of the Treaty of Paris of 1856, concluded in the aftermath of the Crimean War, but also of the Treaty of Berlin 1878 regarding the status quo of the Ottoman Empire. "That both these treaties," Albertini commented, "were called in question was recognized by Grey and de Selves [the new French foreign minister], but neither of them took exception to this." (114) Might made right.

The anti-Italian faction in Vienna, led by Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the Chief of Staff Conrad, was advocating war against the southern neighbour. The latter had already sent a year before the Italian attack on Turkey, on February 7, 1910, Emperor Francis Joseph a memorandum in which he recommended to "deal the main blow at Italy while Russia was not yet prepared." (115) On September 24, 1911, Conrad sent Francis Joseph and Aerenthal another memorandum, warning of an Italy - growing more powerful - having her eyes on the Austrian provinces of Friuli, Trentino and Dalmatia, as well as on Albania, the latter in violation of her agreements with the Dual Monarchy. Aerenthal strove to defeat the aims of the war lobby by pointing out that the Italo-Austrian agreement of 1902 had actually granted Italy a free hand in Tripolitania and could not now be revoked. The Emperor supported Aerenthal, but since Conrad continued to produce memoranda advocating war, he was promoted out of the way, to the mostly decorative post of Inspector General of the Army. (116)

The Italian campaign in Libya failed to improve much, and, as military men sometimes do, her generals began to toy with the idea that better success might be found on a different front, and gazed with longing upon the Turkish Dodecanese Islands, in the Aegean Sea. Their operations in Africa had lately been hampered by a very active contraband business the French had set up in Tunisia, whence they supported the Turks by selling them weapons, ammunition and other war supplies. When, on January 16 and 18, 1912, the Italian cruiser AGORDAT seized two French freighters, the CARTHAGE and the MANOUBA in the western Mediterranean, with more contraband and even some Turkish soldiers on board, the two countries arrived at a full-blown international crisis that could be repaired only with difficulty.

The attention of the Italian admiralty now centred on the Aegean Sea - the Dodecanese Islands or Southern Sporades in the Sea of Crete, and the Dardanelles themselves - the latter of which the Italian navy dreamed to force. This, naturally, met with England's and Austria's opposition which only slowly, by German intervention in Vienna, was weakened down to a tacit consent to an Italian attack by torpedo boats on April 15 and 16, which were to probe the defences as well as try and sink the Turkish fleet if they encountered it. That they did not: "Italian battleships advanced to give battle to the Turkish fleet and cut off its retreat; but it did not come out. Instead, the shore batteries on both sides fired on the Italian units which returned their fire for two hours," withdrawing thereafter, Albertini remarks mockingly, to "fulfil their other duties." (117)

The Italians subsequently informed the world that they had not really tried to force the straits; their true plan was to occupy the Dodecanese Islands. Stampalia was invaded and occupied on April 23, and Rhodes, the biggest of the islands, on May 4. By the end of the month, the ten other major islands were in Italian hands, the troops facing no resistance. In the night of July 18 to 19, Italian torpedo boats undertook a second foray into the Dardanelles, yet the enterprise ended with the same negative result. Attempts to occupy the islands closer to the mouth of the strait, Samos, Mitylene, Lemnos,

and Chios, however, met with the diplomatic opposition of France, Austria and Great Britain, who suspected that Italy, once it had them, would not give them up later. But now the Ottomans' domestic difficulties came to Rome's aid. Over the objections of her own military and the Arab freelancers of the desert, the Turks agreed to a cease-fire on October 15, which was followed by the Treaty of Ouchy three days later; its main provision was the Turkish cessation of Libya. The Powers indicated their agreement by October 20, and the first part of the War of the Turkish Succession was over.

Yet in the six months prior to the Italian attack on the Ottomans, the aftermath of the Agadir affair had given rise to changes in the European political equilibrium that only evidenced their significance later. French relations to Germany had become more uncompromising - if that was possible - under the aegis of Raymond Poincaré, who served as both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of France from 1912 to 1913. Albertini describes him as follows:

He was, indeed, no ordinary parliamentarian, striving only for his own advancement, but a man of action who, while intensely ambitious, saw for his own generation, as he once wrote, "no other reason for existence than the hope of recovering the lost provinces."

The phrase is all-revealing. In this cool-headed, hard, methodical, stubborn man of Lorraine love of country, national pride, and the thirst for revanche' against Germany submerged every other emotion. (118)

Poincaré's major aim was - naturally - the fortification of the Triple Entente with London and St. Petersburg, and his diplomatic priority # 1 the sabotage of any chance of an Anglo-German rapprochement. Attempts in such a direction were underway in late 1911 and early 1912. The uncommon intensity of London's military preparations during the Agadir crisis - that had contrasted so much against German and French military business-as-usual - had given the German ultra-nationalists a welcome opportunity to step up anti-British propaganda, and in the autumn of 1911 they had little difficulty to pass a supplementary navy bill that authorized the building of an additional three dreadnoughts between 1912 and 1914.

Although England was building two or more ships for every German one, Wilhelm, who was much more concerned about the maintenance of peace than he publicly admitted, deputized his friend Albert Ballin, head of the Hamburg-Amerika Steamship Company, to conduct informal talks with Sir Ernest Cassel, a well-connected London banker, on the subject of Anglo-German détente. Grey, Lloyd George, and the new First Sea Lord Winston Churchill consented to a memorandum Cassel took to Berlin as "a basis for negotiation," which "began with the statement that naval superiority was an essential for Great Britain. There were to be no increases in the German naval program, and possible reductions and slowing of tempo. In return England offered to raise no opposition to German colonial expansion" (119)

Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, who received Sir Cassel, had to explain that, unfortunately, the Reichstag was already discussing the new naval bill, which was likely to pass, but indicated the German desire to negotiate directly with Sir Edward Grey.¹⁴ For Grey arrived Lord Haldane, the Secretary of War, in Berlin on September 7, 1912 and entered into discussions with the Chancellor, Tirpitz, and Wilhelm. Bethmann was able to formulate a few proposals, which envisioned that the two countries would not enter into any alliances against each other, and that in the case that one of them were involved in a war with a third or more powers, the treaty partner was to observe at least benevolent neutrality and direct her efforts to a localization of the conflict. (120)

But England could not accept the navy bill, which sort of limited the options. On March 14, after much diplomatic back and forth, Grey passed on to Ambassador Metternich the text of an understanding London felt it could agree to. It ran:

"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." (121)

¹⁴ Alas, as L.C.F. Turner observed: "Sir Edward Grey could not be induced to go to Berlin - in fact apart from a brief visit to Paris in April 1914, he never set foot on the continent in his whole period of office." (122)

Yet France filed strong objections to the formula as soon as Grey informed her, for, what if she - with defensive intent, of course - would find herself obliged to strike at Germany first, what then? Would England aid her, remain neutral or, heavens beware, support Germany? No formula could be found that met with France's approval, and since Wilhelm and Tirpitz were not willing to forego the navy bill - which passed on May 14 - Bethmann found himself checkmated and Haldane returned to London with empty hands, to France's sigh of relief. The frustration of the Anglo-German talks allowed the general staffs of the Triple Entente to continue their war preparations. Albertini reports:

"On 17 January 1912, General Dubail, [the French] Chief of Staff, said to the Russian Military Attaché, Nostiz, that the political horizon was very dark and that his confidential information was most disquieting. 'He believed', wrote Nostiz, 'that war would break out in spring, and added: 'We are working as if we were going to have it.' The General added that the alliances are of a defensive nature, and that the art of diplomacy consists in arranging things so as not to appear the aggressor. On 1 February Nostiz reported that the new French Chief of Staff, General Joffre, had told him: 'Work is going on vigorously at the War Ministry, to have everything ready in case war breaks out in spring. All the arrangements for the English landing [in northern France, to render support against Germany, ¶] are made, down to the smallest detail, so that the English army can take part in the first big battle'".

The same pessimism pervaded reports from Berlin of Jules Cambon, who wrote on 21 January that the general situation was such as to make everybody dread the approach of spring. He said:

"The failing health of the Emperor of Austria, the far-reaching plans attributed to the Heir-Apparent [Archduke Franz Ferdinand, ¶], the Tripoli war, the desire of the Italian Government to extricate itself from the difficulties it had brought upon itself by mixing the disputes of others with its own, Bulgarian ambitions, the threat of trouble in Macedonia, the difficulties in Persia, the shock to the credit of China, all pointed to serious disorders in the near future and the only hope was that the gravity of the danger might lead to its being averted." (123)

The second part of the War of the Ottoman Succession had meanwhile begun in the Balkan Peninsula, where, not surprisingly, the local Slavs and Greek recognized "the Italo-Turkish conflict as a favourable chance to fulfil their own aspirations." (124) The object of their cravings was Macedonia - still Turkish - of which they all desired certain parts, and wherein they sponsored "Comitaji, or armed bands ... each of whom went about massacring the other rival nationalities." (125) Ambitions of the Young Turks to root out this bane led to an alliance between the bitter enemies, who agreed to defeat the Turks viribus unitis before returning, perhaps, to the mutual slaughter they had practised for centuries.

To unify the competing tribes and peoples against Turkey was the desire of the new Russian ambassador to Belgrade, Baron Nikolai Hartwig, an ultra-Pan-Slav agitator in the guise of a diplomat. He first brought together the Serbs with the Bulgarians, who signed a partially secret treaty in March 1912, which, for all practical purposes, allied them in an eventual war against Austria or the Turks. June of the same year saw the conclusion of a defensive Graeco-Bulgarian pact, which was in October extended to cover offensives against Turkey. Montenegro joined all these alliances.

By late 1912, Russia had thus established a Southern Slav league - supported by Greece - against Austria and Turkey, and liberally provided loans for arms at nominal interest rates. The forming of this coalition was the first achievement of the new Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov, who had succeeded Izvolsky in 1909. Sazonov was judged strikingly dissimilar by his contemporaries, depending on the influence they imagined or hoped to exercise on him. Baron Taube, a diplomat who later defected to the Ministry of Education, thought Sazonov "soft and vague," as well as "refractory to all sustained effort of thought," and "incapable of pursuing a train of reasoning to its logical conclusion." (126)

Maurice Paléologue, brother-in-law of Jules and Paul Cambon, and ambassador in St. Petersburg during the crucial years 1914-1917, described him as "simple, kindly, disinterested, scrupulously honest, and of fervent piety," although "his intelligence too often lacked a sense of reality and objectivity. ... I must add that he had not a good command of his nerves; but with calmness, confidence and gentleness he was easily quieted down." (127) Christopher Clark remarks

that not only was he young and little experienced ... "his chief qualifications for office, critical outsiders noted, were a reputation for 'mediocrity and obedience' and the fact that he was [Prime Minister] Stolypin's brother-in-law." (128)

Condescension rings in all these portrayals, but things look quite different if Sazonov is measured by his eventual achievements. As Sean McMeekin points out, his job was to make sure that - in the case of war - his country enjoyed the best possible preparation, and the following gives us an outlook on Sazonov's performance in these critical days of 1914:

Sazonov's game of deception gives us a good idea of what the Russians were really up to in July 1914. Whereas Berlin and Vienna had initially hoped to forge a localized fait accompli in Serbia before the powers could react, Sazonov's own strategy was more ambitious: it envisioned a European war, in which he must line up the most favourable coalition possible.

As Winston Churchill wrote in WORLD CRISIS, "the manoeuvre which brings an ally into the field is as serviceable as that which wins a great battle." By manipulating London into the war, Russia's foreign minister had added to the Franco-Russian coalition not only Britain's expeditionary force of six divisions but, more significantly, the world's most powerful surface navy, making possible a blockade that could throttle the economies of the Central Powers.

Then, too, London was the world's leading financial centre, which meant the Entente would have no difficulty raising loans to pay for the war, even as the Germans would have to resort largely to the printing press. On the overriding diplomatic question of July 1914 -- British belligerence or neutrality -Sazonov had outwitted Berlin and Vienna both, and it was not even close. (129)

But we're not there yet. Russia's godfatherhood of the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty could not be obscured, and initially, France complained of not having been informed a priori, as the terms of the Belle Alliance provided. Then Russia found out that the veto power she had secured in the pact might not suffice to fetter the aspirations of her Slavic client states; Nicholas commented in late June 1912 to the French ambassador, that "We shall do all we can to preserve peace; but it will probably be a waste of breath. For the Balkan populations the chance will be too tempting." (130)

The observation proved correct. When Poincaré visited Sazonov at St. Petersburg in early August 1912 and was shown the treaty, he reported back home in Paris that it "contained in germ, not only a war against Turkey, but also a war against Austria and that it gave Russia the hegemony over the two Slav States." (131) Whether or not Poincaré realized in the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty the germ for the greater war that was to come in 1914, he never said.

At any rate, the deteriorating situation in Turkey accelerated matters. The garrison of Adrianople mutinied, there were public denunciations of Turkish rule in Monastir, bombs were thrown, and in Albania a pitched battle occurred between locals and Turks, the former winning and subsequently occupying the Sanjaks of Ipek, Prizrend and Pristina as well as the town of Uskub (Skopje). Then the Young Turks government fell and the Slavs perceived an opportunity. On October 8, Montenegrin troops attacked a Turkish garrison and ten days later - the same day on which the Italian-Turkish peace was signed - the Serbian King Petar I issued a ukase ordering "his brave army to join in the Holy War to free our brethren and to ensure a better future." (132) Bulgaria and Greece declared war on Turkey the same day.

The next unanticipated event was that the Ottoman military lost, lost big, and lost on all fronts, against the predictions of western experts. About 300,000 Bulgarians thronged into the Thracian plain and concentrated on Lozengrad (Kirk-Kilisse), where in a pitched battle along a fifty-kilometre front they decisively defeated the Ottoman corps that was to cover the fortress Adrianople (Edirne) and protect the access to the isthmus on which end Constantinople was located. The Turks were forced to retire to the fortified line of Chatalja, only twenty miles from the capital, whose inhabitants could hear the roar of the Bulgarian guns [October 24 - November 2].

In Macedonia, the main Serb force advanced easily southward and at Kumanovo encountered and destroyed an Ottoman corps between October 22 and 24. The Serbs pushed on and won a few skirmishes as well as a minor battle at Prilep. Upon a request for help by the Bulgarians, who wanted to reach and occupy Salonika before their allies the Greek could do the same, but had at that moment no troops left over for the important task, the Serbian 1st Army pushed south-

westward onto the small town of Bitola, where their advance was checked by a Turkish force that had dug in and bombarded the Serbs with artillery located on the Oblakov heights. It took the Serbs ten days to overcome this position yet it turned out the last stand of the Turks in Macedonia. The Serbian 3rd Army meanwhile had invaded northern Albania where they met and supported the Montenegrins besieging the fortress Scutari. Smaller Serbian and Montenegrin units occupied the Sanjak of Novibazar, now that the Austrians had gone, and thereby - finally - united their countries.

The Greek had a sole target, Salonika, by far the largest city of Macedonia and the most important harbour between Piraeus and Constantinople. Between October 18 and November 2, their forces overran minor Turkish positions on the way northeast and began to encircle Salonika. The Bulgarian 7th Division that raced from the northeast to beat the Greeks to the prize came too late; when they sent envoys ahead with favourable surrender terms on November 10, the Turkish commander replied: "I have only one Thessaloniki, which I have already surrendered" (133) - to the Greek, it turned out, one day earlier. Less luck the latter had in Epirus, or Southern Albania, where the provincial capital of Yanina withstood several attacks and the subsequent siege.

Yet the overall picture was astonishing: within five weeks the Turks had lost all their European possessions except for the provincial capitals Adrianople, Scutari and Yanina, all of which were under siege, and the few square miles of the triangle formed by the Chatalja line and Constantinople. (134)

Peace negotiations began in London on December 16, and after six weeks or so a treaty was thought ripe for signing when the Young Turks re-overthrew the regime of Kiamil Pasha and fighting resumed. Again, luck was with the attackers; on March 6 Yanina fell and on March 26 Adrianople. Yet the Chatalja line held out, and, as Luigi Albertini summarizes,

On 31 March, at the instance of Turkey, the Great Powers agreed to lay before the Balkan allies the following preliminary peace proposals: the frontier of Turkey-in-Europe to be marked by a straight line between Enos and Midia, all territory west of the line to be ceded by Turkey to the Balkan States, except Albania, whose frontiers and whose regime should be left to the decision of the Powers; Turkey to disinterest herself completely in Crete. The Porte at once accepted these conditions, but the Balkan allies dilly-dallied for a month. However, on 14 April a ten-day, renewable armistice was concluded between Bulgaria and Turkey, pending the conclusion of peace negotiations. These went on very slowly, and only on 30 May 1913 was peace signed on the conditions proposed by the Powers. (135)

What were the consequences of the First Balkan War for Austria and Russia? For the former, the bottom fell out, literally, of a Balkan policy which had been centred on the support of Turkey as the "force of order" in the area. Austria's main concern now was to deny Serbia access to the Mediterranean Sea, on the somewhat spurious grounds that such an eventuality, which would not be covered by the principle of nationality to which the Powers had pledged themselves, would prove Serbian intentions hostile to Austria. Yet to effect such an interdiction, Austria would have to prevent a Serbo-Montenegrin link-up, but this had already happened. Her second aim was to make sure that Albania, if independent, would be independent of a Serbia grown more powerful; "publicized under the slogan 'the Balkans for the Balkan peoples', this policy offered back-up for the interdiction of a Serbian land-grab on the Adriatic, since any port that Belgrade acquired would of necessity lie in the midst of Albanian-inhabited country." (136)

The Serbian army cut a swath of casual genocide through Albanian lands to reach the sea, and by mid-November of 1912 occupied the harbour towns San Giovanni di Medua (Medva) and Durazzo (Durreas), while their Montenegrin brothers-in-arms besieged Scutari, home to 30,000 Albanians. Austrian designs to interdict the Serbian presence with military force, if necessary, were answered by a Russian trial mobilization near the Austrian border and hastily abandoned. The aforementioned London conference then took up the matter and by March 1913 a solution was hammered out, which however failed to address, after the drawing of border lines, the issue of what to do with the 100,000 Serbian troops still standing on newly-apportioned Albanian soil, or the Montenegrins who were still besieging Scutari, which they eventually gained by the surrender of the Turkish garrison on April 23. Slavic stubbornness should be overcome, eventually, by the threat of a common declaration of the Powers regarding Albania that was scheduled for May 5, 1913; on May 4, the

Montenegrin King Nikola proclaimed his decision to place "the destiny of the city of Scutari in the hands of the powers," who bestowed the city to Albania. (137)

For Russia, the Balkan Wars exacted implications on several levels. Prime Minister Stolypin had been assassinated on September 18, 1911, just before the Italian ultimatum on Turkey. His replacement was minister of finance Vladimir Kokovtsov, who struggled to accustom himself to the office, and Sazonov was recuperating from illness in Switzerland. Hence St. Petersburg was unable to find a concerted policy in the matter, which only emboldened Hartwig in Belgrade to take over de facto Russian foreign policy - to a degree that the Bulgarian minister in the Serbian capital opined that "step by step [Hartwig] took into his own hands the actual direction of the [Serbian] kingdom." (138)

Hartwig was the prime mover behind the Serbo-Bulgarian treaty, aided by his friend Spalaiković, who happened to be the Serbian ambassador in Sofia. By the time Sazonov returned, he was unable to change this policy even if he had wanted to. His interest in regards to the Straits, however, was - for the moment - directed on a renewed international conference, in which Austria, we remember, was to assist Russia as the quid pro quo for the Bosnian annexation, and London and Paris as partners of the Triple Entente. Yet it seems that all Russian foreign ministers to date had overestimated British generosity in this regard; nothing came out of it before 1916.

This reliance on peaceful means - for the moment - meant that Russia's policy during the Balkan Wars could not appear too destructive; Sazonov told Izvolsky, in October 1912, that Russia must not "present herself as rallying and unifying opposition to Turkey." (139) But that was exactly what Russia had done, even if she had to find out later that the demons she set free refused to return into the bottle. To deflect attention from Russia's sponsorship of the Balkan League, Sazonov denied them support - which, due to the military weakness of the Turks, was not necessary in the first place. But the lip-synching needed practice, as Christopher Clark recounts:

When the Balkan tiger leapt out of its cage in October 1912, Sazonov made demonstrative but largely gestural efforts to restrain it. The Russian ambassador in London was informed, on the one hand, that he should not consent to any proposals that involved Russia collaborating with Austria. At the same time, the League states were warned that they could not count on Russian assistance.

These admonitions must have sounded strange to Serbian and Bulgarian ears, given the encouragement both states had received from Russia to make common cause against the Turks. Milenko Vesnić, the Serbian envoy to France, recalled a meeting with Sazonov in Paris in October 1912, just as the war was beginning.

Speaking before a group of French officials at the Quai d'Orsay, Sazonov told Vesnić that he believed the Serbian mobilization had been an "ill-conceived démarche" and that it was crucial that the war be contained and brought to a swift close. Irritated but undaunted, Vesnić reminded Sazonov that the Russian foreign ministry had had "full knowledge of the agreement struck between Serbia and Bulgaria."

Embarrassed - French officials were present! - Sazonov replied that this was true, but that it applied only to the first treaty, which was "merely defensive" - a dubious assertion, to say the least.

Russian diplomacy was playing two roles -- instigator and peacekeeper -- at the same time. Sazonov told Sofia that he did not object to a Balkan war as such, but was concerned about timing: a Balkan war might trigger broader consequences, and Russia was not yet militarily ready to risk a general conflagration.

The confusion generated by Sazonov's own ambivalent messaging was compounded by the enthusiastic warmongering of Hartwig and the Russian military attaché in Sofia, who both encouraged their respective interlocutors to believe that if things did go wrong, Russia would not leave the Balkan "little brothers" to fend for themselves. It was reported that Nekliudov, the Russian minister in Sofia, "wept" for joy when the Serbo-Bulgarian mobilizations were announced. (140)

The worst possible consequences of a Balkan war, of course, were its eventual spreading on the continent, and France was somewhat miffed that St. Petersburg kept her uninformed about Hartwig's and Nekliudov's perilous machinations. Already on March 13, 1912, Poincaré had complained to Izvolsky that:

"... the Government of the Republic has always interpreted our alliance in the sense that any initiative not foreseen in the original pact, i.e., any enterprise of general policy which does not constitute a reply to an actual or imminent attack by Germany, lays on both allies the preliminary obligation to concert together." (141)

That was a rebuke as sharp as they come amongst allies, and Sazonow promised to behave better in the future. He was quickly able to test his resolution, when Poincaré visited St. Petersburg in early August 1912, concerned about the military implications of the Franco-Russian alliance. As Albertini recounts, he told Sazonov that, "although no treaty existed between France and England, England had given a verbal pledge to aid France with all her land and sea forces if Germany attacked her," but stressed that "public opinion in France would not allow the Government of the Republic to decide on military action over purely Balkan questions if Germany did not intervene in the conflict and did not, of her own initiative, provoke the application of the casus foederis." (142)

That, however, meant that "if the Balkan States go to war and Austria attacks them and Russia goes to their aid, France will not move, having no duty nor interest to do so. But if, in consequence of Russian intervention against Austria, Germany enters the fray, then France will without hesitation recognize the casus foederis and ... will bring England in with her." (143) Therefore, by convincing any Balkan nation to provoke an Austrian attack, France and Russia were in the position to begin the planned war against Germany and Austria at any time of their choosing - and were assured of British assistance and complicity.

This evidenced itself when, in accordance with this scenario, the French North Sea and Channel fleets moved - from the Atlantic port of Brest - to Toulon in the Mediterranean Sea, in September 1912; a manoeuvre which Poincaré explained to Izvolsky as the "final development and completion of the agreements reached between the French and British naval experts." (144) The problem that arose was that the change of station gave away the existence of the Anglo-French military cooperation, which Grey had kept secret from his cabinet. In his memoirs, he professes innocence:

"Ministers who now heard of these military conversations for the first time suspected that there was something to conceal. If the conversations really did not commit the country, why should the knowledge of them have been withheld? There was a demand that the fact of the military conversations being non-committal should be put in writing." (145)

The knowledge of the staff conferences, of course, had been withheld exactly because else there would have been no conferences. Grey then composed a letter, had it approved by cabinet, and sent it to Paul Cambon, the French ambassador. It read:

"From time to time in recent years the French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has always been understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the other by armed force."

We have agreed that the consultation between experts is not, and ought not to be, regarded as an engagement that commits either Government to action in a contingency that has not arisen and may never arise. The disposition, for instance, of the French and British fleets respectively at the present moment is not based on an agreement to cooperate in war."

You [Cambon] have, however, pointed out that if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, it might become essential to know whether it could, in that event, depend on the armed assistance of the other."

I agree that, if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and, if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common. If these measures involved action, the plans of the general staffs

would at once be taken into consideration, and the Governments would then decide what effect should be given to them." (146)

Yet given the fact that Izvolsky remarked to Sazonov, on December 5, that "the Anglo-French military agreement is of as definite and complete a character as the Franco-Russian agreement," (147) one must ask: whom was Grey trying to kid? Apparently, he had success with his cabinet colleagues, but more important - and with dire consequences - he did fool a few Germans. In July 1914 some high-ranking German politicians and generals thought that England might be kept neutral. Interestingly, Albertini interprets Grey's letter as a sign of the "isolationist current in the English Cabinet," i.e. a disavowal of exactly the strategic situation it contemplated. (148)

This is the cart before the horse - Grey was the head of the anti-German fronde, not an isolationist. There was only one game in town - France and Russia against Germany, and the only open question was with or without England. Some of the wrong assumptions of German foreign policy in the fateful July of 1914 were consequences of British political opacity. Had the German government been made aware of the extent and intensity of Franco-British military cooperation, Bethmann-Hollweg had had an argument against the - disastrous - escalation that was set in motion by supporting Austria. Essentially, Grey's note argues that there is no binding agreement - nobody had presumed to suggest the existence of one - but he clearly admits that France and Great Britain have taken measures for a certain scenario; the only existing scenario, however, was war with Germany, and it is not clear how Albertini comes to the conclusion that the above-note portrays anything else but a Franco-British military alliance, or, rather, a Franco-British-Russian alliance.¹⁵

We have left the First Balkan War on May 30, 1913, when peace was signed "on the conditions proposed by the Powers," and now can complete Albertini's sentence, "only to be torn up immediately by all the members of the Balkan League." (149) The division of spoils, especially of Macedonia and the area between Salonika and Adrianople which provided access to the Aegean and hence the Mediterranean Sea, became Paris's Golden apple. The danger of a widening of hostilities, which seemed great in late 1912, when the Russian Minister of War Sukhomlinov was close to convince the Tsar to order mobilization against Austria - which herself was close to declaring mobilization against Russia during a meeting of the Joint Ministers on May 2, 1913 - had abated with the progress made by the peace conference, but deteriorated again as soon as Serbia demanded from Bulgaria a larger part of Macedonia than their treaty had envisioned. The Greek-Bulgarian problem was even bigger, for their pre-war treaty of May 29 1912, had not discussed the apportionment of eventual loot at all - which was the reason for the race to Salonika.

Chances for a permanent state of peace hence were nonexistent, and hostilities reopened on the night of June 29 to 30, 1913, with a Bulgarian attack on the nearest Serbian and Greek positions Tsar Ferdinand had ordered without informing his government. Whatever was to transpire now depended much on Austria and Russia. Austria played Bulgaria against Serbia, which annoyed the Russians who subsequently supported Serbia. Soon Romania and the Turks attacked Bulgaria as well, and under the onslaught of four adversaries Sofia experienced defeat. On July 21 Tsar Ferdinand telegraphed to the Romanian King Carol his desire for peace, if possible including Serbia and Greece.

When the latter continued to advance into Bulgaria, Austria threatened intervention and so did Russia - at least pro forma. Envoys of the belligerents then convened in Bucharest and on July 31 an armistice was called (there remained a problem with Serbian troops on territory that had been allocated to Albania, as we will see). Austria still dreaded the emergence of a greater Serbia that might include most of Albania, Montenegro, and western Macedonia, but her policy was marked by disparity: Conrad¹⁶ argued in favour of attacking Serbia but lost to the anti-Italian faction, which included the heir apparent, Francis Ferdinand - who called Albania a "poverty stricken grazing ground for goats" - and supported the archduke's idea of integrating the Southern Slavs into the Monarchy as citizens, not prisoners-of-war. (150) This notion - trialism - was of course the nightmare of the Hungarians. Foreign Minister Berchtold found himself between the chairs and thus his policies were not free of contradiction and reverses, although, in the long run, his Hungarian sympathies won the day and shaped his anti-Serbian policy. But he tended to thoughtlessness, which created fear in Germany that "from one moment to another, they might find themselves involved in some serious affair without previous warning, without vital

¹⁵ Poincaré conveyed to Izvolsky that: "The moment at which France will have to draw the sword is exactly laid down by the Franco-Russian military agreement, and ... the French Ministers feel not the slightest doubt nor the slightest hesitation." (151)

¹⁶ He was reinstated as Austrian Chief of Staff on December 7, 1912.

Austrian interests being at stake and with Austria appearing to be the Power which offered the provocation." (152) Bethmann-Hollweg took the drastic step to remind Berchtold, in a letter of February 10, 1913, that the Russians' traditional support of the Slavs would make it impossible for her to tolerate an Austrian attack on Serbia. The consequences would

*"... result in a war between the Triplice - sustained by Italy probably **not** with great enthusiasm - and the Powers of the Triple Entente, in which Germany would have to bear the full brunt of the French and English offensive. Your Excellency will understand that this prospect makes it my duty to address the request to Your Excellency to be so good as to inform me of the line of policy the Royal and Imperial Government intends to take in the further course of the present crisis." [Emphases in original] (153)*

The termination of the Balkan Wars I & II depended chiefly upon the Conference of the London Ambassadors the Powers had agreed to form in late 1912, which held its inaugural meeting on December 12, 1912 and a further sixty-three meetings until August 13, 1913.¹⁷ "It passed through stormy scenes," Albertini commented, "but in the end settled all the problems related by the Balkan wars." (154) In the final period of the Balkan Wars, the outstanding problem was the relation between Austria and Serbia - the question whether Austria would attack the latter if no satisfactory peace formula could be arrived at - and this depended chiefly upon the measures taken by the conference in London, which ... had resolved to set up two Commissions to trace the frontiers, one of Southern and the other of Northern Albania. But whereas in London the southern line had not been definitively drawn, the northern line had been clearly laid down. In spite of this the Serbs continued to maintain troops in zones assigned to Albania, on grounds that these constituted an excellent strategic line." (155)

For their resumption of casual genocide, the Serbian occupation troops were soon facing an Albanian insurgency - the question is whether they intentionally provoked it. At any rate, the occupiers took it as a pretext for resuming military preparations that, at least in Berchtold's eyes, supported the urgent suspicion that they meant to remain in Albania and thus at the Mediterranean coast for good. On October 3, 1913, Berchtold brought the matter to the attention of the Joint Ministers, presenting the alternative of letting Albania fall to Serbia or to issue an ultimatum. If the Serbian troops were not withdrawn from Albanian soil in a week, Vienna would declare war.

He received support for the latter plan from the Hungarian ministers, in particular from Count Stephan Tisza, who, after a stint as Hungarian Prime Minister in 1904, had just re-entered the office. His Austrian colleague Karl Stuerghk seconded. After some diplomatic back-and-forth, Berchtold instructed his Chargé d'Affaires in Belgrade, Wilhelm von Storck, to present the Serbs, on October 18, an Austrian note reminding them of their duty to follow the London rulings and to evacuate Albania forthwith.

"It is indispensable in the eyes of the Imperial and Royal Government that the Serbian Government shall proceed to the immediate recall of the troops who have advanced beyond the frontiers fixed by the London meeting and who consequently occupy territories forming part of Albania.

The Imperial and Royal Government is pleased to hope that the Serbian Government will not delay in proceeding the total evacuation of Albanian territory within a period of one week. Failing this, the Imperial and Royal Government will to its great regret find itself compelled to have recourse to the appropriate means to assure the fulfilment of its demand." (156)

Due to its unilateral character, the Austrian démarche provoked a bit of diplomatic astonishment - it was roundly criticized that Berchtold should have rather addressed the powers and given them an opportunity to espouse multilateral proceedings than to go ahead on his own. Yet there was a widespread international consensus that Serbia could not be allowed to retain Albanian territory - even Russia agreed - and a week later, on October 25, 1913, the Serbian government meekly informed the powers that her troops had been withdrawn. The Second Balkan War was over.

Yet despite the success of the Serbian ultimatum, the aftermath of the wars left the Dual Monarchy relative to the other powers in a weakened position. The Hungarians disallowed any practical solution of the Southern Slav issue - which

¹⁷ Members were Grey, Imperiali for Italy, Mensdorff for Austria, Lichnowsky, successor of Metternich, for Germany, Benckendorff for Russia and Paul Cambon for France. (157)

could only be the one or other form of trialism - and while Austria had gained the respect of some for her courageous ultimatum, many more had seen in the years and months preceding it proof of her - perhaps inevitable - decay. The situation of her armed forces in particular gave rise to headaches. Christopher Clark summarizes:

The partial mobilizations of the Balkan War crises had imposed immense financial strains on the monarchy. The extra costs for 1912-13 came to 390 million crowns, as much as the entire yearly budget for the Austro-Hungarian army, a serious matter at a time when the monarchy's economy was entering a recession.

In this connection we should recall that Austria-Hungary spent very little on its army: of the great powers, only Italy spent less. It called up a smaller percentage of its population each year (0.27 per cent) than France (0.63 per cent) or Germany (0.46 per cent). The years 1906-12 had been boom years for the empire's economy, but very little of this wealth had been siphoned into the military budgets.

The Empire fielded fewer infantry battalions in 1912 than it had in 1866, when its armies had faced the Prussians and the Italians at Königgrätz and Custoza, despite a twofold increase in population over the same period. Dualism was one reason for this - the Hungarians consistently blocked military growth; the pressure to placate the nationalities with expensive infrastructural projects was another block on military investment.

To make matters worse, mobilizations in summer and/or early autumn gravely disrupted the agrarian economy, because they removed a large portion of the rural workforce from harvest work. In 1912-13, the critics of the government could argue, peacetime mobilizations had incurred huge costs and disrupted the economy without doing much to enhance the empire's security.

Tactical mobilizations, it seemed, were an instrument that the monarchy could no longer afford to deploy. But if that was the case, then the government's flexibility in handling crises on the Balkan periphery must be gravely diminished. Without the intermediate option of purely tactical mobilizations, the decision-making process would inevitably become less nuanced. It would be a matter of peace or war. (158)

In how far would this narrowing of options influence the greater picture, i.e. the Triple Alliance? Her last renewal had occurred on December 5, 1912, only six weeks after the Italo-Turkish Peace of Ouchy and in the midst of the First Balkan War. The early date - the pact would not have run out until July 8, 1914 - could be explained by Italy's wish that her allies' consent to her recent African acquisitions. Kiderlen-Wächter and the Italian Foreign Minister San Giuliano thus composed a new (Second) Final Protocol, which had as its seminal point: "It is understood that the territorial status quo in the North African regions on the Mediterranean mentioned in Article IX of the Treaty of 28 June 1902, implies the sovereignty of Italy over Tripolitania and Cyrenaica." (159)

Yet both Germany and Austria had doubts as to whether Italy's promises could be trusted if the fat were in the fire. While discussing scenarios with an Austrian diplomat, Kiderlen acknowledged that, if there were a war...

... I do not now believe that in this event Italy will simply tear up the treaty of the Triple Alliance; the personality of the King offers security against that. I believe rather that Italy will slowly mobilize and play the waiting game, so to speak. If the first decisive battle with France should turn out favourably to Germany, Italy will cooperate against France. If, however, France should score a great initial victory, Italy's attitude towards us might possibly become alarming." (160)

Italy figured prominently in the three urgent foreign issues the Dual Monarchy faced in the aftermath of the Balkan wars: first, would Serbia attempt to merge with Montenegro, to win a Mediterranean port, second, would Italy attempt the colonialization of Albania under some pretext, and third, could the relations to Romania be improved over the objections of the Hungarians? During the heydays of Serbian occupation of foreign areas during the summer of 1913, Gottlieb von Jagow - successor of Kiderlen-Wächter, who had unexpectedly died - had counselled patience, and brought to Berchtold's attention that "developments in the Balkans are almost beyond expectation favourable to Austria-Hungary: the Balkan League is split, Russian influence has received a severe blow, and the Balkan States, now tearing one another to pieces, will be so weakened by the war that they will need a long time to recover." (161)

But Berchtold's favourite scenario - Austria and Bulgaria destroying Serbia viribus unitis - came to naught when the latter lost most of the lands she had gained in the first war and found herself sidelined - for the time being. The winners of the Balkan wars were Greece and Serbia, the latter of which, despite her retreat from the parts of Albania she had illegally occupied, finished the year 1913 by having almost doubled her size - fruits of her courage or recklessness. Wilhelm was aware of the dangers a resurgent Serbia might present to Austrian Balkan policy; in a conversation with an Austrian diplomat on December 16, 1913, he observed that

"... the Serbs must by one means or another be harnessed to the carriage of the Monarchy; they must also remain conscious that they are being kept in order by a firm will, which on the one hand offers them a powerful hand of friendship but on the other is instantly prepared to set its troops on the march at the first hostile provocation.

The final decision in the Southeast of Europe may, we know, sooner or later call for a serious passage of arms and we Germans will then stand with you and behind you, but it cannot be a matter of indifference to us whether twenty divisions of your army are tied down by an offensive against Southern Slavism or not." (162)

Willy was reading the tea leaves again, in his patented mixture of ignorance and prophecy. Of course, had not Aerenthal given up the Sanjak of Novibazar without need, this specific Serbo-Montenegrin issue could not have arisen - for the lack of a common border. The two countries played it slow in early 1914 - the kings exchanged letters filled with pleasantries, a Customs Union was proposed, military cooperation planned - to Austria's ire and Wilhelm's applause, and this disagreement invalidated any chance for a common Austro-German Balkan policy. Wilhelm believed that "the union is definitely not to be prevented, and if Vienna were to attempt this, it will be committing a great stupidity and conjuring up the danger of a war with the Slavs, which would leave us quite cold." (163)

A proposal to detach the Montenegrin littoral and award it to Albania did not make things easier, for while it would solve the issue of preventing a Serbian port at the Mediterranean Sea, it would give Austria a common border with Albania, and this Italy would not permit. In April 1914, San Giuliano told the German Ambassador to Rome, Hans von Flotow, that "under no conditions could Italy tolerate the geographical contiguity of Albania to Austria which would then arise," and "which would lead the way to a preponderance of Austrian influence in Albania, which Italy could not tolerate." (164) Her admirals were afraid that an Austrian naval base at the coast of Montenegro might jeopardize their access to the Adriatic Sea, but, in the early summer of 1914, San Giuliano surprised Berchtold with the proposal of a compromise. An Austrian occupation of the Montenegrin coast might be condoned by Italy if it were to trigger Article VII of the Triple Alliance -- a territorial compensation. But the compensation San Giuliano had in mind was the Trentino, i.e. the Etsch (Adige) River valley and South Tyrolia - under no circumstances would Austria give this region away. Stalemate ensued, and Berchtold and San Giuliano's meetings over the Serbian port issue ended unresolved. The same fate befell their negotiations on the question who was to become King of Albania. Both countries nominated candidates, of which the Austrian aspirant, the Prince of Wied, eventually succeeded - to gain what exactly? When he stepped from an Austrian warship onto Albanian soil on March 17, 1914, it was a leap into darkness. A contemporary observer noted:

"The Prince of Wied, who ascended that locking throne, possessed neither capacity, nor money, nor courage; and lacking these he lacked the chief qualifications for reigning over a country like Albania - amid inveterate tribal hatreds and religious feuds, surrounded by young scions of native aristocracy who were unscrupulous adventurers, and by a pastoral people more vigorous than industrious and handier with the gun than with either plough-share or spade.

The new Sovereign was in immediate need of protection, and the protectors that suggested themselves were two, with equal titles [the Austrian and Italian ambassadors, ¶]. Was he to be the protégé, if not the vassal, of Austria or of Italy? The problem presented itself immediately because fierce armed revolts broke out shortly after his arrival, nourished by the suspicion that he inclined to favour the Catholic minority against the Moslem majority.

Which of the two Ministers -- the Austrian or the Italian -- was to guide the wavering policy of the poor Prince? In which of the ships anchored off Durazzo was he to take refuge if the insurgent bands, hammering at the gates, were to invade his palace?

All the formulas of mutual understanding, confidence, and common interests recurring in protocols, old and new, and confirmed ... in the public declarations of San Giuliano and Berchtold could not disguise the rivalry, every day more intense, between the two Ministers who should have acted in concert and who, instead, disputed every inch of the field of local influence, each denouncing to his own Government the intrigues of the other." (165)

Albania was sinking into a cauldron of rivalling insurgencies - the number of bellicose factions that had started with anti-Austrian and anti-Italian bands was soon augmented by a third cabal of Epirotes, supported by Greece and aiming to split off the unfortunate young nation's south, and then by a fourth, the Mirdites, a tribe of hardy mountain men who backed the Prince - the sole loyalists, so to say. (166) After the eighteen weeks that separated the arrival of the Prince from the outbreak of the Great War, the local Albanian calamity blended seamlessly into the greater catastrophe of the World War.

On the eastern side of the Balkan, Austria's diplomacy found herself in trouble as well. In the autumn of 1913, a mission of great diplomatic importance had led Count Ottokar Czernin, an intimate and advisor of the Heir Apparent, Franz Ferdinand, as Austrian Minister to Romania, whose friendship with the Habsburg state the Archduke sought to fortify. On the one hand, the Archduke attempted to counteract Berchtold's pro-Hungarian policies, which led to frequent and entirely legitimate complaints over the mistreatment of the Romanian minority in Hungary-administered Transylvania and, on the other, to assess how firm Romania could be expected to adhere to the secret treaty with the Triple Alliance that dated from October 1883 and had been renewed only recently, on February 5, 1913. But two wars had since then changed the Balkan.

Not only had, alas, the secrecy of the pact resulted in some of King Carol's decisions during the Balkan wars being misunderstood by his subjects - to say the least - the intransigence of the Hungarians left no hope for a timely improvement of the mutual relations, and, from bad to worse, the Germanophile Conservative government had been replaced by the Francophile Liberals on January 16, 1914. Things looked grim; Czernin noted that "the treaty of alliance is not worth the ink and the paper with which it is written," and urged that "either we must make the endeavour to win back Romania or we must give her up for lost." (167) The latter case soon transpired; Sazonov seized an opportunity to come to a rapprochement with Romania by offering her aid against Bulgaria - whose attacking Romania had started the Second Balkan War - and in the spring and early summer of 1914 reciprocal visits of the Romanian royal family in Russia and the Tsar at Constanza began to change Romania's orbit - as would be seen in 1916. Czernin noted:

"Primarily the hatred of Romania for Budapest, which we still do not believe to exist, and which since last year had come to include Vienna, is a powerful factor in the wish to swing over to the Entente. But it is not the only one.

Since last year and the behaviour of Austria-Hungary during the war, the firm conviction has grown here, as in many other parts of Europe, that the Monarchy is an entity doomed to downfall and dissolution, that at the partition of Turkey we have inherited nothing from her but her fate -- that, in other words, in the near future the Hapsburg Monarchy will be put up to European auction." (168)

In addition, Russia and France promised Romania what Austria could never give her - Transylvania.

In the opposite corner of the continent, however, the New Year had brought an easing of tensions; the heavens seemed to light up a bit over Germany and Great Britain - as it is often the case in classic drama before disaster strikes. England's attention had recently been diverted to the six counties of Ulster, i.e. Northern Ireland, where Protestant loyalists worked on the armed secession of the north from the Catholic South. Britain, her attentiveness directed westward, indicated her willingness to negotiate on the two issues presently under dispute between Germany and Albion - the division of the former Portuguese colonies between the two and the more urgent issue of the (German-

built and -financed) Baghdad Railway, and on both questions agreement was eventually reached, although in the case of the railway not before June 15, 1914 - two weeks before Sarajevo.

But if the scales of Anglo-German relations were going up, those of Russo-German rapport sank proportionally - as if they were linked. The Russians complained over the appointment of a German general, Otto Liman von Sanders, commanding officer of the German 22nd Division, to the post of special military plenipotentiary for the reformation and education of the whole Ottoman army. Not only did that include the training of the Turkish General Staff, Liman would also have the actual command of the Ottoman 1st Army Corps, the force defending Constantinople and the Straits themselves. German officers in military missions in Turkey were nothing new - General Colmar von der Goltz had trained Turkish officers already in the 1880s and 1890s. (169) Neither were German officers the only foreign instructors in Turkey - the Turkish Navy was actually commanded, since 1912, by the British Admiral Sir Arthur Henry Limpus, whose employment contract titled him, irrefutably, "commandant de la flotte". (170) Thus Sazonov's initial complaint was ignored in London as well as in Paris, where Sazonov's threats of attacking and dismembering Turkey alienated the French bankers whom the Porte owed many million Gold Francs. An irate Sazonov then proceeded, on January 6, 1914, to present the Tsar a memorandum in which he recommended the following course of action:

"From the political point of view, the surest means [to compel Turkey to dismiss Liman von Sanders] would be the simultaneous occupation by France, Russia, and England of certain points in Asia Minor with the declaration that these three Powers will remain there until their demands have been satisfied.

In view of this eventuality, the Russian Minister [i.e., Sazonov himself, ¶] is prepared to offer England and France, Smyrna and Beirut, taking for himself either Trebizond or Bazajet.

It is true that in this case it may be expected that Germany will take some active step in favour of Turkey, and this might have as its result the transfer of the problem to our western frontier with all the consequences deriving therefrom." (171)

In this memorandum, Sazonov suggested for the first time that a great European war might be provoked and waged by Russia as the proper means to come into the possession of the Straits - that a war might be the proper measure to prevent an unknown German general from taking over the Turkish defences.

One week later, a conference was held in St. Petersburg over the affair, chaired by Prime Minister Kokovtsov, with Sazonov, Sukhomlinov, the Minister of War, Zhilinsky, the Chief of Staff, and Navy Minister Grigorovich in attendance. The issue at hand was - hence the presence of the military leadership - whether a war with Germany was a viable option or whether other avenues should be explored, and, if so, which ones exactly. The conference addressed several scenarios¹⁸ in regards to which it seems that Sukhomlinov and Zhilinsky "categorically declared that Russia was perfectly prepared for a duel with Germany," (172) but in the end the doves won the day; Kokovtsov opined that "a war at present would be the greatest misfortune that could befall Russia," (173) and it was resolved to wait for the German reply to Sazonov's objection. This proved the correct choice, for, as Albertini explains, only

... two days after this conference the peaceful solution came to fruition which the German Government had sought from the first and which had to be of a nature not to damage the prestige of either Turkey or Germany, while at the same time satisfying Russia, with whom Berlin wished to remain on the best possible terms.

Liman von Sanders was promoted to the highest rank in the German Army and this, in his contract with Turkey, raised him to the rank of a field-marshal of the Turkish Army and thus above the rank of a commander of the First Army Corps. Thus he remained Inspector General of the Turkish Army and Director of the Military Academy, but he no longer held the command in the capital against which Sazonov had so particularly protested. The public announcement of this settlement took place on 15 January 1914. (174)

¹⁸ See Albertini 1/548-549.

Yet the aftermath of the conference had unintended consequences for the Russian military. A commission that had been appointed to compile a dossier on the preparedness of the forces in the case of war arrived at various unsatisfactory conclusions; the mobilization schedules had to be reworked, and the Russian Black Sea fleet, tasked to transport to the shore of the Bosphorus the landing troops that were to storm Constantinople, was in a state of particular pity; a credit of 110 million roubles had to be procured instantly for the most urgent repairs. (175)

The great rearmament program upon which Russia had embarked after her downfall in the Japanese war alarmed the German General Staff, who had - for the last fifteen years - been forced to watch all funding increases going to the navy and who had not received monies for necessary structural modernizations - the development and mass purchase of machine-guns, mortars, and fast-moving field artillery, for example - for more than a decade. In early 1913 Moltke asked for the establishment of an additional three army corps, and on July 3 the Reichstag passed a bill that increased the peacetime strength of the German Army from 663,000 to 761,000 enlistees, with a view to reach 810,000 by late 1914.¹⁹ (176) Austria passed a much more modest law, which increased her annual intake by 25,000 from 175,000 to 200,000 men.

In Paris, the administration of Raymond Poincaré, who became President in 1913, secured, after a protracted parliamentary struggle, an extra 500 million Francs for supplementary military expenditures in 1913 and increased the active service term of conscripts from two to three years, which corresponded to a 50% increase in peacetime strength. From January 1, 1914, on, the French Army enlisted 790,000 men. (177)

Thus in early 1914 the Entente - not counting Great Britain - held under arms about 2, 3 million men, almost twice as many as Austria and Germany did at 1, 2 million. This number did not include the Italians, for a reason. Moltke and Conrad had met and consulted with General Pollio, the Italian Chief of Staff, at the occasion of the German autumn manoeuvres of 1913 and a few times thereafter, and begun to develop a new strategy for the Triple Alliance in the case that the *casus foederis* arose for Italy. A new protocol was needed for the Italian deployment, in the light that the dispatch of an Italian force to the Upper Rhine against France had been given up in 1901. Of all Italian chiefs of staff, Pollio was the one most positively inclined to the Triple Alliance, but - incredible but true - had not been informed by his own government of Italy's obligations under her treaty with France of 1902 or the military consequences arising thereof. Thus, unbeknownst to himself, his plans were condemned to futility and whatever he promised his allies would not be delivered. His sudden death on June 28, 1914, the day of Sarajevo, left the planning for an eventual Italian troop deployment within the parameters of the Triplice entirely in the air and Moltke shelved all plans that called for Italian participation.

Sazonov and Izvolsky meanwhile worked on replacing the Entente with France, which had been conceived as a defensive pact against a German attack, with a trilateral alliance that comprised offensive operations and was to include Great Britain. Like the essays of Sir Eyre Crowe in London and Maurice Herbet in Paris that had earlier belaboured Germany's dreadful designs, Sazonov's complaints - as cited here from his memoirs - were vague, but intimidating.

"Germany's Weltpolitik [world politics] conducted with extraordinary energy and by all possible methods, frequently found expression in imprudent official utterance; and these could hardly be reconciled with the existence of independent States on the continent of Europe, still less with the existence of great Empires spreading far beyond the limits of Europe and possessing vast territories in other parts of the world. There were three such States in Europe: England, Russia, and France. ...

Germany was inevitably destined to come into conflict with this alliance (sic!), not in order to defend her existence - which was not threatened - but to execute her gigantic plan of world domination. The appearance of German officers on the Bosphorus, armed with unusual powers, was the decisive moment which prompted Russia to seek an understanding with England, more definite than the vague sense of common danger." (178)

Following Sazonov's protestations, one would assume that Germany was the paramount European aggressor and Russia the prospective victim - yet the former had not waged war since 1870, when she was attacked by France, while Russia

¹⁹ This compares to a peacetime strength of the Russian Army in 1914 of some 1,500,000 men, which was expected to reach 2,000,000 by 1917. (179)

fought the Ottomans in 1853-56 and 1877-78, as well as Japan in 1904-05 and on her Chinese border almost perpetually - in comparison, German plans for world domination seemed far too tame.

Again, perception defines reality, but whatever Liman von Sander's rank or "unusual powers", his mission was strictly defensive, and it was Sazonov, not Tirpitz or a German admiral, who sent a Naval Attaché to London in late May 1914 - eight weeks before the war - to pave the way for English support of a Russian landing in Pomerania. (180) It would seem that WELTPOLITIK was a "great Empire's" right - Sazonov names England, Russia, and France - as long as it was not Germany. Yet if one keeps Russia's strategic target in sight - control of the Straits - Sazonov's theory makes sense - only Germany could deny it to her. This was the true issue of the Ottoman Succession; this was why the road to the Straits led through Berlin.

In the spring of 1914, Sazonov arranged the visit of the Tsar and Tsarina Alexandra at Constanza in Romania, which took place on June 14, and accompanied the visitors for the continuation of the negotiations he had begun during the Romanian royal family's visit at Tsarskoe Selo in March. Two days earlier, on June 12, 1914, only sixteen days before Sarajevo, the Russian newspaper BIRZHEVYE VEDOMOSTI - "regarded as the organ of the Minister for War" (181) - published, under the headline "Russia is ready, France must be ready too!" an article that harboured the following exhortations:

"Russia has done everything to which she is committed by the alliance with France and expects her ally also to do her duty. ... This year's levy of recruits has by the latest Imperial ukase risen from 450,000 to 580,000 men and the term of service has been extended by six months. By virtue of this measure, there are every winter four contingents of recruits under arms in Russia, thus an army of 2,300,000 men. ...

Germany has at her command over 880,000, Austria somewhere over 500,000 and Italy somewhere over 400,000 men, Quite naturally Russia expects of France 770,000 men, and this is only possible with the three-year term of service. It must be noted that these army increases in peace time are exclusively intended to effect a rapid mobilization.

*Russia is further proceeding to fresh reforms, and the construction of a whole network of strategic railways for the swiftest concentration of the army in case of war. This Russia wants also from France, but it can only be effectuated by the maintenance of the three-year term of service. **Russia and France want no war, but Russia is ready and France must be so.**" [Emphasis in original] (182)*

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER

*Even assuming the case
that nobody else interferes:
what should we gain from it?
Only another pack of thieves
and murderers and scoundrels
and a few plum trees.*

Archduke Francis Ferdinand on war against Serbia

They only met once.

The prince was Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the oldest son of Francis Joseph's brother, Archduke Karl Ludwig,¹ - hence the Emperor's nephew. A few years after the suicide of the Emperor's only son, Crown Prince Rudolf, in 1889,² he was named Heir Apparent to the Habsburg thrones in Austria and Hungary. His youth was unexceptional except for concerns about his health; growing up, he spent much time at the court of Archduke Friedrich and Archduchess Isabella in Bratislava, whose daughter - his cousin - he was believed to marry one day. But then it was found out that his amorous chivalry was directed to one of Isabella's ladies in waiting, the Bohemian Countess Sophie Chotek, and the fat was in the fire. Frau Chotek, the descendant of an ancient yet impoverished Bohemian family, was not an acceptable match according to the Habsburg family code, and the Emperor forbade the marriage.

Yet in this matter the young prince showed tenacity - or stubbornness. He began to solicit support for his choice of bride and was able to mobilize, among others, Tsar Nicholas, Kaiser Wilhelm and Pope Leo XIII, under whose concerted salvos Francis Joseph eventually declared his capitulation. He would allow the marriage under the conditions of a morganatic union, that is, neither the wife nor eventual children had claims to Habsburg titles, privileges or possessions, and that the children were excluded from the royal and imperial succession. The Archduke had to swear a public oath and sign a deed of quitclaim, on June 28, 1900 - fourteen years, to the very day, before the couple met their death at Sarajevo.

The debacle of the marriage was not the sole reason for the increasing tension between Emperor and Prince. The Emperor was conciliative, the Prince abrasive, and, on top of it, sought "to exercise an influence on the policy of the Monarchy which the Emperor could ill brook. Their frequent sharp discussions resulted in mutual feelings of fear and hatred." (1) Despite his official status, the Prince was excluded from the business of the imperial administration as much as possible, and in his military capacity, despite having been promoted to the rank of Field Marshal, was entrusted only with decorative tasks. His character, Albertini writes,

... was complex and full of contradictions. He hated flattery and was wont to say of anyone who cringed to him: "He is no good, he is a toady." But on the other hand - writes Brosch³ - "he could never bear direct

¹ Karl Ludwig died a rather ingenious death, by drinking the infectious water of the Jordan River, at the occasion of a pilgrimage.

² Cf. Chapter IV, conclusion.

³ Colonel A. Brosch was Head of Franz Ferdinand's Chancery and Aide-de-camp.

contradiction", yet demanded the unvarnished truth and those around him had the difficult task of presenting the truth which he demanded in a tactful form acceptable to his pride." (2)

But he had comprehension of and a talent for politics, and understood the principal challenge for the Dual Monarchy - the question of nationalities. For his - shocking - habit of asking people of lower status questions and contemplate their answers, he was held to know more than the Emperor of the true situation of the realm; more than what Albertini called the "official opinion." (3)

His political outlook was in essence anti-Hungarian, and this - mutual - hostility formed his opinion on the treatment of the southern Slavs and his conviction that, in the long run, the monarchy could survive only as a trialist or federal state, in which Germans, Magyars and Slavs possessed their own statehood. His disapproval of the *Ausgleich*, in which the Magyars had taken, as he saw it, the whole nation hostage, brought him into sharp conflict with the Emperor, who was the founder and guarantor of the system. The Prince remained a vocal opponent of the Hungarian travesty of parliamentary procedure, in which "the eight million non-Magyars (not counting the Croats) were represented by 21 deputies and the eight and a half million Magyars by 392." (4)

Being marked as a potential reformer, he was the natural nemesis of the Pan-Slav movement, which, by the second half of the nineteenth century, had pervaded the Monarchy internally as well as, outside of her, found a political basis in the small kingdom of Serbia, which had been proclaimed by Prince Milan Obrenović in 1882, four years after the Congress of Berlin had made it a newly independent nation.

When the juvenile kingdom responded quickly to the native paraphernalia of modern politics - parties, committees, newspapers - King Milan tried autocracy, unsuccessfully enough that he had to abdicate formally in 1889, which, however, did not enjoin him from keeping the reins during the regency of his son Alexandar - in a burlesque dual kingship that ran from 1897 to 1900 - to the ministrations of whom the Queen Mother Nathalie added her own corruptive skills. When the just as autocratic-minded son married the notorious courtesan Draga Masin, a former maid of honour to his mother who was also ten years older than the groom (5) - the news of their engagement "alone was enough to trigger the resignation of the entire cabinet," including that of Minister of the Interior Djordje Gencit, who had his own, personal and intimate memories of the new queen. (6)

Old King Milan was horrified at his son's family plans and reposed to exile in Austria, where he died in 1901. The son continued a very personal reign - interpreting and, if he found it necessary, changing the constitution according to his whims, closing critical newspapers, throwing personal enemies into prison and naming schools, villages and, as Christopher Clark notes, even regiments of the army after his queen. (7) The rumour that the king - in lieu of a natural heir, for the queen remained childless - planned "to designate Queen Draga's brother Nikodije Lunjevica as successor to the Serbian throne", (8) finally provoked the military, which was complaining about arrears of pay and insufficient promotions - the royal couple was following the Balkan tradition of promoting friends and relatives to the main posts - to take action. (9)

A talented lieutenant of the army, Dragutin Dimitriević, became the nerve centre of the military conspiracy that formed itself in the summer of 1901 with the aim of replacing the royal couple. The young officer's abilities had been early recognized by the military leadership and he had been given a post on the Serbian General Staff a week after his graduation from the military academy. Professor Stanoje Stanojević, Rector of the University of Belgrade, revealed to the world in a 1922 essay on the murder of the Archduke the responsibility of this man and his organization, *UJEDINJENJE ILI SMRT!* [Union or Death!], also called the "Black Hand", for the murders of Sarajevo, which the initial Austrian investigation, discussed below, had erroneously blamed on *NARODNA ODBRANA*, the Serbian Defence Organization that had sprung up in the aftermath of the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908; both organizations, however, overlapped. In his pamphlet, Stanojević gave the following brief summary of the activities of this officer, who eventually was to become Chief of the Serbian Military Intelligence Service:

"A restless character full of the spirit of adventure, Dimitriević was continually planning conspiracies and outrages. In 1903, he was one of the chief organizers of the conspiracy against King Alexander, in 1911 he sent an emissary to assassinate either the Austrian Emperor or the Heir Apparent. In February 1914 he conceived with a Bulgarian secret revolutionary committee to assassinate the Bulgarian King Ferdinand.

He took over and organized the outrage against the Austrian Heir Apparent in 1914. In 1916 from Corfu he sent an emissary to attempt the assassination of the Greek King Constantine and in the same year he seems to have sought contact with the enemy and organized an outrage against the Serbian Heir Apparent, Prince Alexander. It was for this reason that he was condemned to death and shot on the Salonika front in June 1917." (10)

Luigi Albertini was able to entertain a correspondence with a few high-ranking former members of the Black Hand after the war. The membership total had been wildly exaggerated, Colonel Cedomilj Popović, one of the organization's founders, told him. It was not more than 2,500 but...

"Union or Death found wide approval and membership would have been much higher if the doors had been open to all. Those who were admitted had to be tested of loyalty and capable of rendering practical service." (11)

What about the organization's objectives? Popović explained that...

"Union or Death had for its object the unification of all the Southern Slays of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in a national unity. The Belgrade Central Committee comprised, in addition to the members from the Kingdom of Serbia, delegates representing all unredeemed Yugoslav territories: i.e. one for Bosnia-Herzegovina, who was Gaftnović, one for Old Serbia and Macedonia, one for Montenegro, one for Croatia, one for Slovenia and Sytmia, one for the Voivodina, one for Dalmatia, who was Oskar Tartaglia. It is affirmed that Dragutin Dimitriević, in 1917, died shouting: 'Long live Yugoslavia!'" (12)

Professor Stanojević was fascinated by the personality of his subject and describes Dimitriević as a born conspirator, a mixture of Fouché and Mazarin, perhaps.

"Gifted and cultured, honourable, a convincing speaker, a sincere patriot, personally courageous, filled with ambition, energy and the capacity for work, Dragutin Dimitriević exercised exceptional influence on those around him, in particular on his associates and on junior officers who were all his inferiors in qualities of mind and character.

He had the characteristics which cast a spell on men. His arguments were always striking and convincing. He could represent the most intractable matters as mere trifles, the most hazardous enterprises as innocent and harmless. Withal he was in every respect a remarkable organizer. He kept all the threads in his own hand and even his most intimate friends only knew what was their own immediate concern.

But at the same time he was he was extraordinarily conceited and thoroughly affected. Ambitious as he was, he had a taste for working in secret, but he liked it to be known that he was doing secret work and that he kept all the threads in his own hand. He was incapable of distinguishing what was possible from what was not and perceiving the limits of responsibility and power. He had no clear conception of civil and political (staatlichem) life and its requirements. He saw only his own aims and pursued them ruthlessly and without scruple. He loved adventure and danger and secret meetings and mysterious activities. How far his private ambition reached is hard to say. His political ideas were dim and confused, but he was extraordinarily resolute in carrying out anything that he had set his mind on.

Dimitriević was convinced that his own ideas were the right ones on a matters, events and circumstances. He believed that his opinions and activities enjoyed the monopoly of patriotism. Hence anyone who did not agree with him could not in his eyes be either honourable or wise or a patriot. He, without a doubt, was all this, but he found it hard to acknowledge it in others, apart from those who obeyed his orders. It was for him to plan, organize and command, for others to obey and carry out his orders without questioning." (13)

The origins of "Union or Death!" date back to the conspiracy of Serbian officers to murder the royal couple and other enemies of the people. The young lieutenant, already a leader, fixed the date for the first attempt on September 11, 1901, at the occasion of the royal ball held on the queen's birthday. Christopher Clark remarks:

In a plan that seems lifted from the pages of an Ian Fleming novel, two officers were assigned to mount an attack on the Danube power plant that supplied Belgrade with electricity, while another was to disable the smaller station serving the building where the ball was in progress. Once the lights were shut off, the four assassins in attendance at the ball planned to set fire to the curtains, sound the fire alarms and liquidate the king and his wife by forcing them to ingest poison (this method was chosen in order to circumvent a possible search for firearms).

The poison was successfully tested on a cat, but in every other respect the plan was a failure. The power plant turned out to be too heavily guarded and the queen decided in any case not to attend the ball. Undeterred by this and other failed attempts, the conspirators worked hard over the next two years at expanding the scope of the coup. Over one hundred officers were recruited, including many younger military men. (14)

It was eventually decided to attempt the assassination at the royal palace, where the couple's presence could be guaranteed. Aware of conspiracies - which were even acknowledged by the London Times on April 27, 1903 - the king had beefed up security and it took the conspirators a long time and great trouble to circumvent or penetrate the successive layers of royal guards. (15) The event itself became a legend for its outrageous cruelty. In the early morning of June 11, 1903, twenty-eight conspirators - all army officers - breached the palace doors and made for the royal bedchamber, the entry to which they entrusted to a box of dynamite. The huge blast that ensued short-circuited the supply of electricity and delayed the posse until they had acquired candles. The royal couple - barely dressed - was hiding in a tiny service room and it took nearly two hours until they were discovered. While the search was underway, death squads dispatched into town murdered the Queen's two brothers as well as the Prime Minister and the Minister of War.

A second search of the royal apartment eventually discovered the quarry, and, after assuring the king of their oath and peaceful intentions - to draw him out - the schemers aimed at the royal couple a cloud of pistol shots.

An orgy of gratuitous violence followed. The corpses were stabbed with swords, torn with a bayonet, partially disembowelled and hacked with an axe until they were mutilated beyond recognition, according to the later testimony of the king's traumatized Italian barber, who was ordered to collect the bodies and dress them for burial.

The body of the queen was hoisted to the railing of the bedroom window and tossed, virtually naked and slimy with gore, into the gardens. It was reported that as the assassins attempted to do the same with Alexandar, one of his hands closed momentarily around the railing. An officer hacked through the fist with a sabre and the body fell, with a sprinkle of severed digits, to the earth. By the time the assassins had gathered in the garden to have a smoke and inspect the results of their handiwork, it had begun to rain. (16)



DRAGUTIN DIMITRIEVIĆ, RIGHT, WITH TWO ASSISTANTS

Subsequently the conspirators replaced the Obrenović dynasty with the current head of the Karadjordjević clan, Petar, whom they recalled from Swiss exile. The great-grandfather of the new king had been the "swarthy former cattleherd 'Black George' (Serbian: 'Kara Djordje') Petrović, who "had led an uprising in 1804 that succeeded for some years in driving the Ottomans out of Serbia, but fled into Austrian exile in 1813 when the Ottomans mounted a counteroffensive." (17) In 1815, another insurrection led by one certain Milos Obrenović had more success; the Ottomans accepted Serbian home rule as a principality under Turkish suzerainty, and Milos' first order of business was to kill Black George upon his return from exile, enabling the Obrenović family to rule Serbia until the slaughter of June 1903.

Quite surprisingly, the new King Petar I appeared to have learned from his studies of politics and history - he translated John Stuart Mill's *ON LIBERTY* into Serbian - the duties of a constitutional monarch, who "reigned but did not govern", (18) and did actually become one - within the bounds that the conspirators, who never disbanded, allowed. But they changed their outlook, and perhaps their inclinations - although we cannot be sure that they abandoned assassination as a political means, given what Stanojević says about Dimitrijević's subsequent career⁴ - from regicide to PanSlavism. The conspiracy, however, continued to be a force outside the authority of king, parliament or civil government, which was led between 1904 and 1918 chiefly by Nicolas Pasić, chairman of the Radical Party, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁵ The conspirators had infiltrated the government already in the preparation of the coup; in its wake they were able to "secure for themselves the most desirable military and government posts." (19) Yet they did face opposition.

Within the army itself, a military "counter-conspiracy" concentrated in the fortress town of Nis emerged under the leadership of Captain Milan Novaković, who produced a manifesto calling for the dismissal from the service of sixty-eight named prominent regicides.

Novaković was swiftly arrested and after a spirited defence of his actions, he and his accomplices were tried, found guilty and sentenced to varying periods of imprisonment by a military court. When he left prison two years later, Novaković resumed his public attacks on the regicides and was incarcerated again. In September 1907, he and a male relative perished in mysterious circumstances during an alleged escape attempt, a scandal that triggered outrage in parliament and the liberal press. The question of the relationship between the army and the civilian authorities thus remained unresolved after the assassinations of 1903, a state of affairs that would shape Serbia's handling of events in 1914. (20)

The Radical Party was a specific Serbian political product, combining run-of-the-mill liberalism à la late Nineteenth Century with fervid nationalism that sought the unity of all Serbs, or perhaps all Southern Slavs, in a Greater Serbia, whose future borders, however, depended on the person one asked. The fundamental, semi-official map of Serbian nationalism, Christopher Clark explains...

... was a secret memorandum drawn up by the Serbian interior minister Ilija Garasanin for Prince Alexandar Karadjordjević in 1844. Known after its publication in 1906 as NACERTANJE (from the Old Serbian NHCRT, "draft"), Garasanin's proposal sketched out a "Program for the National and Foreign Policy of Serbia".

It would be difficult to overstate the influence of this document on generations of Serb politicians and patriots; in time it became the Magna Charta of Serb nationalism. Garasanin opened his memorandum with the observation that Serbia is "small, but must not remain in this condition". The first commandment of Serbian policy, he argued, must be the "principle of national unity"; by which he meant the unification of all Serbs within the boundaries of a Serbian state: "Where a Serb dwells, that is Serbia."

The historical template for this expansive vision of Serbian statehood was the medieval empire of Stepan Dusan, a vast swath of territory encompassing most of the present-day Serbian republic, along with the entirety of present-day Albania, most of Macedonia, and all of Central and Northern Greece, but not Bosnia, interestingly enough.

⁴ Cf. this chapter, n. 786.

⁵ He led ten cabinets for a total of nine years. (21)

Tsar Dusan's empire had supposedly collapsed after a defeat at the hands of the Turks on Kosovo Field on 28 June 1389. But this setback, Garasanin argued, had not undermined the Serbian state's legitimacy; it had merely interrupted its historical existence. The "restoration" of a Greater Serbia unifying all Serbs was thus no innovation, but the expression of an ancient historical right.

"They cannot accuse [us] of seeking something new, unfounded, of constituting a revolution or an upheaval, but rather everyone must acknowledge that it [Greater Serbia] is politically necessary, that it was founded in very ancient times and has its roots in the former political and national life of the Serbs."

Garasanin's argument thus exhibited that dramatic foreshortening of historical time that can sometimes be observed in the discourses of integral nationalism; it rested, moreover, upon the fiction that Tsar Dusan's sprawling, multi-ethnic, composite, medieval polity could be conflated with the modern idea of a culturally and linguistically homogenous nation-state. Serb patriots saw no inconsistency here, since they argued that virtually all the inhabitants of these lands were essentially Serbs.

Vuk Karadžić, the architect of the modern Serbo-Croat literary language and author of a famous nationalist tract, SRBI SVI I SVUDA ("Serbs all and everywhere", published in 1836), spoke of a nation of 5 million Serbs speaking the "Serbian language" and scattered from Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Banat of Temesvar (eastern Hungary, now in western Romania), the Backa (a region extending from northern Serbia into southern Hungary), Croatia, Dalmatia and the Adriatic coast from Trieste to northern Albania. Of course there were some in these lands, Karadžić conceded (he was referring in particular to the Croats), "who still find it difficult to call themselves Serbs, but it seems likely that they will gradually become used to it." (22)

The obvious problem was how to convince Turks, Greek and Austrians to "acknowledge" the history-born necessity of a Greater Serbia, so that they might evacuate the provinces indicated by the Serbs as their future possessions and whose indigenous populations longed to be awarded Serbian ethnicity, nationality and citizenship. Because some of the intended beneficiaries were not yet aware of the good fortune the future held in stock, the liberalization project needed to proceed somewhat clandestinely, and no one was better suited to this task than conspirator and regicide Dimitrijević who was then a lecturer at the Serbian Military Academy. (23)

But this was not the full extent of his activities. In the wake of the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which had led to the emergence of the Narodna Odbrana, there had remained a deep division between the official Serbian government, which had to plan and act within the boundaries of generally acknowledged political limits, and the nationalist hotheads who accepted no restriction. In early 1911, the political activist Bogdan Radenković began to contact nationalist sympathizers from all walks of life, and, in the presence of Dimitrijević, four of his fellow officer-regicides and another civilian, formed on March 3 in Belgrade the secret brotherhood UJEDINJENJE ILI SMRT!, "Union or Death", which eventually became known as the "Black Hand". (24) In today's parlance, it was a terrorist organization, adopting rituals from the Freemasons and combining them with the cell system of the underground communists. It thrived, as such clubs do, mostly on the self-aggrandizement of their founders - the conviction that they were to alter history. In their case, as we will see, they succeeded. Neophytes were inducted by meeting their hooded future brethren in a dark room and made to swear the following oath:

"I [name], in joining the organisation Union or Death, swear by the sun that warms me, by the earth that nourishes me, before God, by the blood of my ancestors, on my honour and on my life, that I will from this moment until my death be faithful to the laws of this organisation, and that I will always be ready to make any sacrifice for it.

I swear before God, on my honour and on my life, that I will execute all missions and commands without question.

I swear before God, on my honour and on my life, that I will take all the secrets of this organisation into my grave with me.

May God and my comrades in the organisation be my judges if, knowingly or not, I should ever violate this oath." (25)

It was a show, but impressive and designed to make an imprint on the mostly young members-to-be which were attracted to the world of secret male bonding - Christopher Clark has recognized the strong homoerotic tendencies of the fraternity:

The milieu in which Dimitrijević deployed these gifts [of inducing trust and imposing his will] was emphatically masculine. Women were a marginal presence in his adult life; he never showed any sexual interest in them. His natural habitat, and the scene of all his intrigues, was the smoke-filled, men-only world of the Belgrade coffee-houses -- a space at once private and public, where conversations could be seen without necessarily being heard. The best-known surviving photograph of him depicts the burly moustachioed intriguer with two associates in a characteristically conspiratorial pose. (26)

Given the secretive origins and character of the organization, it cannot surprise that Ujedinjenje ili smrt! subverted the civil government as easily, quickly and profoundly as it had undermined the military sphere; its members also infiltrated the various semi-official (Narodna Odbrana) and secret societies as well as the border police, spy networks and telegraph offices. Oddly enough, some party politicians and government officials mistook "Union or Death!" for an internal revolutionary committee, suspecting it to attempt domestic subversion in the furtherance of overthrowing the civil government. "This misreading," Christopher Clark points out, "made its way into many of the diplomatic records" and "would continue to befuddle the Austrian authorities during the crisis of July 1914." (27)

In the wake of the Balkan wars of 1912/13, the recently acquired provinces were admitted to the benefits of modern Serbian government. The uncertain state of security, alas, disallowed the introduction of civil liberties, and many Turkish public buildings - schools, offices, and, naturally, mosques - had to be destroyed lest they might serve as hideouts for Turkish terrorists. The latter were presumed to exist in such multitudes that the imposition of martial law and the frequent execution of suspects became a regrettable but necessary side-effect on the way into a brighter future. Critical voices began to appear in international newspapers, but the Serbian Foreign Office was, fortunately, able to rely on the British Ambassador, Sir Dayrell Crackanthorpe, who, of his own volition, corrected erroneous reports of his underlings, who presumed to criticize the sort of small errors that could not be avoided in the noble task.

It seemed to be a sign of the efficiency of Austrian and, perhaps, German propagandists that the administrative reforms in the newly liberated areas did not find the undivided applause of the international observership; especially British diplomats appeared susceptible to the disinformation campaign. From Monastir on the southern border, for example, the British Vice Consul Charles Greig reported "that Moslems under Servian rule have nothing whatsoever to expect but periodical massacre, certain exploitation and final ruin." His colleague in Skopje related "systematic intimidation, arbitrary detentions, beatings, rapes, village-burnings and massacres by Serbs in the annexed areas." Less than two weeks later, Mr. Greig warned that the "Bulgarian and especially the Moslem populations in the districts of Perlepe, Krchevo and Krushevo [were] in danger of extermination by the very frequent and barbarous massacres and pillage to which they are subjected by Servian bands" and that "murder and outrage of other kinds by bands of Servian comitaji and persons in league with them" created outright anarchy. (28) His Excellency Dayrell Crackanthorpe, however, was a good friend of the Serbs and did his best to suppress the reports he believed to be entirely fabricated, and it was only "the cumulative detail of the reports emerging from the annexed areas, combined with corroborating accounts from Romanian, Swiss and French officials that persuaded the British Foreign Office that the news of Macedonian atrocities should not be dismissed as Austrian propaganda." (29)

While "the Serbian government showed no interest whatsoever in preventing further outrages or in instigating an investigation of those that had already occurred," (30) there were voices which saw the true cause of the horrors in the recently occupied areas along the borders to Greece and Bulgaria in an administrative decree that subordinated the military authorities - who considered these areas their personal playground⁶ - to the civil government. The officer corps

⁶ As the result of the Balkan wars, Serbia had grown from 18,650 to 33,891 square miles and acquired more than 1,500,000 new inhabitants. (37)

mounted a protest that brought down the - once again - Pasić-led cabinet, and the spectre of a military takeover appeared upon the horizon. The Austrian Ambassador in Belgrade reported to Vienna on May 8, 1914:

"The conflict between the Government and the conspirator party (Crna Ruka)⁷ ... has become so aggravated in the last few weeks that a violent clash between the two rivals for power seems not impossible. ... The King, who owes his throne to the conspirators, does not quite venture to side openly with them, but his sympathies belong to the Crna Ruka, as do those of the Crown Prince. ...

The Crna Ruka being probably none too fastidious in its choice of means to gain its ends, I regard the possibility of violent eruptions, even of an overthrow of the Government or a coup d'état, as not entirely inconceivable developments ... unless the Government at the last moment capitulates to the military party, as it has done up to now." (31)

Facing enlarged political instability, Belgrade's sponsors, Russia and France - the latter of whom had given her yet another credit (which amounted to twice the national budget of 1912) in 1914 (32) - resorted to the somewhat unusual step that the Russian Ambassador Hartwig, by some believed the country's true suzerain, "declared publicly that Russia's Balkan policies required Pasić's retention in office," (33) and Paris made it known that no other government than the present could hope to receive further loans. (34) These were clear messages, but still, no one knows what might have transpired had not the beginning of the Great War - only a few weeks later - given the Serbian army plenty of concern.

Again, in the continent's opposite corner, improvement in Anglo-German relations persisted; Winston Churchill mused that "the spring and summer of 1914 were marked in Europe by an exceptional tranquillity. ... Naval rivalry had at the moment ceased to be a cause of friction, it was certain that we could not be overtaken as far as capital ships were concerned," and a professor of economy noted that "Germany, from 1911, was the best market of all [for British exports]." (35) This caused fear in St. Petersburg that the coalition for the war against Germany - which would remove the true obstacle to the possession of the Straits - might fall apart at late notice. Even Paris seemed to falter. The former Prime Minister Joseph Caillaux - "suspected of softness towards Germany" and thus "hounded from office" in 1912 (36) - rejoined the French government as Minister of Finance in December 1913 and it was thought possible that he might emerge as the Prime Minister of a coalition of Radicals and Socialists, which many believed would choose a more constructive, peaceful policy towards Germany than the revanchism impersonated by President Poincaré. The Belgian Ambassador Guillaume reported to Brussels in early 1914:

"I feel certain that Europe would profit from the policies of M. Caillaux, the Radicals and the Radical-Socialists. As I have already told you, MM. Poincaré, Delcassé, Millerand and their friends have created and pushed the current policies of nationalism, militarism and chauvinism. ... I see in them the greatest threat to the peace of Europe today." (38)

Beginning with the annual General Staff conference of 1911, France and Russia reworked their strategy. Poincaré's bellicosity ended France's earlier reluctance to come to Russia's aid over some Balkan issue - which had accounted for France's caution during the Bosnian annexation crisis - yet it was not him alone who developed a more military orientation: "the pacifist and anti-military popular mood that had prevailed in 1905 made way for a more belligerent attitude," (39) and "by the autumn of 1912, Poincaré was firmly supporting a Russian armed intervention in the Balkans." (40) Yet this would necessarily lead to war: Austria would have to match a Russian mobilization - no way around it - which would bring in Germany, under the terms of the Dual Alliance, which would, in turn, bring in France and Great Britain on the side of Russia. Hostilities would open with a simultaneous attack of both France and Russia into Germany. Christopher Clark remarks on Franco-Russian war planning:

The question of how fast and how many men Russia would mobilize in the event of the cases foederis, and in what direction it would deploy them, dominated the Franco-Russian inter-staff discussions in the summers of 1912 and 1913. In the conversations of July 1912, the French CGS, Joseph Joffre, requested that the Russians

⁷ Serb for "Black Hand".

double-track all their railway lines to the East Prussian and Galician frontiers. Some strategically important lines were even to be quadrupled to allow faster transit of large troop numbers.

The Franco-Russian Naval Convention of July 1912, which provided for closer cooperation and coordination of the two navies, was another fruit of these efforts. And there was a gradual improvement in the Russian assurances --whereas Zhilinsky promised in 1912 to attack Germany with 800,000 men by day 15, in the following year he felt able, once the improvements were put in place, to shave a further two days off the schedule.

The direction of mobilization was another area of concern. The protocols of the inter-staff discussions record the tireless efforts of the French staff officers to keep the Russians focused on Germany rather than Austria as the principal opponent. For while the French were willing to acknowledge the legitimacy of a Balkan casus belli,⁸ the entire military purpose of the alliance (from France's perspective) would be defeated if the Russians deployed the bulk of their military might against the Habsburg Empire and left the French to deal on their own with a massive German attack in the west.

When this issue was raised at the 1912 meeting, [the Russian Chief of Staff] Zhilinsky objected that the Russians also had other threats to think about ... [Sweden and Turkey] ... but Joffre insisted that the "destruction of Germany's forces" - l'aneantissement des forces de l'Allemagne - would in effect resolve all the other problems facing the alliance; it was essential to concentrate on this objective "at any price". (41)

Peace on the continent now rested on the slender shoulders of the pauper. His name was Gavril Princip; he had been born in a Bosnian village in 1894, and attended "irregular schooling in various places." (42) A somewhat sickly youth - he was to die in 1918 of tuberculosis - he arrived in Belgrade in 1912 to report for the last grade of high school, yet immediately felt driven to spend most of his time in the Serbian nationalist coffee-house scene. His exalted pro-Serbism had motivated him to memorize the entirety of THE MOUNTAIN WREATH, an epos about the self-sacrificing Serbian tyrannicide Milos Obilić, composed and published in 1847 by the Prince-Bishop of Montenegro. (43) That the supreme expression of Serbian nationalism was tyrannicide the young patriot, whose apprehension of Serbian history was that of a continuing enterprise in idealism and sacrifice, readily accepted. In reality, Serbian patriotism had lately expressed itself more in murder, theft and rape. Luigi Albertini explains:

To understand the atmosphere in which this young generation lived, one must bear in mind the Serbian Comitaji movement after the Second Balkan war. For ten years, from 1902 to 1912, Comitajism was the leading element in all Balkan turbulence.

The first Comitajism was of Bulgaro-Macedonian origins. In 1902 armed bands were formed in Macedonia, subsidized by the Bulgarian Government, for the purpose of causing disorders which would focus the attention of Europe on the Balkans and lead to European intervention such as would end Ottoman domination in Macedonia. This province was either to become autonomous or be annexed to Bulgaria.

Alarmed by the claims which these bands were staking out for Bulgaria in Macedonia, Serb and Greek revolutionary circles, in touch with their respective governments, recruited armed bands in Serbia and Greece. In Serbia they arose as early as 1905.

The Comitaji crossed into Macedonia provoking disorders, blowing up bridges, attacking small bodies of gendarmes, committing murders, acting not only against the Turkish authorities but also against the private property of Moslems. When Turkish troops intervened they disappeared over the frontiers into their respective states, from whose governments they received arms and money. In the Balkan wars, Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian Comitaji had moved in advance and in support of their respective armies, fighting without regard for the rules of warfare and often indulging in arson and massacre.

⁸ This was the original sin, so to say, of the change in the Franco-Russian Military Convention -- now *other* than defensive scenarios, i.e. a direct attack of Austria or Germany on Russia, might invoke the casus foederis and lead to war.

One of these battalions of Comitaji fighters was commanded by Major Voja Tankosić, who in 1903 had taken part in the plot against the Obrenović royal pair and had ordered the shooting of Queen Draga's brothers. It mainly consisted of young Serbs who were Austro-Hungarian subjects. After the war, the Serbian Government was unable to get rid of them. Crowded in Belgrade, they spent time in cafés, bragging of their exploits and dilating plans for more wars and conspiracies. ...

After the defeat of Turkey and then of Bulgaria, their plots for wars and outrages took Austria-Hungary as their objective. (44)

Here were young patriots, if one can call them so, that Dragutin Dimitrijević, now Colonel and, under the code name "Apis", head of the Serbian Military Intelligence Service, could put to good use. He ordered his assistant Tankosić to select a few of the young men for a special job. The former Comitaji leader recruited three nineteen year-old Bosnian kids, Trifko Grabez, Nedeljko Cabrinović and Gavrilo Princip, all of them from "poor families and unhappy households." Cabrinović and Grabez "had suffered under and rebelled against the male authority figures in their own early lives," which draws an interesting parallel to Hitler's troubles with his father. (45) As Christopher Clark remarks, these young men were classic prey for conspirators:

These boys had little in the way of bad habits. They were made of that sombre, youthful stuff, rich in ideals but poor in experience, that modern terrorist movements feed upon. Alcohol was not to their taste. Although they were heterosexual by romantic inclination, they did not seek the society of young women.

They read nationalist poetry and irredentist newspapers and pamphlets. The boys dwelt at length on the suffering of the Serbian nation, for which they blamed everyone but the Serbs themselves, and felt the slights and humiliations of the least of their countrymen as if they were their own. (46)

The man whom Gavrilo Princip approached for patriotic guidance was, apparently by sheer accident, an old terror hand himself and a former subaltern of Major Tankosić, Milan Ciganović, who, by virtue of his being a titular employee of the Serbian State Railway was ideally placed for the intelligence and terror business. The story goes that Princip asked him outright whether he knew how to get bombs. Ciganović did, and informed his old boss Tankosić about Princip and his acquaintances.

At this early opportunity, in 1912, Tankosić rejected Princip as too young and frail, but in early 1914 changed his mind and reported Princip to Dimitrijević. Since the boys had no experience whatsoever with conspiracies, Ciganović was assigned as their handler. On May 27, he provided them with four revolvers and six 22 pound bombs, courtesy of the Serbian State Arsenal at Kragujevac, (47) and took them to Belgrade's Topcider Park for weapon training. (48) In addition, Ciganović supplied 150 dinars in cash, a map of Bosnia, cyanide ampoules - with which the assassins were to commit suicide after the attempt, to frustrate investigations - and a letter for Major Rade Popović⁹ of the Border Guards, who was a member of Ujedinjenje ili smrt! as well as a contact for Narodna Odbrana. (49) The boys were then smuggled into Bosnia - Cabrinović by members of the underground railway established and used by the Black Hand and the military, and Princip and Grabez, it would seem, by the border police themselves - to Tuzla, where they met Cabrinović. While there will be a word or two, below, to the topic of the Serbian and Russian government's possible foreknowledge of the Sarajevo plot, the local Bosnian patriots were easily trusted with the Big Secret. A schoolteacher working for the smugglers, who took Princip and Grabez over the border to Tuzla, was reported to have told the Kerovići, the family to whom he delivered his charges for the night: "Do you know who these people are? They're going to Sarajevo to throw bombs and kill the Archduke who is going to come there." Princip then showed his hosts the weapons. (50)¹⁰

⁹ The name Popović is common, and one should not confuse Major Rade Popović, the Border Guards officer, with the more famous Colonel Cedomilj Popović, a co-founder, Central Committee member and future secretary of the Black Hand, or with the young Cvijetko Popović, member of the Sarajevo cutout cell.

¹⁰ The Kerovići subsequently came to grief. The Austrians tried them for supporting terrorists, and Nedjo Kerović, who had given the boys a lift on his cart, received a death sentence - eventually commuted to twenty years imprisonment. His father Mitar received a sentence of imprisonment for life. (51)

When the boys arrived in Sarajevo by train from Tuzla, they were expected by a second group of operatives, four men strong and led by Black Hand member Danilo Ilić. Ilić had recruited three more youngsters: a Muslim carpenter from Herzegovina, Muhamed Mehmetbasić, and two local schoolboys, one Cvijetko Popović and the seventeen year-old Vaso Cubrilović, a brother of the aforementioned loquacious schoolteacher. That the latter had never met Ilić before that day, and that the three would not meet Princip and the others until after the coup shows that the second cell was devised, *ab initio*, as a cutout. "In this connection," as Christopher Clark points out, "Mehmedbasić was an inspired choice, because he was a willing, if incompetent, assassin, and thus useful backup for the Belgrade cell, but not a Serb. As Black Hand members, Ilić and Princip could be depended upon (in theory) to take their own lives, or at least remain silent after the event. The Sarajevo boys would be unable to testify, for the simple reason that they knew nothing about the larger background to the plot. The impression would thus emerge that this was a purely local undertaking, with no links to Belgrade." (52)

While there are small details in which the accounts of what happened at Sarajevo on that morning of June 28, 1914, differ, the main outlines are clear. A motorcade of six' cars¹¹ waited for the royal visitors, who arrived around 10 a.m., at the train station, to take them down Appel Quay, the promenade that runs along the Miljacka River to the town hall where the official welcome ceremony was to take place.

It was a sunny day but an ominous date. On June 28, St. Vitus' Day in Austria, VIDOVDAN in Bosnia, 525 years ago, in AD 1389, the Ottoman Turks had defeated the troops of Tsar Stepan Dusan's - fictitious - Serbian Empire at the legendary Battle on Kosovo Field, and consequently this day had become the Serbian National Anniversary day; more important than ever in the present year, for the celebrations of 1914 were to be the first after the "liberation" of Kosovo and Macedonia - resulting from the Second Balkan War - in the previous year. (53)

On a more positive note, this June 28 was also the royal couple's fourteenth wedding anniversary, and a welcome side effect of visiting the provinces was that Sophie could spend the day on the side of her husband without, as in Vienna, being relegated to a background role by the Habsburg court protocol.

The seven conspirators had positioned themselves strategically along the honoured guests' travel route, which was the same one used at every state visit. Official security was conspicuously absent: "The espalier of troops who usually lined the kerbs on such occasions was nowhere to be seen, so that the motorcade passed virtually unprotected in front of the dense crowds. Even the special security detail was missing - its chief had mistakenly climbed into one of the cars with three local Bosnian officers, leaving the rest of his men behind at the railway station." (54)

Three bridges span the river along the part of the Appel Quay the motorcade was to follow. At the first one, Cumurija Bridge, Mehmedbasić, Cubrilović and Cabrinović had posted themselves, on the riverside; opposite, on the landward side, waited Cvijetko Popović and Danilo Ilić - the latter, unarmed, seemed to rehearse the role of *maitre d'honneurs*. At the second bridge, the Latin Bridge, Gavril Princip waited alone; Trifko Grabez was posted on the third, the Imperial Bridge. It seems that the attempt was to take place at Cumurija Bridge, and Princip and Grabez were the reserve or backups, should unexpected developments occur.

The motorcade rolled in the direction of Cumurija Bridge. In the first car were the town's mayor, Fehim Effendi Curčić, and Dr. Edmund Gerde, the superintendent of the police. In the second car's landaulet backseats rode the royal guests, facing them, on the flip seat, was General Potiorek, the governor of Bosnia. On the front seat, aside the chauffeur sat Lieutenant-Colonel Count Franz von Harrach, the car's owner. They were followed by cars filled with local police, lower honoraries and retainers. (55)

The cavalcade moved towards Mehmedbasić, who - alas - at the point of its closest proximity found himself paralyzed, struck by dread and terror, as he had been five months earlier at an aborted attempt of his own at Potiorek. Next in line was Cabrinović, who took out his bomb and armed it by breaking the detonator - a percussion cap -- against the next lamppost. It reported with a loud crack, alarming Harrach and the driver. They turned around, perhaps thinking that a tire had exploded, yet when the chauffeur saw a dark shape flying towards the limousine, he immediately

¹¹ Other sources, e.g. Albertini, have only four cars in the motorcade.

accelerated. The bomb fell short - some say the archduke himself deflected it; others maintain it simply bounced off the back. It hit the street and exploded below the following car, wounding a few of its passengers. Only later was it determined that the detonator - in exploding - had caused a small wound on the Duchess's neck. (56) When the archduke saw the wreck of the third car, he ordered the motorcade to stop so that the injured - among them Potiorek's aide-de-camp Colonel Merizzi - might receive first aid and be brought to the hospital. Then the cavalcade proceeded to the Town Hall, where an abbreviated ceremony was to be held after whose completion the royal couple planned to visit the victims in the infirmary.

Cabrinović had meanwhile been fished out of the - almost dry - riverbed whither he had jumped to get time to swallow the small cyanide wrapper. The poison failed to work, for some unexplained reason, and, after being beaten up for a minute, he was taken to the police station. Cubrilović watched him, paralyzed - like Mehmedbasić - and Popović, overcome with dread, hid away his bomb in the nearest building. Only Princip retained his composure; initially he had assumed that the explosion of Cabrinović's bomb reported success, but when he saw Cabrinović arrested and the royal carriage resume motion in his direction, he thought of firing. The car's speed denied him a clear shot, yet he remained calm enough to take up a new position, on the way the cavalcade was to use on its return. There he waited.

Meanwhile the procession had arrived at the Town Hall, and the mayor had begun to read his prepared lines, which included the assertion that "all of the citizens of the capital city of Sarajevo find that their souls are filled with happiness, and they most enthusiastically greet Your Highness's most illustrious visit with the most cordial of welcomes" (57) The archduke was not convinced, it seems - he had kept almost quiet since the explosion but now urgently inquired whether bombs were indeed part of the cordial welcome. "Mr. Mayor, I came here on a visit and I get bombs thrown at me. It is outrageous. Now you may speak." (58) The mayor's address was over mercifully quick, and Franz Ferdinand asked Governor Potiorek whether one had to expect further attempts. The general did not think so, but advised to skip the rest of the official program. The party should either drive back straight to Ilidze, the small resort town where the royal couple had stayed the last three days, or return, via the Governor's mansion, to the railway station.

Luigi Albertini's collaborator and amanuensis Luciano Magrini was able to talk to two of the conspirators, Vaso Cubrilović and Mohamed Mehmedbasić, during a visit in Serbia in the autumn of 1937, and we shall follow the resulting account:

"The Archduke objected that he must first visit Colonel Merizzi at the garrison hospital, although his wound was known to be slight. Potiorek then suggested that they should go there avoiding the town and once more passing along the Appel Quay where - he said - no one expected the procession to pass. This was not true; because the press had published that on the return from the Town Hall the procession was to pass again along the Appel Quay as far as the Latin bridge. In any case, this was the plan followed.

At the trial [Princip] stated that when he heard the explosion of Cabrinović's bomb he moved with the crowd in that direction and saw that the procession had come to a standstill. Thinking that 'all was over', i.e. that the attempt was successful, and seeing Cabrinović taken away by the police, he thought of shooting him to prevent his talking and then committing suicide himself. But he gave up the idea when he perceived that the procession had moved off again. ...

The cars again took the route via the Appel Quay. The Duchess, who from the Town Hall was to have proceeded straight to the Konak [the Governor's mansion], decided to accompany her husband and again took her seat beside him, while Harrach took up position on the running board on the left side of the car, so as to cover the Archduke with his body.

But Potiorek and the chief of police, who did not expect a second attempt, not only failed to realize the danger of passing along the first part of the Quay again, but also omitted the essential precaution of giving clear instructions to the chauffeurs, particularly to the driver of the Archduke's car. What happened was that the front car containing the chief of police drove along the Appel Quay, but at the Latin Bridge took a right-hand turn into the narrow Francis Joseph Street, the Archduke's car naturally following suit." (59)

It was at this moment that the confusion over the correct route to be taken proved fatal. Harrach's sleek sports car had no reverse gear, which meant that the car had first to be stopped, the engine disengaged, and the vehicle pushed slowly back out of Franz Joseph Street, to Appel Quay, by hand. (60) This delay of perhaps twenty seconds gave Princip relatively much time to draw and steady his weapon, while the fact that the procession was essentially standing instead of moving made his aim much more certain and accurate.

Princip was not more than a few feet away from his target, at point-blank distance, and fired a round each at the archduke and the duchess with Harrach looking on - in horror - from the wrong, the opposite side of the car. The count later reported to one of Francis Ferdinand's biographers:

"While with one hand I drew out my handkerchief to wipe the blood from the Archduke's lips, Her Highness cried: 'For God's sake! What has happened to you?' Then she sank down from her seat with her face between the Archduke's knees. I had no idea that she had been hit and thought that she had fainted from shock. Then His Royal Highness said: 'Soferl, Soferl! Don't die. Live for my children!'

Thereupon I seized the Archduke by the coat-collar to prevent his head from sinking forwards and asked him: 'Is Your Royal Highness in great pain?' To which he clearly replied: 'It is nothing.' Now his expression changed and he repeated six or seven times: 'It is nothing,' more and more losing consciousness and with a fading voice.

Then came a brief pause followed by a convulsive rattle in the throat, caused by the loss of blood, which ceased on the arrival at the Konak. The two unconscious forms were carried into the Konak where death soon supervened." (61)

A second wave of urgent telegrams spewed forth from the Sarajevo postal station. After the first attempt, the archduke himself had directed a telegram to his uncle, the emperor, asserting the couple's well-being, while the local reporters filed their stories. Now, at just past 11 a.m. local time, the news had changed in such dramatic fashion that at first many people refused to believe it.

A moment was frozen in history; as acknowledged in the words of Christopher Clark, "the Sarajevo murders, like the murder of President John F. Kennedy at Dallas in 1963, were an event whose hot light captured the people and places of a moment and burned them into memory. People recalled exactly where they were and whom they were with when the news reached them." (62)

What was yet to be determined was the event's impact on the world. Technically, a prince had been assassinated - worse had happened in the history of the continent - but it soon became painfully clear that a whole age had come to an end on the streets of Sarajevo - the age of liberalism, civil government, and the belief in the possible, nay, imminent augmentation of the human condition by technological and philosophical progress. It turned out that what had been murdered at the crossing of Appel Quay and Franz Joseph Street was nothing less than the pride and optimism of the rational age - the foundations of the "Proud Tower" - rejected by irrationalism, nationalism, vanity and hate. When the consequences of Sarajevo had played out, thirty-one respectively seventy-six years later, in 1945 or 1990, depending on one's point of view, Europe had lost power over the globe. Sarajevo marked the beginning of the end.

À LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU

*In peacetime ... it is most important
to back the side that is in the right --
but in times of war, the strongest.*

Caelius to Cicero

It had been the legacy of the Second Balkan War that it created more problems than it solved. Moreover, because the two most critical issues - Austro-Serbian enmity and Russian designs on the Straits - had remained undecided, everybody assumed, correctly, that a third war might be in the offing, for even Turkey - clear loser of the first round - had rebounded, much to Russia's dismay.

Except for Great Britain - busy with Ireland - Sarajevo brought the Balkan back into the focus of continental diplomacy. It is far from true that the murders were of little importance, as some argued - unlike in the cases of Tsar Alexander II and U.S. President William McKinley, it was said, the Sarajevo murders had not targeted a head of state, only an archduke, of which there were many and who was not even active in his country's civil government. They judged Sarajevo an accidental occurrence that led to the Great War not by its own weight but only because in its aftermath the Powers failed to find a proper response to the mechanisms of escalation. This contention seems to disregard that the Austrian and Russian mobilizations of 1913, even without the former's provocation by a blatant act of terrorism, had brought the continent to the brink of war only a few months earlier. Then the Liman von Sanders crisis broke out in Turkey, upsetting German-Russian relations again, and the Young Turks bought more guns from Krupp to improve the defences of the Straits against Russia.

Since the circumstances of the crime had allowed the immediate capture of both Cabrinović and Princip, the investigation began on the same day. And because the international implications of the event became apparent almost immediately - the suspicion of connivance by the Serbian and Russian governments in particular - the scandal kept on mushrooming instead of fading away. The failure of the cyanide had thwarted the assassins' suicide plans, and soon after the Sarajevo police had fished Cabrinović out of the Miljacka, it was determined that "he was an old acquaintance, who had been banished from Sarajevo for five years for socialist opinions." (1) While some said, perhaps unavoidably, that he was in truth an Austrian police spy like his father had been, and that the Sarajevo conspiracy was an Austrian ploy, it was easily established that he had moved to Belgrade, taken a job at the Serbian state printing house, and spent his time in the cafés of the Serbian ultra-nationalist scene, "uneducated, irresponsible, vain, talkative, he was a revolutionary whose muddleheaded ideas were sincerely held." (2)

Princip, "the outstanding figure in the group of assassins," (3) arrived at the Sarajevo police station less than an hour later. The police doctor determined that his injuries - results of his being manhandled by the crowd - were not serious, and the Sarajevo District Judge Leo Pfeffer began his interrogation at once. He noted:

"The young assassin, exhausted by his beating, was unable to utter a word. He was undersized, emaciated, sallow, sharp featured. It was difficult to imagine that so frail looking an individual could have committed so serious a deed. Even his clear blue eyes, burning and piercing but serene, had nothing cruel or criminal in their expression. They spoke of innate intelligence, of steady and harmonious energy.

When I told him I was the investigating judge and asked him if he had the strength to speak, he answered my questions with perfect clearness in a voice that grew steadily stronger and more assured. He confessed that already two years earlier he had vowed on the grave of Bogdan Zerajić to avenge the man who had sought the life of General Varesanin.¹

When he learnt that the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was to visit Sarajevo, he decided to take his vengeance because he regarded the Heir Apparent as the embodiment of the supreme power which exercised its terrible pressure on the Yugoslavs.² 'From the footboard' - he said - 'I aimed at the Archduke, whose car had slowed down at the street corner. I do not remember what I thought at that moment. I only know that I fired twice or perhaps several times, without knowing whether I had hit or missed, because at that moment the crowd began to beat me.' (4)

It is perhaps important to address the inescapable allegations of torture right away. As per the interviews his co-author Magrini conducted with the remaining assassins in 1937, Albertini asserts:

"Their confessions were, however, not extracted under torture as had been represented by Borislav Jevtić in a play and by Dobroslov Jevdević in his book SARAJEVSKI ATENTATORI. This book prints an alleged letter from Grabez to his father, describing horrible tortures (including being bitten by police dogs) by which his confessions were extorted (pp 51-3).

Nothing about such tortures came out in the trial, where the accused would not have failed to reveal them if they had been subjected to them. The lawyer Zistler and the assassin Vaso Cubrilović have assured the present writer that torture was not used, and Princip never spoke of such things in his conversations with (police physician) Dr. Pappenheim.

One thing that is true is that Grabez was dipped in the river by the police to extract confessions and does not mention this in writing to his father. But Pfeffer - as he himself told the present writer - firmly intervened so that the accused was no longer maltreated. Tartaglia, who after the Sarajevo crime was arrested and sentenced to five years' imprisonment, has assured the present writer that he never suffered the least violence. He and Colonel Popović regard the Grabez letter to his father as apocryphal." (5)

It quickly became clear that torture was not necessary - the Austrians simply kept the two conspirators separate of each other and bided their time - the young men spilled the beans soon enough. Initially Princip denied any acquaintance with Cabrinović - or anyone else - he had acted on his own and received the weapons from unknown "patriots". Cabrinović sang the same song in E Minor, having received the bomb "from 'an anarchist' in Belgrade whose name he could not remember." (6)

But Cabrinović changed his story by next morning, June 29, admitting to have conspired with Princip in Belgrade. The Austrian police, who went to arrest every known nationalist sympathizer, soon established that the net of the conspiracy was considerably wider than it seemed. Especially useful was their arrest of Danilo Ilić on July 1, who confessed

¹ General Marian Varesanin, the Austrian Governor of Bosnia. On June 3, 1910, Zerajić, a Serbian student from Herzegovina, fired five bullets at him, all of which missed, and then committed suicide. (7)

² Another matter of perception: the "terrible" oppression of the Yugoslavs in Bosnia manifested itself in a higher - if still modest - living standard than in Serbia.

everything during his interrogation upon the promise not to be sentenced to death. He admitted that he had lodged together with Princip, whom he had known since 1908, in Belgrade, and that he was well acquainted with various Serbian revolutionaries. Then, Albertini recounts, Ilić related

... that Princip, whose ideals he shared, had written him from Belgrade before Easter that he with two other men was soon to prepare an outrage against Archduke Francis Ferdinand on the occasion of the royal visit to Sarajevo, asking Ilić to find three more assassins in Sarajevo and saying that he would be given the necessary means of carrying out the deed.

Ilić deposed that Princip's accomplices were Nedeljko Cabrinović and Trifko Grabez. The latter had lodged with Princip, and after the crime had gone first to the village of Pale, where his father was the Serbian pope, and then to Visegrad, to escape into Serbia.

Pfeffer stopped the interrogation and telephoned to the police at Sarajevo, Pale and Visegrad to arrest Grabez, and the arrest took place at Pale. Pfeffer relates that in the cause of further interrogation Ilić named the three other assassins recruited by him in Sarajevo and those who had enabled the bombs to be taken into Bosnia. ... It was as a result of Ilić's revelations that the other accomplices were arrested. (8)

Within nine days of the incident, the Austrian police had all except Mehmedbasić, who had escaped to Montenegro, and thus the conspiracy had been blown wide open in a relatively short period of time. While the assassins' ties to Serbia were conspicuous, the problem of who did what on account of whom remained perplexing. The provenance of the weapons was easily determined: the revolvers were a Belgian model made under Serbian license, and the bombs hailed, as mentioned, from the Serbian state armoury at Kragujevac. (9)

But the name of the mastermind provided by Ilić was that of Major Tankosić - not Colonel Dimitriević - and the Austrians eventually established the link to the shady railroad employee Milan Ciganović, but Dimitriević - and the whole Ujedinjenje ili Smrt! - seemed to escape their attention until Professor Stanojević published his essay about the Black Hand in 1923. The Austrians instead followed the implied, nay, rather obvious link to Narodna Odbrana, which the conspirators - since it was false - heartily supported. Yet what was clear beyond a doubt was that the spiritual instigators of the crime lived in Belgrade. The Austrian police established quickly that Cabrinović's earlier socialist group had had ties to Belgrade, that Princip studied there, and that in the house of his brother "an entire library of nationalist-revolutionary publications of Belgrade origin" had been found. (10) The Austrian Ambassador in Belgrade summarized in a report to Vienna that:

"I would not yet be so bold as to accuse the Belgrade [government] directly of the murder, but they are surely indirectly guilty, and the ring-leaders are to be found not just among the uneducated masses, but in the Propaganda Department of the [Serbian] Foreign Ministry, among those Serbian university professors and newspaper editors who for years have sown hatred and now have reaped murders." (11)

When Princip and Cabrinović were asked about Tankosić, they tried to minimize his involvement - Grabez called him a "secondary figure" (12) - but Judge Pfeffer, who had Tankosić's name from Ilić, played the boys against each other and soon obtained Princip's admission that the orders came from Tankosić, not Ciganović. That, again, led the Austrians to wrongly suspect Narodna Odbrana, for Tankosić, the former Comitaji leader, was a military man and they suspected him to stick to his trade. Parts of the Austrian military intentionally sought to shift the conspiracy's ties to the Serbian military rather than the civil government because the hawks - Conrad von Hötzendorf in particular - longed to fight the war that had eluded them in 1913. Potiorek, in a telegram to the Austro-Hungarian Joint Minister of War, had no qualms about making his feelings known, and opined that "firm action in the domain of foreign policy would restore peace and normality to Bosnia-Herzegovina." (13)

Was Austria unaware of the Black Hand? They were not. As early as February 12, 1912, the Austrian Military Attaché at Belgrade, Otto Gellinek, had reported to Vienna that "the founders of the Crna Ruka (Black Hand) were 'Major Dragutin Dimitriević, called Apis, the leading spirit of the conspiracy of 1903, and Milan Milovanović, then his chief helper and intimate,'" and continued that "the founders of the new organization chose a current slogan 'Union or Death', which evidently means the union of all Serbs, the fulfilment of Pan-Serb aspirations." (14) When, on January 20, 1914, Colonel

Stefanović-Vilovsky, one of the regicides of 1903, was appointed Serbian Minister of War, Baron Giesl von Gieslingen, the Austrian Ambassador at Belgrade and Gellinek's superior, reported that "the Crna Ruka is again in full possession of its influence and all attempts of the Government and of the Radicals to rid themselves of it fail and lead again and again to their capitulation to the conspirators." (15)

In addition, the archives of the Ballhausplatz held a documentation of clippings about the Black Hand - collected from all major Balkan as well as French, German and Austrian newspapers - and since we have now established that the Austrian government was aware of the group - why, then, did they not make their knowledge public? Surely someone would have noticed that they were not identical with the "Narodna Odbrana"? Some observers have held that it was "doubtful whether the Tsar and the English Government would have decided to support Serbia [after Sarajevo] if the Austro-Hungarian Government in explaining its action against Serbia had produced its evidence about the association whose leaders were the regicides of 1903," and that the publication of the material was therefore in Austria's interest. (16)

Why, then, did they never call attention upon the Black Hand? Albertini thinks that the Ballhausplatz simply overlooked it.

[Perhaps Austria] refrained from accusing the Black Hand because, since it was a secret society over which the Belgrade Government had no hold and with which it was at war, [the Serbian Prime Minister] Pasić might have been enabled to elude the Austrian demands [presented in the ultimatum of July 23].

But it is more likely that the Austro-Hungarian Government in the confusion of the moment never thought of the possible complicity of the Black Hand and concentrated all its suspicions on the Narodna Odbrana, whose activities for five years had been a constant source of worry to Vienna.

Berchtold's ignorance of Balkan questions is well known. Jovan Jovanović, the former Serbian Minister at Vienna, told the present writer that it probably never entered Berchtold's head to connect the crime with the Black Hand, though he knew of its existence. None of Potiorek's telegrams from Sarajevo or those from Giesl, the Austrian Minister at Belgrade, mentions the Black Hand as a possible instigator or accomplice in the outrage. The name never occurs in any Austrian document of July 1914, except in one from Nish of which we shall shortly speak.

It is not to be found in the minutes preserved in the Vienna State Archives relating to the drafting of the ultimatum nor in those of the discussions in the Council of Joint Ministers. Giesl, whose reports of Black Hand activities we have already mentioned, stated to the present writer that neither before nor after his arrival in Belgrade did he have any grounds for suspecting the Black Hand of complicity.

It was the Narodna Odbrana which the Monarchy had found itself up against in 1908-9 and against which were concentrated the anger and suspicion of Forgach, the Counsellor on Serbian affairs at the Ballplatz. In any case, as the present writer was told by [Head of Chancery at the Ballplatz] Musulin, who actually drafted the ultimatum, it would not have been possible to ask for the dissolution of a secret society or measures against its members.

All this explains why Judge Pfeffer at the preliminary investigation, when told of the part played in the crime by Ciganović and the Serbian Major Tankosić, who belonged "to the military party hostile to Pasić", did not pursue the clue and was not urged by Vienna to do so. In the collection of Austrian diplomatic documents there occurs no telegram sent to Potiorek by Vienna, in reply to those he sent day by day on the proceedings of the preliminary investigation, asking for further inquiry into any aspect of it. If Vienna had known that the Black Hand was involved in the plot and had not been so slow to pursue the clue, it would have had an excellent opportunity to ask for the arrest not only of Ciganović and Tankosić but also of the members of the Central Committee of the Black Hand, in particular of Colonel Dimitriević, chief of Military Intelligence of the General Staff.

And this would have been a request Pasić would have been forced to refuse, given the power of the Black Hand in Serbia. Moreover, it would have created a great sensation all over Europe if it had been made known that the outrage was committed by the same regicides who in 1903 had perpetrated the massacre of the Obrenović royal pair. (17)

There is, of course, one, and only one, explanation for the conspicuous absence of Ujedinjenje ili smrt! from the Austrian correspondence: to protect a source. Austria's discretion, if one can call it that, makes sense only if the Austrian military intelligence service had an agent in the highest echelons of the Black Hand - most likely in its Central Committee - and allowed the Sarajevo plan to run because they calculated - most assassinations fail - that the unsuccessful attempt would give them, together with some juicy confidential information from their now-unmasked source, the means to strike a lethal blow to the enemy. In the above, Albertini puts the cart before the horse: the unsuccessful attempt would have been the most productive for Austria's foreign policy.

Had Austrian civil intelligence - the State Police - run the source in the Black Hand, they would have attempted to thwart the assassination plan or at least make sure that the archduke were not to visit Sarajevo at all, or, at the bare minimum, not on so special a day as June 28 and only with a full security detail. The military, however, was no friend of the archduke; should the attempt succeed, against the odds, nichevo, so much the better; the head of Slavic appeasement and hence the mortal enemy of the Hungarians would have been removed. In this scenario, Governor General Potiorek, a known anti-Slav militarist, was the perfect man in Havana, er, Sarajevo.

Predictably, the accused made more or less conflicting statements as the days in court went on, but since then the Great War was already raging, nothing could be left to chance or doubt. Berchtold wrote to Bilinski - still supervisor of the Bosno-Herzegovinan administration - that

"... the verdict by which the trial was to end should take full account of the formidable international consequences of the crime.

A verdict not corresponding to what is expected ... would compromise the statements issued by the authorities of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the preliminary inquiry and thereby the first diplomatic move against Serbia; in general, our right to enter Serbia in the conflict which has given birth to the World War would itself be called in doubt." (18)

The tribunal's verdict fulfilled the expectations - the boys had all admitted to the conspiracy and were thus found guilty. Since Austrian law forbade the death sentence for minors, i.e. persons under the age of twenty-one, Princip, Cabrinović and Grabez received sentences of twenty years' imprisonment, Cubrilović sixteen and Popović thirteen years. Danilo Ilić was sentenced to death and hanged. While the sickly Cabrinović and Princip died in detention at the fortress prison of Theresienstadt of tuberculosis in 1916 respectively 1918, and Grabez soon thereafter, Cubrilović and Popović were freed after the war and went on to live in the new state of Yugoslavia they had helped to create. Cubrilović became a professor of history at Belgrade University and Popović director of schools in the Jagodina district. (19) Albertini and Magrini further note, on Serbian hero-worship:

Around Gavrilo Princip there concentrated all the admiration of the Serbs for political assassins. The remains of the three Belgrade conspirators who died in prison were transferred in 1920 from the Bohemian fortress of Theresienstadt to Yugoslavia accompanied by several Serbian members of parliament. The anniversary of the outrage was celebrated at Sarajevo by religious and patriotic speeches in honour of Princip. On 2 February 1930, on the house in front of which Francis Ferdinand and Duchess Sophia were assassinated, a marble tablet was put up with the following inscription: "On this historic spot, on 28 June 1914 on St. Vitus Day (Vidov Dan) Gavrilo Princip proclaimed freedom."

The tablet was unveiled with a solemn religious ceremony over which the archbishop presided. It was attended by the relatives of Cubrilović, Grabez and Jovanović. Milan Božić, secretary of the Narodna Odbrana, called to the crowd to sing hymns to the "hero" Gavrilo Princip. In the winter of the same year at Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia, an avenue received the name of Principova Aley, in memory of Princip. (20)

Although the Black Hand was alluded to only twice during the trial,³ and the name of Dragutin Dimitriević was never mentioned, it became clear that the Austrian government had a good idea of the actual Serbian connections to the crime, whether they made their knowledge public it or not. The verdict stated *expressis verbis*:

"The Court regards it as proved by the evidence that both the Narodna Odbrana and military circles in the Kingdom of Serbia in charge of the espionage service, collaborated in the outrage. ...

There is no doubt that both the Narodna Odbrana and military circles on the active list in the Kingdom of Serbia knew of the aims of the outrage and 'were prodigal of all possible assistance and all possible protection to the perpetrators for whom they actually procured the means of carrying out the assassination.

The Narodna Odbrana and military circles on the active list in the Kingdom of Serbia not only collaborated in the outrage in this way, but also found a means intended to prevent the discovery of their collaboration once the outrage was perpetrated (i.e. Ciganović had given poison to Princip and his associates, before they left Belgrade, advising them to poison themselves as soon as they had carried out the outrage, in order not to betray their accomplices)." (21)

Who, if not Dimitriević - and his brainchild Ujedinjenje ili smrt! - could be characterized as belonging to "military circles in the Kingdom of Serbia in charge of the espionage service", persons who were "on the active list"?

Yet the Austrian government choose not to clarify these hints, although as early as two days after the incident, the whole world was discussing Serbia's possible responsibility. The acting French Consul at Budapest, for example, wrote to his superiors at the Quai d'Orsay on June 30:

"To establish the responsibility of Serbia, who has not got his own little pointer? Everyone remembers the démarche said to have been undertaken a few days ago at the Ballplatz by the Serbian Minister, M. Jovanović, to draw attention to the dangers awaiting the Archduke in Bosnia." (22)

If the acting consul in Budapest - not exactly a high-ranked diplomat - was aware of this mission, one may assume it was not a closely guarded secret to begin with. As it turned out, the plot had leaked - not in Bosnia, i.e. on the Austrian side, but in Belgrade, on the conspirators' soil. We may be reminded in this context that, from late 1913 on, the outward success of the Second Balkan War had precipitated an internal Serbian crisis over the administration of the newly acquired provinces, which the military regarded their personal toys and whose control they were unwilling to relinquish. It was not only a matter of power, Christopher Clark points out

... but also of policy, for the hardliners took the view that only a firm and illiberal administration would be suited to the consolidation of Serbian control in areas of mixed ethnicity. When the Radical minister of the interior Stojan Protić issued a Priority Decree in April 1914 formally subordinating the army to the civil authorities, a fully fledged crisis broke out.

Officers in the new areas refused to comply with the decree, the military party linked arms with the Independent Radical opposition in the Skupstina, just as the conspirators had done after 1903. There was even talk of an impending coup, to be coordinated by Apis, who would lead troops of the Belgrade garrison to the royal palace, force King Peter to abdicate in favour of his son Prince Alexander and assassinate the Radical members of the cabinet. (23)

Although Pasić and the civil cabinet had won the fight by a hair's breadth by May 1914, the danger was far from over and it seems that, a few weeks before Sarajevo, a little bird sang a tune into the Prime Minister's ear. The former Minister of

³ It was referred to as a subcommittee of the Narodna Odbrana.

Education, Ljuba Jovanović,⁴ who had met Princip in his official capacity a few times in Belgrade before the Sarajevo incident, published an essay in 1924 in which he related the following story:

"I do not remember whether it was at the end of May or the beginning of June, when one day M. Pasić said to us (he conferred on these matters more particularly with Stojan Protić, who was then Minister of the Interior, but he said this much to the rest of us) that there were people who were preparing to go to Sarajevo to kill Francis Ferdinand, who was to go there to be solemnly received on Vidov Dan.

As they afterwards told me, the plot was hatched by a group of secretly organized persons and in patriotic Bosno-Herzegovinian student circles in Belgrade. M. Pasić and the rest of us said, and Stojan agreed, that he should issue instructions to the frontier authorities on the Drina to deny a crossing to the youths who had already set out from Belgrade for that purpose. But the frontier 'authorities' themselves belonged to the organization, and did not carry out Stojan's instructions, but reported to him (and he afterwards reported to us), that the order had reached them too late, for the young men had already got across.

Thus the endeavour of the Government to prevent the execution of the plot failed, as did also the endeavour made on his own initiative by our Minister in Vienna, M. Joca Jovanović⁵ in an interview with the Minister Bilinski, to dissuade the Archduke from the fatal journey which he contemplated. And so the attempt at Sarajevo was to be carried out, in more terrible measure than had been anticipated and with results which no one could then have pictured even in his wildest dreams." (24)

Yet this article seems to invite more questions than it provides answers. If the Pasić government knew the circle of suspects so well - Bosnian students, armed and trained by the Black Hand - and the border "authorities" apparently knew their identities, for how else would they know that the "young men had already got across" - shouldn't it have been possible to give Vienna a detailed warning? What exactly did Ambassador Jovanović relate to Bilinski, the Austrian Joint Minister of Finance, and why did he not address Berchtold, the Foreign Minister, directly? Herr Jovanović was not per se regarded a reliable bringer of news in Austrian eyes - he was suspected of having fomented anti-Austrian disorder during his earlier posting as Serbian consul in Uskub and was even rumoured of having commanded a band of Comitaji before his diplomatic service. It is possible that he addressed Bilinski because the latter was, technically, the supervisor of the Bosno-Herzegovinian administration and thus perhaps better suited to arrange local countermeasures, or was the warning indirect and vague by design? (25)

At any rate, on June 28, 1924, the tenth anniversary of the Sarajevo incident, J. Jovanović wrote in a letter to the Neues Wiener Tagblatt, a Viennese daily:

"So far as I remember, my visit took place about 5 June. ... I explained quite openly to the Minister what I had learned, namely that the manoeuvres were to be held in Bosnia on the Drina just opposite to Serbia, and that the Archduke himself would take command [in reality they took place elsewhere and the Archduke was not in command].⁶

I said: '... If this is true, I can assure Your Excellency that it will arouse the greatest discontent among the Serbs, who must regard this as an act of provocation. Manoeuvres in such circumstances are dangerous. Among the Serb youths, there may be one who will put a ball-cartridge in his rifle or revolver in place of a blank carriage, and he may fire it, and the bullet might strike the man giving provocation. Therefore it would be good and reasonable that the Archduke should not go to Sarajevo; that the manoeuvres should not be held on Vidov Dan; and that they should not be held in Bosnia.'

⁴ He wrote: "I saw him two or three times in my department, when he came to see me to ask me to allow him to sit privately for the examination at the 'Gymnasium', first for the fifth, and then for the sixth class." (26)

⁵ His first name also appears as "Jovan".

⁶ Bracketed insertion in original quotation, at Albertini II/102.

To these clear words Dr. von Bilinski replied that he ... would inform me what result they had with the Archduke, although he himself could not believe in any such results of the manoeuvres as I foresaw; and that moreover he was in possession of information that Bosnia was completely quiet. A few days later I again called on Minister von Bilinski about this matter, but nevertheless had shortly to learn that the original program would be followed and nothing changed in spite of my warnings." (27)

Comparing the scenarios described by L. and J. Jovanović, we recognize a striking dissimilarity. Ljuba Jovanović describes the actual Belgrade plot - young men issuing from Serbia, armed with guns and bombs by the Black Hand - while Ambassador J. Jovanović describes a danger resulting from general Bosnian dissatisfaction, a faction of the military, perhaps, or even an attempt perpetrated by a single man. In addition, since this warning seems to have come of Jovanović's own volition, indirect and circumspect as it was, it could not command the same attention as a warning by Pasić himself or his Foreign Minister would have yielded. The ambassador's appeal to caution was wrapped in a critique on the manoeuvres in general and their taking place in Bosnia in particular, with an exhortation, perhaps, to postpone or cancel them - very different from the terror plot described by the Minister of Education. But if it were correct that, as Ambassador Jovanović later claimed, both he himself and Pasić were ignorant of the Belgrade plot, his warning would have been a truly miraculous coincidence. Thus we have to deal with two separate warnings.

What, then, did Pasić know, we must ask, and what did he pass on - given that, as early as June 30, the Belgrade newspaper *Stampa* printed an article alleging that the Serbian Minister in Vienna had warned the Austrian government of a conspiracy, because "the Serbian Government had come into possession of information which led it to believe that a plot had been engineered in Sarajevo to be carried out if the Heir Apparent were to go there"? (28)

Two days after the incident, when international newspapers as well as the greater and lesser diplomats of the world publicly discussed Belgrade's potential culpability, the presumption of her innocence had already been rejected. In the light of the quick confessions of Princip et al. that reached the world from Sarajevo, some contemporaries came to believe, and historians tend to agree, that Pasić was kept informed by sources very close to the heart of the conspiracy - most likely Milan Ciganović himself, busy railroad employee and member of the Black Hand, and Major Tankosić, fellow Black Hand, former Comitaji and handler of terrorists. The warning to his cabinet, as painted by Ljuba Jovanović, was detailed enough -- necessarily Pasić couldn't admit to his sources. Prime ministers who have knowledge of conspiracies that threaten a high foreign official are ill advised to condone such activities. Pasić might have let the plot proceed on the assumption that he, perhaps, shared with the Austrian military intelligence service: most plots fail - but in their failure they become powerful weapons.

In an interview with the Hungarian newspaper *Az Est* on July 7, nine days after the assassination, Pasić explicitly denied any foreknowledge - personal or of his administration - and asserted that no warning had been issued to Vienna. (29) Here the contradictions begin, and indeed the Serbs never succeeded in quelling the suspicions. Many believed that, even if Pasić and his government were personally blameless, they did not have the border situation under control - their renewed attempts in the early summer of 1914 were thwarted at every stage by the military, which operated in cahoots with Ujedinjenje ili smrt!, and thus innocence of the government would not necessarily constitute innocence of the nation. Christopher Clark summarizes the border business:

The three Sarajevo-bound assassins who entered Bosnia at the end of May left virtually no trace in the Serbian official records. In any case they were not the only ones moving weapons illegally across the border in the summer of 1914. Reports from the Serbian border authorities during the first half of June reveal a dense web of covert cross-border activity.

On 4 June, the district chief of Podrinje at Sabac alerted the minister of the interior, Protić, to a plan by officers working with the border control "to transfer a certain quantity of bombs and weapons using some of our people in Bosnia." The district chief had considered impounding the weapons, but as these were in a suitcase that was already on the Bosnian side of the border, he feared that an attempt to retrieve it might

incriminate or expose the operations of the frontier forces. Further inquiries revealed that the agent who was supposed to take charge of the weapons on the Bosnian side was none other than Rade Malobabić.⁷

What was alarming about these operations, one local official complained, was not simply that they were conducted without the knowledge of the relevant civilian authorities, but that they were undertaken "publicly and in broad daylight". And since the perpetrators were "public officials", the impression might easily arise "that we welcomed such actions".

Pasić and Interior Minister Protić saw the point. If it is true that Pasić already knew at this time of the plot's existence, we would expect him to have done whatever was possible to shut down activities that might incriminate the Belgrade government. On 10 June, word indeed went out to the civilian authorities of the border districts that "all such activities should be prevented." Whether the civilian commanders in the affected areas were in any position to interdict the operations of the Border Guards was another question.

When Raiko Stepanović, a sergeant of the Border Guards who had smuggled a suitcase full of guns and bombs around the border, was summoned to give an account of himself to the district chief, he simply refused to appear. Following a meeting of the cabinet in mid-June, an order went out to the civilian authorities demanding an official inquiry on the illegal passage of arms and persons into Bosnia and a curt note was sent to the captain of the 4 Border Guards on 16 June "recommending" that "he cease this traffic of arms, munitions and other explosives from Serbia into Bosnia." There was no reply. (30)

It is hard to resist the suspicion that Pasić's ukase of June 10, about two weeks after the Princip party had crossed the border, was anything but a fig leaf. It might signify, again, that Pasić clandestinely opted for letting things proceed; for once he might have agreed with his bitter enemy Dimitrijević that a policy of Trialism and the integration of the Southern Slavs into the Austrian Monarchy, which Franz Ferdinand was known to support, would be a lethal danger to Pan-Slavism and Serbia's leading role in it.

In addition, one ought to keep in mind that assassinations were not uncommon in these years, the heyday of anarchism. Tsar Alexander II as well as U.S. President William McKinley had been assassinated as well as Francis Joseph's own wife, Empress Elizabeth, all of them without wars resulting from their murder. Hence, simply consenting to the attempt by passivity might not have seemed a big risk to Pasić; his problem was perhaps less that he disagreed with the plot but that he had no control over its details and thus not over its possible political repercussions. And control he could not gain - there the Black Hand was in his way. When Stepanović, the Minister of War, directed an official inquiry to the Chief of the General Staff whether any covert military operations were currently pursued in Bosnia, he was answered first by the Chief of Operations, who professed utter ignorance, and then by the Intelligence Department, i.e. Dimitrijević, who "defended the record and reputation of agent Malobabić and insisted that any guns passed to his hands were purely for the self-defence by Serbian agents working in Bosnia." Of bombs, he had no idea at all, but made clear that danger could not result "on account of the discreet and necessary operations of the military but because of the insolence of civilian operatives who claimed the right to police the border," attempting "to interfere with sensitive military operations beyond their competence and understanding." (31)

Pasić realized that he was taken for a ride, and attempted to go to the offensive. He had reason to believe, he wrote to Stepanović, that the military engaged in conduct aiming "at the creation of conflict between Serbia and Austria-Hungary," (32) and thus threatened the existence of the nation.

"All our allies and friends of Serbia, if they knew what our officers and sergeants are doing, would not only abandon us, they would stand on the side of Austria—Hungary and allow her to punish her restless and disloyal neighbour, who prepares revolts and assassinations on her territory.

⁷ The Serbian equivalent to James Bond, member of the Narodna Odbrana, co-founder of Ujedinjenje ili smrt! and master spy against Austria, in Christopher Clark's words "a super-agent, a man of extraordinary dedication and cunning who knew the borderlands well and repeatedly evaded capture by the Austrian authorities. ... It was probably Malobabić who first informed Apis of the impending visit to Sarajevo by Franz Ferdinand ... in June 1914." (33)

The life interests of Serbia impose on her the obligation to be aware of everything that could provoke an armed conflict with Austria—Hungary at a time when peace is necessary for us to recuperate and prepare for the future events that lie ahead." (34)

This letter from Pasić to Stepanović is dated June 24, that is, four days before the assassination, but in its prophecy seems too good to be true, so to say, and it is hard to suppress doubts on its authenticity. Clearly Pasić could have given the Austrian Minister in Belgrade a most detailed warning, enough to stop the attempt, had he wanted, yet he chose not to. Neither did he order a "severe investigation" (35) on the military until when, in late June, the Princip party was long since in Sarajevo, and although - as Christopher Clark points out - Dimitriević was the top target of the inquiry, he "remained in post as head of Serbian Military Intelligence throughout the crisis - he was not dismissed or even suspended from duties pending the outcome of the investigation." (36) Perhaps a draw, a cease-fire, was what both parties would have been secretly content with.

The problem with Pasić's testimonials is, as Albertini candidly observed, that "he was not accustomed to telling invariably the truth." (37) Yet Ljuba Jovanović's story of Pasić informing the cabinet about the attempt around the end of May or beginning of June is well attested to in other sources. The Serbian Minister at St. Petersburg, Spalaiković, seems to have given an interview two days after the event to a Russian newspaper, which was then summarized in the Vienna mainstay *Neue Freie Presse* on July 2. (38) The following note, dated July 1, 1914 was found in the French archives, written by Abel Ferry, the Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs:

"I have received a call from Monsieur Vesnić, the Serbian Minister, with whom I keep up an old acquaintanceship and who, as one friend to another (en ami) told me

(1) That he regarded the outrage on the Archduke as a reply to the annexation of Bosnia. Prince (Alexander) moreover, was regarded as an homme à poigne. The Serbian Government had actually warned the Austrian Government that it had got wind of the plot." (39)

Colonel Lesanin, who was the Serbian Military Attaché at Vienna in 1914, testified to Luciano Magrini in October 1915:

"The Serbian Government knew of the plot that was being hatched at Sarajevo; in fact a telegram from Pasić" reached the Serbian Legation at Vienna in the first fortnight of June, asking the Minister Jovan Jovanović to let the Austrian Government know that, owing to a leakage of information, the Serbian Government had grounds to suspect that a plot was being hatched against the life of the Archduke on the occasion of his journey to Bosnia.

Since this visit might give rise to regrettable incidents on the part of some fanatic, it would be useful to suggest to the Austro-Hungarian Government the advisability of postponing the Archduke's visit." (40)

There is altogether too much smoke, from Serbian as well as Allied sources, to doubt the existence of the fire, i.e. the warning to Vienna, yet it remains unclear whether (a) Ambassador Jovanović's warning sprang from his own misgivings on the desirability of Austrian manoeuvres in Bosnia and described the scenario he related to Bilinski (see n. 27), or whether he relayed the Belgrade plot that his namesake, the Minister of Education, had been informed of by Pasić, (b) whether he passed the warning in fact and (c) if so, why to Bilinski, not to Berchtold. It would seem that in regards to issue (a) he must have acted from the former, for of the Belgrade conspiracy he had no idea, as he subsequently asserted. In a letter of December 31, 1932, he claimed that "neither Pasić nor I knew that an outrage was being prepared in Sarajevo." (41) This is altogether improbable.

In another letter, dated January 25, 1933, Jovanović repeated that "the Serbian Government had any positive information, or that it planned or took part in the planning of the tragedy of St. Vitus' Day, no, a thousand times no." (42) Yet not only are his statements in this respect directly contradicted by his colleagues, the fact that he claimed ignorance of the real threat but warned of a nonexistent one makes his warning to Bilinski a truly miraculous coincidence. As Albertini points out correctly, Jovanović's protestations do not cut to the heart of the matter, because no one ever alleged what he specifically denies - that Pasić planned the attempt - nor does it seem likely that he would have issued any warning to

Vienna without Belgrade's approval. His credibility was low. Not only was he a "frenzied Serb nationalist" (43), suspected of being an ex-terrorist and hence not in Berchtold's good graces to begin with, but also had ties to Dimitrijević and the Black Hand. He was their candidate for Foreign Minister in the government they hoped to form to replace Pasić's - who had resigned as Prime Minister - administration after the elections of August 14⁸

It is not clear, however, why Albertini seems to accept Jovanović's later declaration that "even if the Serbian Government was aware of what was being prepared, it could not betray the perpetrators once they were across the frontier and send them to the gallows in Austria," (44) which is not only an exceptionally lame excuse - they could have been arrested on any number of pretences - but which essentially contradicts his earlier statement that neither Pasić nor himself had any idea of the Belgrade plot.

About ten years after the war, testimonies surfaced alleging that Dimitrijević had not only guided the assassins along - whether he initiated the plot or not - but also kept the Russian Military Attaché at Belgrade, Colonel Artamonov, and hence his government informed of the plan. This was first alleged by the Vienna journalist Leopold Mandl in two articles in June 1924, which claimed that Dimitrijević informed Artamonov, who "a few days later ... reappeared at the office of the Intelligence Section of the Serbian General Staff and declared that whatever happened, Russia would back Serbia." (45) Mandl, however, did not name his sources - but his story was confirmed by Colonel Bozin Simić, a high-ranking member of Ujedinjenje ili smrt!, in an interview with a French magazine in May 1925:

"Apis worked daily in association with the Russian Military Attaché Artamonov. ... [Around May 1914] [h]e informed him of the preparations for the Sarajevo outrage. A few days later Artamonov gave his reply, which ran 'Just go ahead! If you are attacked, you will not stand alone.' Artamonov had sought exact instructions of his superiors. Who were they? Very probably [the Russian Ambassador in Belgrade] Hartwig. Hartwig knew everything, according to Apis' firm belief. Probably St. Petersburg, too, where Hartwig had personal friends. What about Sazonov? We cannot say with certainty, since the policy of ambassadors often differed in many details from that of ministers. Artamonov was well aware of the activities of the Black Hand. He personally paid Apis 8,000 French francs for propaganda in Austria." (46)

In a December 1937 meeting with Simić, that also included the famous Colonel Cedomilj Popović, co-founder of the Black Hand, Luigi Albertini confirmed the essential correctness of his testimony. Simić mentioned, however, that in his opinion Hartwig had not known of the plan and that in this respect his words had been reported incorrectly. Yet the close relation between Dimitrijević and Russian officers has been pointed out by other sources as well, so by the Serbian Charge d'Affairs at Berlin, Milos Bogicević, (47) despite Artamonov's protestations that he was on a holiday between June 19 and July 28, 1914 - exactly between the assassination and the outbreak of war. (48) Albertini says clearly that he did not believe Artamonov when the latter denied foreknowledge of the plot in a personal conversation. In summary, Albertini judges that "it does, however, seem certain ... that Artamonov was told of the plot, if not directly by Dimitrijević, then by some other informant, and that he did nothing to thwart it." (49) With this, for the purposes of the present volume, the prosecution regarding Serbian and Russian prescience of the conspiracy shall rest.

A different question is, of course, what Bilinski did in regards to Jovanović's warning. As a consequence of the Balkan Wars, the general political environment in Sarajevo was developing outright hostility to Austria. In his memoirs, Judge Pfeffer reflected on the change of atmosphere in Bosnia that resulted from the Serbian successes particularly in the Second War and the growth of Pan-Slav fanaticism:

"Having followed all this, I was amazed to read one day in the newspapers that Archduke Francis Ferdinand, actually on St. Vitus' Day, was to visit Sarajevo officially and be welcomed by the mayor and municipality in the presence of all the citizens of Sarajevo." (50)

When he discussed the planned visit with his brother-in-law, who was another judge in Sarajevo, "both came to the conclusion that an outrage might very well happen, because such a visit on that special day was a direct provocation to the

⁸ Although the Black Hand was not exactly famous for lawfulness, it was supported by a faction in parliament, the "Young Radicals". Then the war intervened, short-circuited their designs and Pasić returned as Prime Minister.

Serbs." (51) It would seem that Bilinski actually alerted Potiorek, who, alas, proved "an arrogant and violent reactionary and believed with Conrad that the Yugoslav question could only be solved by war." (52) Bilinski's Press Officer Flandrak wrote in 1928 that his chief, warned by a multitude of letters he received in his capacity as overseer of the Bosno-Herzegovinan civil government, instructed Sarajevo to sound the local authorities as to their views on such a visit - with the result that practically all of them declined responsibility for the consequences. These reports were duly transmitted to Vienna and to the Court, but brought down upon Sarajevo a sharp reprimand: the responsibility of the civil authorities, they were told, was neither desired nor needed." (53)

When Monsieur Zurunić, chief of the administration's political department, dared to call "attention to the inadequacy of the police force in the town and to the difficulty of protecting the Archduke on the lengthy route he was to follow," (54) all his attempts earned him was Potiorek's sarcastic riposte that "the Archduke comes here as a general and you have nothing to do with the matter." (55) There were only 120 policemen in Sarajevo, a number that seemed sufficient to Potiorek - he did not ask for more - although the Hungarian Prime Minister Tisza, too late, as it turned out, wondered about the "conditions" that "must have reigned in the police force for six or seven individuals known to the police to be able on the day of the outrage to take up positions along the route ... armed with bombs and revolvers, without any of them being noticed and removed by the police." (56) His statement also reminds the reviewer that all the assassins were known to the police and could have easily be observed and/or rendered impotent by temporary detention. A posteriori, Judge Pfeffer came to his own conclusions:

"I had the impression that the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was sent on purpose to Sarajevo in the hope that this event would give rise to a demonstration which might provide a pretext for a conflict with Serbia.

My brother-in-law ... and I both, however, came to the conclusion that certainly the route would be lined by the troops present in Bosnia for the manoeuvres, exactly as it had been a few years before when the Emperor Francis Joseph came to Bosnia. In that case an outrage could hardly have been successful.

But towards evening, as soon as I was alone, I came to the conclusion that there were two possibilities. Either ruling circles with their limited mental horizon had failed to foresee the danger to which they were exposing the Heir Apparent, or, if they did foresee it, they feigned to take so little account of it in order to provoke an incident." (57)

That such suspicions could not be promptly ruled out was based on the reactions of the Court in Vienna, which bordered, in the famous quote, "on the perfunctory" and returned to business as usual within a few days. The newspapers made no qualms in pointing out, as did for example DIE ZEIT, that "the death of Archduke Francis Ferdinand ... came as a relief in wide political circles even to the highest official circles," (58) and when the Emperor on July 2, four days after the incident, received the German ambassador, he spoke "of all kinds of things, shooting plans, the recent death of General Pollio, the Italian Chief of Staff, regarded as a faithful friend of the Triple Alliance, but not a word of the Archduke's murder." (59) In these times of ceremony and court protocol, the funeral arrangements would be most revealing to private and official observers alike and Albertini sums them up as follows:

The remains of the two deceased were conveyed from Sarajevo to the Dalmatian coast and thence by warship to Trieste, reaching Vienna at 10 p.m. on 2 July. [Imperial Majordomo] Montenuovo had wished that nobody should be present at the station to receive them, so that the remains of the Duchess might be conveyed unobserved straight to Artstetten, the castle at which the Archduke had built a memorial chapel where he would be buried beside his wife.

Thus the Duchess's funeral would not have taken place at the same time as that of the Archduke. But the new heir to the throne, Archduke Charles, attended at the station with the whole officer corps of the Vienna garrison and reverently escorted the cortege to the Hofburg Chapel where the coffins were placed side by side. Placed on different levels, they were different in size and finish.

That of the Archduke bore his full insignia, that of the Duchess only a pair of white gloves and a black fan, reminders of her former subordinate station as lady in waiting. Neither the Emperor nor the Archdukes sent

wreaths. The only flowers were those sent by the diplomatic corps and the Hohenberg children, who, however, were not allowed to attend their parents' funeral service. It was also marked by the absence of all foreign royalties.⁹ ...

The funeral ... was a sorry and shabby affair. It only served to reveal the tottering condition of the Monarchy, which even in the midst of such bereavement could not present a united front to the world. The funeral service on the afternoon of 3 July, conducted by the Cardinal-Archbishop in the tiny Hofburg chapel, was attended only by the Emperor and the Court. After the ceremony the chapel was closed, and not until dark did the funeral procession leave the palace.

Only at the last moment was permission given for troops to line the route, and this as a result of a protest from the aristocracy who had not been invited to the funeral. They were so indignant at the lack of respect shown to the two deceased that about 150 members of the highest Austrian and Hungarian families, headed by Count Chotek, the Duchess's brother, in gala uniform but on foot, forced their way into the procession and accompanied it as far as the station. (60)

The manifestations of grief in Hungary were even perfunctorier - whether or not this comparative exists - for it was unlikely "that in Hungary adequate tribute would be paid to the memory of a prince who had planned to liberate the other nationalities from the yoke of the Magyar magnates." (61) The unprecedentedly meagre burial, however, sent a somewhat contradictory message to the world: how could the lack of official mourning be juxtaposed to best effect with the mandatory diplomatic infuriation over the crime?

At any rate, the anti-Serbian faction in Austrian politics experienced a sudden augmentation in membership and influence, and "within a few days of the assassinations of 28 June, a consensus formed among the key Austrian decision-makers that only military action would solve the problem of the monarchy's relations with Serbia." (62) Bilinski, Krobatin, the Minister of War, Musulin, the Head of Chancery at the Ballhausplatz, Szapary, the Austrian Ambassador in Russia, Count Forgach, the former Austrian Ambassador at Belgrade, Count Hoyos, Berchtold's chef de cabinet, all of them and many lesser officials entered the anti-Serbian fronde, while the old hawks Conrad and Potiorek boastfully saw their prior counsels affirmed.

Yet it soon became obvious that a military action was easier spoken of than implemented, for three major problems still awaited their solution: how could Tisza, the Hungarian Prime Minister - without whose assent mobilization could not be decreed - persuaded to agree to it; the guilt of the Serbian government - as opposed to some Bosnian hotheads - had to be proven; and whether Germany would support the Monarchy if a Serbo-Austrian war would bring in Russia and hence open the gate to a European conflagration. Austria and Russia had been on the brink of war over Serbia in 1913 already, and the stakes were only higher, for the "Balkanization of the Franco-Russian Alliance" (63) in the summer of 1912 had for all practical purposes instituted an automatism of escalation: an Austro-Russian War would now entail the successive *casi foederis* for France and Germany - and perhaps Great Britain - and bring forth the Great War of 1914.

During his visit in St. Petersburg in August 1912, Poincaré had observed that the Serbian-Bulgarian Treaty of 1912, which gave Russia the role of arbiter in all future issues on the Balkan, contained "the seeds not only of a war against Turkey but of a war against Austria", (64) yet expressly assured Sazonov that - if Russia were to go to war against Austria and thus inevitably bring in Germany - as per the terms of the Dual Alliance -- "the French government would recognise this in advance as a *casus foederis* and would not hesitate for one moment to fulfil the obligations which it has incurred in respect of Russia." (65) The operative words are "in advance", which meant that Poincaré in August 1912 ensured Russia of France's support whenever she was to mobilize against Austria. The World War was already declared - only the date was to be filled in.

⁹ Among many other, Kaiser Wilhelm II, a personal friend of the deceased, King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy and Prince Arthur of Connaught, for King George V of Great Britain, all indicated their desire to attend the funeral but were told in no unclear terms by Berchtold that they would not be welcome, because it would be "most important to spare the Emperor fatigue and keep the ceremony as short as possible." (66)

The present author must point out in this context that many historians, for reasons that are not always accessible, flinch from calling the spade a spade, i.e. that the Franco-Russian Military Protocol after 1912 virtually ensured the outbreak of a European war. The following excerpt is from the most recent work by Christopher Clark and describes the currents underlying the situation:

By the spring of 1914, the Franco-Russian Alliance had constructed a geopolitical trigger along the Austro-Serbian frontier. They had tied the defence policy of three of the world's greatest powers to the uncertain fortunes of Europe's most violent and unstable region. For France, the commitment to the Serbian salient was a logical consequence of the commitment to the Franco-Russian Alliance, which was in itself the consequence of what French policy-makers saw as immovable policy constraints.

The first of these was demographic. Even with the immense expansion made possible by the Three Year Law, the French army did not possess the numbers its commanders believed were necessary to counter the German threat alone. Success against the Germans would thus depend upon two things: the presence of a British expeditionary force on the Allied western front, and a rapid offensive through Belgium that would enable the French forces to circumvent the heavily fortified terrain of Alsace and Lorraine. Unfortunately, these two options were mutually exclusive, because breaching Belgian neutrality would mean forfeiting British support. Yet even forgoing the strategic advantages of an invasion of Belgium did not necessarily guarantee a British intervention in the first, decisive phase of the coming war, because the ambiguity of British policy had created a substantial margin of doubt.

France was thus obliged to seek a means of compensating in the east for its security deficits in the west. As the Belgian minister had put it in the spring of 1913, the less "solid and effective" British friendship seemed, the more French strategists felt the need to "tighten" the bonds of their alliance with Russia.

The French government focused from 1911 onwards on strengthening Russian offensive capacity and, in 1912-13 on ensuring that Russian deployment plans were directed against Germany rather than Austria, the ostensible opponent in the Balkans. Increasingly, intimate military relations were reinforced by the application of powerful financial incentives. This policy was purchased at a certain strategic cost, because betting so heavily on enabling Russia to seize the initiative against Germany inevitably involved a certain reduction in French autonomy.

That French policy-makers were willing to accept the resulting constraints is demonstrated by their willingness to extend the terms of the Franco-Russian Alliance specifically in order to cover the Balkan inception scenario, a concession that in effect placed the initiative in Russian hands. The French were willing to accept this risk, because their primary concern was not that Russia would act precipitately, but rather that she would not act at all, would grow so preponderant as to lose interest in the security value of the alliance, or would focus her energies on defeating Austria rather than the "principal adversary", Germany.

*The Balkan inception scenario was attractive precisely because it seemed the most likely way **of securing full Russian support for joint operations**, not only because the Balkan region was an area of traditionally strong Russian interest, but because the conflict of the Serbs with Austria-Hungary was an issue that **could be depended** upon to stir Russian national feeling in a way that would leave the leaders **with little option but to commit**.*

Hence the importance of the vast French loans (at the time, among the largest in financial history), being tied to the programme of strategic railway construction that would throw the brunt of Russia's forces against Germany, thereby forcing Germany (so it was hoped) to divide its armies, reduce the weight of the assault on the west and provide France with the margin required to secure victory. [Emphases added] (67)

What was Russia's gain in this scenario?

The Russian commitment to the Serbian salient was built of different stuff. The Russians had long pursued policies designed to secure a partnership of some kind with a league of Balkan states capable of forming a bulwark against Austria-Hungary. They revived this policy during the Italian war on Lybia, brokering the creation of the Serbo-Bulgarian alliance that defined Russia as the arbitrating power of the peninsula. When the Second Balkan War broke out over the territorial spoils of the first, the Russians recognized that the League policy was now obsolete and chose, after some prevarication, to adopt Serbia as the principal client, to the detriment of Bulgaria, which quickly drifted into the financial and (later) political orbit of the central powers. The deepening commitment to Serbia tied Russia into a posture of direct confrontation with Austria-Hungary, as the events of December 1912-January 1913 had shown.

Yet the Russians were slow to embrace the strategic vision so insistently offered by the French General Staff. Sukhomlinov's Redeployment Plan of 1910 annoyed the French, because it had pulled the areas of concentration far back from Russia's western borders with Germany.¹⁰ Over the following years, the French worked hard and with success to overcome Russian resistance to a strategy focused on delivering the maximum strike power against the western frontier in the shortest possible time, by means of quadruple railway arteries designed to deliver massive forces against the enemy's heartland. ...

Since it was impossible to imagine that a Russian attack on Austria would not draw in Germany, it was increasingly clear that the breaking of Austrian power on the Balkan Peninsula would be possible only if Russia were in a position to defeat Germany. (68)

Yet, as the author points out, these Franco-Russian plans ought to be seen in a strictly defensive context.

*We need to draw an important distinction: at no point did the French or the Russian strategists involved plan to launch a war of aggression against the central powers. We are dealing here with scenarios, **not plans as such**. [Emphasis added] (69)*

As laid out in more detail below,¹¹ the present author begs to differ, for the above might misperceive the feasibility of military options. There were no mobilization or deployment "scenarios", there were concrete plans, and they were

¹⁰ The 1910 schedule moved additional Russian troops to the interior, to guard against revolution, and to the Caucasus, for deployment against Turkey.

¹¹ The unspoken assumptions in Clark's exegesis of the Franco-Russian Alliance should be addressed briefly:

First, that "France was ... obliged to seek a means of compensating in the east for its security deficits in the west," is putting the cart before the horse. There was no security deficit on her German border before she engaged into the Russian alliance; Germany had no territorial designs on French soil, as Bismarck had made abundantly clear at the Conference of Berlin. France might simply have given up her fixation with revanche and pursued a peaceful solution of this sole remaining issue between the two nations; after all, she had needlessly declared war in 1870.

Secondly, the allegedly defensive nature of the Franco-Russian Alliance was upended at the latest in 1912, with France strengthening the "Russian offensive capacity", so that the Tsar's armies could "seize the initiative against Germany". The enlargement of the political/military nexus for which the policy was initially conceived to include the inherently instable Balkan Peninsula eminently increased the likelihood of its blowing up in the face of all parties - which promptly happened.

Russia was strategically in a different, a more favourable condition than France, Germany or Austria, for her vastness alone, as Napoleon had proven, protected her from conventional military defeat and subsequent occupation.

Third: that Russia had to be prevented from becoming "so preponderant as to lose interest in the security value of the alliance" only serves to point out that France had an urgent interest in war "now" rather than "later", for without Russian support her design on revanche was doomed.

Fourth: The Russian commitment in the Balkans was an indirect result of her primary strategic interest, the Straits. Russia had no territorial interests in the Balkans; her policy was principally aimed at blocking Austria from the road to Salonika. This aim was secured when Aehrenthal gave up the Sanjak of Novibazar in 1908; subsequent Russian Balkan policy was reduced to obstructionism as usual, divide et impera with Serbia as her stalking horse. The partners of the Franco-Russian Alliance followed divergent "strategic visions" - Russia's enemy was Turkey, not Germany.

The essential question before the "Balkanization" of the Franco-Russian Alliance in 1912 had been what was to happen if Austria attacked Russia. France had no common border with Austria and could not come to Russia's aid, unless - and there's the rub, Germany would come to the aid of Austria. But in the case of an Austrian attack on Russia, Germany would not support her - as

implemented. On March 12, 1912, for example, the Russian General Staff specified in an order to the Warsaw military district that "the telegram relative to mobilization is to be regarded at the same time as the Imperial command for the opening of hostilities against Austria and Germany," (70) - Austria and Germany, right from the start. The Franco-Russian plan, not "scenario", then explicitly called for an attack into Germany, again, as rapidly and with as many men as possible -- a minimum of 800,000 before 1912, then more than a million. In the event - August 1914 - the plan was executed as prescribed with the first Russo-German battles occurring in East Prussia, on German soil, as did the first Franco-German encounters, in the Alsace.

But we're not there yet. Although, as mentioned, the aftermath of the Sarajevo incident caused a majority of Austro-Hungarian officials to flock to the hawks, it was generally recognized that a suitable pretext would have to be identified while the opinion of the German government was sounded out. That was why, on June 29, Berchtold "rejected Conrad's demand for immediate mobilization against Serbia and stressed the need for an enquiry which 'may furnish us with a reason for taking action', together with the need for prior consultation with Germany." (71)

Early signals had been mixed. Heinrich von Tschirschky, Bethmann Hollweg's Secretary of State, consigned to the diary his counsels on belligerent Austrian exhortations. "I availed myself of such openings to issue a warning, calmly but

Bismarck had made more than abundantly clear, and, sub rosa, affirmed in the Reinsurance Treaty - and since Austria alone could not threaten Russia the whole scenario was far-fetched to begin with.

Yet after August 1912, the casus foederis would arise for France - in advance, as Poincaré had promised Sazonov in the case that Russia attacked Austria, not vice versa - "the breaking of Austrian power on the Balkan peninsula" - for only this case would trigger German support for Austria under the Dual Alliance. A Russian attack on Austria would kindle the European war.

Fifth: The expression "war of aggression" is problematic per se, as this term in current usage has acquired negative connotations it did not possess then. From the Russian point of view, the change of the alliance terms with France in 1912 would allow them to launch the gamble for the Straits at the most propitious instant, assured of French and British support. The Brits did not even realize that they had been instrumentalized, as can be inferred in Grey's warning to the German Ambassador in London, Prince Lichnowsky, of December 4, 1913:

"If a European war were to arise through Austria's attacking Serbia, and Russia, compelled by public opinion, were to march into Galicia rather than again put up with a humiliation like that of 1909, thus forcing Germany to come to the aid of Austria, France would inevitably be drawn in and no one could foretell what further developments might follow." (72)

This five-line statement contains a surprising amount of improbabilities and dubious assumptions. Christopher Clark summarizes them:

"Grey aligned himself, firstly, with Sazonov's and Izvolsky's view of the 'humiliation' of 1909, seemingly forgetting that it was Britain's refusal to do business with Izvolsky over the Straits that had prompted the then Russian foreign minister to kick up the crisis by claiming that he had been duped by his Austrian colleague. The notion that Russia had suffered repeated humiliations at the hands of the central powers was dubious, to say the least -- the truth was the contrary, namely that the Russians were lucky to have escaped so lightly from dangers of their own making.

*Then there was the highly questionable notion that Russian decision-makers would have no choice but to attack Austria if a conflict between Austria and Serbia inflamed Russian domestic opinion. In fact it was not at all clear that Russian opinion demanded precipitate action over Serbia; some nationalist papers did, of course, but there were others, such as the conservative *Grazhdanin* of Prince Meshchersky, that denounced the 'impotent romanticism' of the Slavophiles and attacked the notion that Russia must inevitably take the side of Serbia in an Austro-Serbian conflict. ...*

Equally remarkable was Grey's supposition that this intervention by Russia, though it would involve aggression against a state whose actions posed no direct threat to Russian security, must 'inevitably' bring in France -- a point of view that essentially endorsed, or at least implicitly accepted, Poincaré's scaling up of the treaty commitment to cover the possibility of a Russian attack on another European great power. And this, Grey implied, would oblige Britain at some point to intervene on the side of France." (73)

Thus - whether Grey realized it or not - all of a sudden he had accepted that a potential Russo-Austrian conflict in the chronically instable Balkan Peninsula could "oblige" Great Britain to fight for Serbia - with whom she had no treaties whatsoever. That he did not seem to realize the implications only emphasizes the blind that Poincaré and Sazonov had pulled over the British Lion's eyes.

In effect, the Franco-Russo-British coalition denied Austria the right to shape her own Balkan policy; she would be expected, it would seem -- since the Triple Entente would not specify what might constitute "permissible" conduct and what not -- to accede to every whim of a rogue state like Serbia. Vienna was being emasculated, and if she dared to enlist the aid of her ally Germany, French and British armies would defend Russia's interests on the Balkan with their own blood on Germany's western border. In Christopher Clark's words, this British policy was the equivalent of a "death warrant for the Habsburg state" (74), and, given that the repercussions of Austria's post-war division aided much to the genesis of World War II, Whitehall's haplessness had most serious consequences for the rest of the century.

very emphatically and seriously, against hasty measures." (75) But on July 1, Count Hoyos, Berchtold's chef du cabinet, received a telephone call from the well-connected German journalist Victor Naumann; the contents of which he summarized as follows:

"Dr. Naumann discussed the general political situation, dwelling on the great uneasiness felt in Berlin over Russian armaments and the test mobilizations, recently fixed for the autumn, of considerable Russian forces. He himself had observed that not only in army and navy circles but also in the Foreign Ministry the idea of a preventive war against Russia was regarded with less disfavour than a year ago.

A settlement had been arrived at with England over Africa and the Portuguese colonies, and the visit of the English fleet to Kiel had been arranged to document the improvement in relations. For this reason there was believed to be the certainty that England would not intervene in a European war.¹² The Foreign Ministry had been much impressed by the verbal account of the German consul until lately in Moscow, who has now been appointed as 'Vortragender Rat'¹³ at the Foreign Ministry and has brought a great deal of information about Russian armaments.

Herr von Stumm [Political Director at the Wilhelmstrasse] has spoken very seriously with Dr. Naumann of this danger and has described the war 'which Germany could have when she wants' as not impossible. I thanked Dr. Naumann for this interesting survey and let fall the remark that this state of affairs would be not unpleasing to us if we should ever find ourselves under the necessity of taking action against Serbia.

Dr. Naumann eagerly seized on this remark and said that this was exactly what he had been going to suggest to me. In his opinion, after the Sarajevo murder, it was a question of life and death for the Monarchy not to leave this crime unpunished but to annihilate Serbia. For Germany such a course of action would be the touchstone whether Russia meant war or not.

Berlin no longer counted on Romania as an ally, but thought that the Rumanians would at first stay neutral. Opinion had come round to agreement to the accession of Bulgaria and Turkey to the Triplice and the Bulgarians would receive a subsidy. It was hoped that Greece could be forced to be neutral.

France would probably be obliged by financial embarrassments to urge Russia not to go to war, but if a European war should come after all, the Triplice was now strong enough. Dr. Naumann thinks that if at the present moment, when Kaiser Wilhelm is horrified at the Sarajevo murder, he is spoken to in the right way, he will give us all assurances and this time go to the length of war, because he perceives the dangers for the monarchical principle. The Foreign Ministry will do nothing to oppose this state of mind because they regard this as the favourable moment for bringing about the great decision. ...

Austria-Hungary will be finished as a Monarchy and as a Great Power if she does not take advantage of this moment [says Naumann]. I answered that I, too, regarded a solution of the Serbian question as urgently necessary and that it was of great value to us to reckon with the certainty that Germany will cover our rear. Dr. Naumann offered on his part, without mentioning me by name, to bring up the matter informally with Herrn von Stumm and let me know his answer. (76)

This diary entry conveys the impression of counsel between equals, legates or envoys, ambassadors or ministers - yet the good Dr. Naumann had no business expressing German government policy except that he was a good friend of Herrn von Stumm, who, however, was by himself only # 4 on the German foreign policy totem pole, after the Kaiser, the Chancellor and the Secretary of State. Thus it is the more surprising that Hoyos clearly takes Naumann's gospel on faith; as in Sir Grey's words of advice to Lichnowsky, the reader is surprised by the multitude of unspoken implications and assumptions contained in it - the more since it is composed in the nongovernmental context of a private conversation. The document's contents reflect forty years of more-often-than-not confusing German diplomacy, and although Naumann's words appear

¹² This absurdly wrong "certainty" of England remaining neutral will become a basic assumption of the ill-conceived Austro-German pre-war policy.

¹³ The promotion to "Vortragender Rat" - 'Special Counsel' - was the decisive step from lowly consular to future ambassadorial service.

to relate to authorities of the highest order, they imply that, in reality, a camarilla of second-level bureaucrats' attempts to direct the resolutions of their superiors by the ancient and venerable method of determining the outcome by controlling the input. In essence, Herr Naumann represents German foreign policy in the early summer of 1914 as based on the following articles of faith:

(1) Army, navy and foreign services increasingly espouse the idea of a preventive war against Russia. (2) England will not enter a European war. (3) Austria must "annihilate Serbia" to avoid her degradation to a second-rate power. (4) Romania may remain neutral or enter the war on the side of the enemy but (5) this is more than compensated by the accession of Bulgaria and Turkey to the Triplice - most tellingly, Naumann completely fails to mention Italy. (6) Carpe diem - Kaiser Wilhelm needs to be addressed as quickly as possible.

The Foreign Ministry, Naumann asserted, would seek Germany's complete and unequivocal support of Austria. How much of this was creditable Holy Writ became Count Hoyos' job to find out in Berlin. On the evening of Saturday, July 4, he boarded the night train to the German capital, armed with directives from Berchtold - an updated version of the "Matscheko Memorandum" - and a personal letter from Emperor Francis Joseph to Kaiser Wilhelm.

The "Matscheko Memorandum" was a review of the international situation of Austria-Hungary in the early summer of 1914, compiled and prepared by a senior Ballhausplatz official, Baron Franz Matscheko. He accounts for two lesser positive developments for Austria: the improvement in her relations to Bulgaria and the blocking of Serbia from the Mediterranean Sea by the creation of Albania, although the latter "was not exactly a model of successful state-building: levels of domestic turbulence and lawlessness were high, and there was general agreement among Albanians that order would not be achieved without external help." (77)

The rest of Matscheko's ruminations were depressing: Serbia, twice as big as before 1912, was a greater danger than ever, Romania was in the process of choosing Russia over Austria as her patron, and since "Turkey-in-Europe" had been destroyed, the only purpose behind a Russian-sponsored Balkan League could be the ultimate dismemberment of the Austro-Hungarian Empire itself, whose lands Russia would one day feed to its hungry satellites." (78) A copy of the grim summary, containing a hasty appendix discussing the consequences of the assassination, accompanied Hoyos to Berlin.

On July 2, Francis Joseph had received the German Ambassador Tschirschky, to whom he admitted dismay over Serbian aggression and Russian intransigence and expressed the hope that Wilhelm shared his awareness of the looming danger. "What particularly disquiets me," the old emperor asserted, "is the Russian test mobilization, which is planned for the autumn, just the time when we here have our change of recruits." (79) The monarch discussed a list of other dangers facing Austria - and perhaps the Triple Alliance - and Tschirschky reported to Berlin:

*"I took advantage of the Emperor's remark [on the possibility of war] to point out once again - **as I have already in these last few days emphatically pointed out to Count Berchtold** - that His Majesty can surely rely on finding Germany solidly behind the Monarchy as soon as there is a question of defending one of its vital interests. The decision as to when and where such vital interest is at stake must be left to Austria herself. **Moods and wishes, however understandable they might be, could not be made the basis of a reliable policy.***

*Before taking any decisive step it must be **exactly estimated how far one meant to go** and by what means the intended goal was to be attained. Before any important move, the first point to be taken into consideration was the general political situation and the **probable attitude of the other Powers and States**, and the ground must be carefully prepared. I could only say once more that my Kaiser would back any firm resolve on the part of Austria-Hungary. His Majesty agreed heartily with these words of mine and said he thought I was undoubtedly right." [Emphases added] (80)*

Tschirschky urged caution and proactive diplomacy - but official Vienna did not seem to get the message. A day before the ambassador met Francis Joseph, he had called on Berchtold, whom he also reminded that Austria should cease to speak "a great deal about ideas without formulating a concrete plan of action, and [that] Berlin would only intervene unreservedly

on our behalf if such a plan were forthcoming." (81) The notes Berchtold later composed for the file show a strange mixture of unwillingness and unpreparedness:

"Recently Prince Hohenlohe [the new Austrian ambassador in Berlin] had spoken to him of the necessity for settling accounts with Serbia. He [Tschirschky] had answered that this was 'all very well', only one must be clear how far one meant to go and what were the plans in regard to Serbia. Moreover provision must be made for a favourable diplomatic situation and in particular the attitude of Italy and Romania must be ascertained.

To start a war with Serbia without being assured against attack from those countries would be a most risky undertaking. I answered that the question of how far one would go and what would in the end have to be done with Serbia would have to be decided by ourselves [Austria] at the given moment in accordance with the circumstances. ...

In regard to Romania, we could not raise the question there, because it would expose us to the demand for impossible compensations. ... If we were to speak of the matter to the Rome Cabinet, Italy would presumably ask for Valona in compensation and to that we could not agree." (82)

This note shows that, by early July, the visualization of the crisis already differs greatly between Vienna and Berlin. The most important issue, Tschirschky says, is to localize a possible Serbian war by addressing the concerns of Italy and Romania in advance - which Berchtold declined to do for he dreaded their demands. This would truly be irresponsible were it not for the fact that his claims were bogus - what he really alluded to was that if Germany backed Austria, neither Italy nor Romania would dare to attack, unless Russia - mentioned by neither Tschirschky nor the Austrians - entered the picture, in which case the goose would be cooked.

It seems that Berchtold misunderstood Tschirschky's advice as meaning that Germany urged "extreme measures" (83) - perhaps he welcomed such a misunderstanding, being one of the hawks - and adjusted his proceedings upon this interpretation. It gave him a chance to outmanoeuvre Tisza, the Hungarian Prime Minister, who was the only important dove in Austria at the moment. While allowing that the archduke's death had alleviated Hungary's dread of a pro-Slav policy, not to mention trialism, had the archduke turned emperor, Tisza warned against a Serbian war unless the Romanian question had been properly addressed¹⁴ and the opinion of Germany received. Berchtold realized that, properly prepared, Hoyos' mission could satisfy Tisza while securing German support for the Serbian war. Sending the hardliner Hoyos to introduce them, "an unequivocally bellicose construction would be placed upon the two policy documents from Vienna."¹⁵ There would be no doubt in the minds of the Germans that the Austrians meant business." (84) His personal interpretation of Tschirschky's memo then allowed Berchtold to outwit Tisza. The Germans would be asked - all right - but the impression Berchtold asked the ambitious and aggressive Hoyos to convey to Berlin was that Austria had decided on war.

That she had - the much-cited "settling of accounts" with Serbia - but, alas, for a variety of reasons it could not be done right away: the army was not ready, the inquiry in Sarajevo was not finished, and political dissent in Vienna - socialists and liberals - and a few provinces would have to be overcome. Then the harvest would have to be brought in. Unfortunately, these delays shaped the perception of the outside world. There is - almost - a historical consensus that, had Austria struck at Serbia immediately, in the days after the murders, with whatever forces were available, fought a battle or two and taken away a slice of Serbian territory somewhere, nothing much else would have happened - certainly not two world wars. But, in the words of Christopher Clark, "by the time Alex Hoyos boarded the night train for Berlin, the window of opportunity for that virtual scenario had already closed." (85)

When Hoyos arrived in Berlin, he found that the newspapers, which had after the assassinations joined the chorus of voices calling for a harsh response had changed their tune to counsels of diplomacy and moderation. As Albertini points out, the conservative DEUTSCHE TAGESZEITUNG hoped that Austria "should not make the crime the starting point of a new

¹⁴ The problem was a huge Romanian minority in Transylvania, oppressed by the Hungarians with all the tricks in the book, and hundreds of miles of Austrian-Romanian border that could not be secured if the army was busy in Serbia.

¹⁵ The 'Matscheko Memorandum' and Francis Joseph's letter to Kaiser Wilhelm.

Balkan policy", the nationalist MORGENPOST "expressed the hope that the Vienna Government would not lose its head", and the liberal FRANKFURTER ZEITUNG "advised against making reprisals". The BERLINER TAGEBLATT evidenced prophetic qualities by being "alarmed by the Austrian demand for an inquiry in Serbia." (86)

The opposite view was taken by the German military and supported - at first - by the Kaiser. The Saxon Minister in Berlin cabled to Dresden that "from military quarters pressure is again being brought to bear, to the effect that we should let war come about now while Russia is not yet ready ... ," (87) and a day later reported that the second man in the German General Staff, Quartermaster-General Waldersee, had told him privately that "we might become involved in a war from one day to another," and they "would regard it with favour there if war were to come about now. Conditions and prospects would never become better for us." (88)

The Kaiser was irate - for the moment. When he received Tschirschky's telegram, in which the ambassador warned Vienna against hasty measures, he famously commented on the cable's margins:

"Who authorized him to do so? That is utterly stupid! It is not his business, since it's entirely Austria's own affair what she intends to do. Later on, if things went wrong, it would be said: Germany was not willing! Will Tschirschky have the goodness to drop this nonsense! It is high time a clean sweep was made of the Serbs." (89)

Hoyos arrived in Berlin on Sunday, July 5, and went to see Count Szoegyenyi-Marich, the Austrian ambassador, whom he provided with copies of the two documents. They bore a few famous lines - quoted in every history of the age - which ran as follows: the 'Matscheko Memorandum' ended with the postscript that "Austria-Hungary has shown no lack of good will and readiness to meet Serbia half way, in order to create an endurable relationship with Serbia. But it has recently become evident that these endeavours were vain and that the Monarchy, in future, will still have to reckon with the stubborn, irreconcilable, and aggressive enmity of Serbia. All the more imperative is the need for the Monarchy with a firm hand to sever the threads which its enemies seek to draw close into a net over its head." (90)

Francis Joseph's letter posed that Serbia had to be "eliminated as a political power factor in the Balkans. You [i.e. Wilhelm], too, since the recent terrible happenings in Bosnia, will feel convinced that a reconciliation of the differences which sunder us from Serbia is no longer to be thought of, and that the stabilizing peace policy of all European monarchs will be menaced as long as this focus of criminal agitation in Belgrade lives on unpunished." (91)

The party then split up - Szoegyenyi left for Potsdam to lunch with the Kaiser, while Hoyos met with his Berlin colleague Arthur Zimmermann, Under-Secretary of State at the Wilhelmstrasse. Szoegyenyi reported the following summary of his audience to Berchtold in Vienna:

"First His Majesty assured me that he had expected severe measures on our part in regard to Serbia, but he must confess that, as a result of the analysis given by our august Sovereign, he must not lose sight of possible serious European complications, and thus would give no definite answer before consulting with the Imperial Chancellor.

After luncheon, when I laid great emphasis on the seriousness of the situation, His Majesty authorized me to convey to our august Sovereign that even in that case we may reckon on full support from Germany. As he had said, he must first hear the Chancellor's opinion but did not in the least doubt that Herr von Bethmann Hollweg would entirely agree with his own view. This was especially true in respect of any measure we might take against Serbia.

In His Majesty's view there should be no delay in undertaking these measures. Russia's bearing would in any case be hostile, but for this he had been prepared for years. And even if matters went to the length of a war between Austria-Hungary and Russia, we could remain assured that Germany in her customary loyalty as an ally would stand at our side.

Russia, by the way, was, as things stand today, not at all ready for war and would certainly think twice before resorting to arms. But she would certainly incite the other powers of the Triple Entente against us and fan the

flames in the Balkans. He quite understood that His Imperial and Royal Apostolic Majesty with his well-known love of peace, would find it hard to march into Serbia, but if we have really recognized the necessity of military measures against Serbia, he (Kaiser Wilhelm) would deplore our not taking advantage of the present moment which is so favourable to us." (92)

It is easy to imagine grandiloquent "Willy" tigering up and down the palace carpet lecturing the diplomat, but an ambassador as experienced as Szoegyenyi should have known that he had to add a pinch or two of salt to the Kaiser's declarations. German foreign policy was exercised not by the emperor, but the chancellor, with the aid of the secretary of state. Szoegyenyi knew this, of course, and hence should have wondered why nobody proposed to recall Foreign Minister Gottlieb von Jagow, who had succeeded in 1913 the suddenly-dropped-dead Kiderlen-Wächter, from his honeymoon. But the Austrian ambassador liked the tune Wilhelm was singing and cared not about its technical legitimacy. Meanwhile at the Wilhelmstrasse, Hoyos repeated Francis Joseph's message - doctored by himself - to Zimmermann. Then the Austrians left.

At around 6 p.m. that evening, Wilhelm and Zimmermann met with Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, General Plessen, the Kaiser's adjutant, General Lyncker, chief of the military cabinet, and General von Falkenhayn, the Minister for War. (93) In his memoirs, the chancellor recalled Wilhelm declaring that ... It was not our business to advise our ally what to do as a result of the Sarajevo murder. On this Austria-Hungary must take her 'own decision'. We must refrain from direct suggestions and advice all the more because we must use all means to prevent the Austro-Serbian conflict from widening into an international conflict. Emperor Francis Joseph must know that even in a critical hour we should not forsake Austria-Hungary. Our own vital interest requires the preservation of Austria intact." (94)

This statement contains two glaringly contradictory issues; the obvious impossibility of preventing the conflict from widening while simultaneously egging on Austria to attack Serbia - which could not fail to bring Russia into the picture. It is not clear how the men present at the meeting came to the conclusion that Russia would not intercede. Plessen recorded in his diary:

"His Majesty summoned me to the Neues Palais at 5 p.m. I there found Lyncker, Chief of the Military Cabinet and Falkenhayn, the War Minister. His Majesty read us a letter from the Emperor of Austria and a memorandum from the Austrian Foreign Minister, Count Berchtold, according to which the Austrians are getting ready for a war on Serbia and want first to be sure of Germany.

*The Imperial Chancellor and the Secretary of State also attended. The opinion prevailed among us that the sooner the Austrians make their move against Serbia the better, and that the Russians - though friends of Serbia - **will not join in**. There is a threat of the withdrawal of Romania from the Triple Alliance, and there appears on the horizon an alliance between Turkey and Bulgaria - His Majesty's departure on his northern cruise is to proceed without interruption."* [Emphasis added] (95)

Thus it fits that, when Falkenhayn asked the Kaiser whether "any kind of preparations should be made" for the case of war, the monarch said no. (96) Yet we do not know on which information the belief in Russian passivity was based - diplomatic reports, tangible propositions, wild-ass guesses or simply personal conviction? Hollweg later claimed to have agreed with Wilhelm without discussion, which has prompted a few historians to remark that he shirked his responsibility, the more so in the absence of Jagow. It had been up to the chancellor to qualify Wilhelm's altogether too enthusiastic promises of support; although some claim that the Kaiser's words to Szoegyenyi had left Bethmann Hollweg no manoeuvring space. But constitutionally, Bethmann Hollweg had not only the right but the duty to define the guidelines of national policy. Yet the true question is why the Germans were so wrong in expecting Russia to keep out and why, in the event, the Balkan crisis of 1914 did kindle the Great War that had been avoided in 1908, 1912 and 1913? Niall Ferguson tracks the genesis of the "puzzle":

Prior to 1908 ... Balkan instability had not had serious ramifications at the great power level. Since 1897 Austria and Russia had agreed not to disagree about the region. Indeed, the Austrian Foreign Minister Baron Aehrenthal consulted his Russian counterpart Alexander Izvolsky before proceeding to annex Bosnia. To be sure, there was a whiff of smoke in 1908-9 when Izvolsky, discovering belatedly that the concession on the

Straits he had expected in return was not in Austria's gift, demanded that the annexation be approved by an international conference.

Germany, for so long the onlooker in Balkan quarrels, now strongly supported Vienna.... Moltke assured Conrad: "The moment Russia mobilises, Germany will also mobilise, and will unquestionably mobilise her whole army." Yet the immediate effect of German intervention was to reduce rather than increase the risk of war: the Russians were far from ready for another war so soon after their humiliation by Japan, and backed down when it became clear that neither France nor Britain was sympathetic.

Something similar happened in the autumn of 1912, following the First Balkan War in which Serbia and Bulgaria, assisted by Montenegro and Greece, drove the Turks out of Kosovo, Macedonia and the Sanjak of Novi Pazar Although Poincaré made it clear that "if Russia goes to war, France will also" and Kiderlen promised the Austrians "unconditional ... support", the truth was that neither St. Petersburg nor Vienna wanted war.

When Aerenthal's successor Count Berchtold stated his terms - an independent Albania (a surprise to the Albanians) and a ban on the Serbs establishing a port on the Adriatic - Sazonov assured the Serbs that they would get no Russian support if they insisted on the latter. (It should be noted that the Russians were bound by no treaty to assist Serbia in a war.)¹⁶ True, the Russians had upped the ante in the arms race by retaining the conscripts who would normally have completed their military service at the end of the year, but this was something of a reflex action.¹⁷

Their real worry was that the Bulgarians - over whom they had long since lost control - might gazump them by getting all the way to Constantinople. "I think," Bethmann told Berchtold in February 1913, "it would be a mistake of immeasurable consequence if we attempt a solution by force ... at a moment when there is even the remotest possibility of entering this conflict under conditions more favourable to ourselves."

When Bulgaria tried to wrest Macedonia from Serbia (and Salonika from Greece) by going to war in June 1913 - only to lose badly - the German Chancellor expressed the hope that "Vienna would not let its peace disturbed by the cauchemar¹⁸ of a 'Greater Serbia'". The most that Berchtold was prepared to do was to chase the Serbs out of Albanian territory.

What made the difference in 1914? Partly, the direct German interest in Turkey, signalled by the German military mission to Constantinople led by General Liman von Sanders: that scared the Russians, dependent as their finances were on grain exports through the Black Sea Straits, weakened as their own Black Sea fleet was, frail as Turkey looked after the Balkan wars. Indeed, this was one of the arguments for the Franco-Russian railway agreement of January 1913 and the arms programme approved by the Duma six months later.

Partly, things were changed by the removal of Francis Ferdinand himself, who had been restraining the recklessly bellicose Conrad. But principally it was the German decision to support, indeed to egg on, an Austrian military strike against Serbia in order to end the threat posed by the "Piedmont of the South Slavs": in Francis Joseph's words to "eliminate ... Serbia as a political factor in the Balkans". Both the Kaiser and Bethmann gave Count Szoegyenyi-Marich, the Habsburg ambassador, and Count Hoyos, whom Berchtold sent specially, a clear assurance: "Even if it should come to a war between Austria and Russia ... Germany would stand by our side".

¹⁶ Neither was Great Britain or France.

¹⁷ This would seem a bit generous. After all, if Germany had kept her recruits in spring 1914, it would later be cited as clear evidence for her preparing war.

¹⁸ The "nightmare" of the Second Balkan War.

The puzzle for the historian has always been to explain why the government in Berlin persisted with this venture in the face of ample evidence that it would indeed lead to a European war. (97)

But this assurance was based on an impossible premise. If, after eliminating all impossibilities - as the old adage holds - whatever remains must be the truth, it would seem that the German government indeed believed that their support of Austria would deter Russia instead of enflaming her. The Tsar's armies would not join the war - but if they did, better now than later, ere Russia's enormous military build-up was able to field a peacetime army of two million men by 1917.

We did not know until 1967 that the Kaiser held secret conferences with Bethmann Hollweg on July 1st and 3rd - "obviously," L.C.F. Turner comments, "they considered the situation created by the assassination and decided on a line of policy." (98) It is tempting to speculate that the assumption of Russian passivity was arrived at during these discussions, yet based on what information or belief we do not know.

The Austrians did not make the attempt to resolve the contradictions in Germany's pledge - they interpreted the promise of support as the famous "Blank Cheque" and incorporated German diplomatic and, if necessary, military aid into their designs against Serbia. Did the "Blank Cheque" truly exist? We'll ask Christopher Clark:

Inasmuch as this otherwise slightly misleading metaphor connotes a promise of support for the alliance partner, it is a fair description of German intentions. The Kaiser and the chancellor believed that the Austrians were justified in taking action against Serbia and deserved to be able to do so without the fear of Russian intimidation.

Much more problematic is the claim that the Germans over-interpreted the Austrian messages, made commitments that surpassed Austrian intentions, and thereby pressured them into war. While it is true that Franz Joseph's note did not refer directly to "war" against Serbia, it left the reader in absolutely no doubt that Vienna was contemplating the most radical possible action. How else should one understand his insistence that "a conciliation of the conflict" between the two states was no longer possible and that the problem would be resolved only when Serbia had been "eliminated as a power-factor in the Balkans"?

In any case Count Hoyos had left no margin of doubt about Vienna's thinking. He asserted personal control over the Austrian representations during his "mission" in Berlin; he later revealed to the historian Luigi Albertini that it was he, not the veteran ambassador, who had composed Szoegyenyi's dispatch [n. 930] summarizing Bethmann's assurances. (99)

Did the Germans simply persuade themselves that no escalation was to occur, or did they secretly long for the opposite, an opportunity for preventive war against France and Russia as long as the chances were still good? But the validity of such a calculation would necessitate the neutrality of England - did the German government hope that recent détente with Great Britain - agreement on the Portuguese colonies, an approaching consensus on the Berlin-Baghdad railway and the recent visit of a British squadron in Kiel - might elicit Britannia's abstention from a continental conflict? Lord Grey was aware of Germany's strategic dilemma; he observed that "they are now genuinely alarmed at the military preparations in Russia, the prospective increase in her military forces and particularly at the intended construction, at the insistence of the French government and with French money, of strategic railways to converge on the German frontier." (100)

Yet the greater weight of the evidence for the first half of July suggests that Wilhelm and his chancellor indeed believed that the conflict could be localized - whatever Hollweg said or did not say at the 5 p.m. meeting on July 5 in the Neues Palais. At any rate, on the next morning, July 6, the Kaiser briefly met with the acting heads of the services, Admiral Capelle for Tirpitz and General Bertram for Moltke, both of whom were on holiday. The emperor advised Capelle that "he did not anticipate major military complications. In his opinion, the Tsar in this case would not take the part of the regicides. Moreover Russia and France were not prepared for war - the Kaiser did not mention England. On the Chancellor's advice he was going on his northern cruise in order not to give room for disquietude." (101)

Yet before we plunge into the sequence of diplomatic interchanges and military measures that paved the road to war in the next thirty days, we may remind ourselves of Luigi Albertini's general caveat that...

... to attribute the responsibility¹⁹ for making war in July 1914 to the Central Powers²⁰ is not to deliver judgement on the conditions which drove Austria to war with Serbia and led Germany to support Austria. To state that Austria and Germany acted as has already been shown and has yet to be shown is not to assert that from their own point of view they had not good reasons for seeking a change a state of affairs injurious directly to Austria and indirectly to Germany.

The same holds good in respect of France and Russia. ... The fact is that the question of the origins of the war is an entirely different one from that of the rights and wrongs of the war. (102)

It is commonly recognized that many factors which result in a country's choice of a particular policy over another are in retrospect hard to qualify, nor are they easily quantified, yet the Russian military build-up was a fact that obliged Germany to come up with an answer. Indeed, the program was the single most important factor on the road to war, and the cause for the Endzeit-atmosphere that permeated not only the offices of some European governments but invaded even the private reflections of its burghers - indeed, it became the gossip of Europe in early 1914. In January 1914, the Parisian LE MATIN, for example, "began to publish a sensational series of five long articles under the title 'La plus grande Russie'," ²¹ which "impressed readers in Berlin not only by the sneering belligerence of its tone, but also by the apparent accuracy and texture of the information contained in it." (103) A map purported to show the "exact dispositions of the Russian army corps as of 31 December 1913," and urged readers to note "the extraordinary concentration of forces on the Russo-Prussian [sic!] frontier." (104) Russian publications gave rise to the assumption that the build-up was directed against Germany: we have already encountered the article "We Are Ready. France Must Be Ready Too!" in the BIRZHEVIA VEDOMOSTI above; the RAZVECHIK, a magazine held to reflect the opinion of the Russian General Staff, wrote:

"Not just the troops, but the entire Russian people must get used to the fact that we are arming ourselves for the war of extermination against the Germans and that the German empires [sic] must be destroyed, even if it costs us hundreds of thousands of lives." (105)

All one had to do to ascertain the Russian intention was to prolong the arrows of her new railway lines: they all pointed to Silesia, East Prussia and the Posen [Poznan] area. It did not look much better at Germany's western frontier. France had passed the law increasing active military service from two to three years only in 1913, and it had cost the German army much political capital to press through parliament its own bill in response - in the last fifteen years, the army had been treated as the navy's handmaiden. In the years 1913-14, Russia's naval spending for the first time outsized Germany's, and, to Tirpitz and his admirals' horror, Russia and Great Britain began naval talks from May 1914 on. A well-placed spy in the Russian embassy, Benno von Siebert, informed Berlin, among other things that Great Britain and Russia discussed - in the event of war - the landing of a Russian expeditionary force in Pomerania. Perhaps even worse, psychologically, was that England, i.e. Sir Grey, declined to give any clarifications to German inquiries, and his silence, combined with the "details filed by Siebert conveyed the alarming impression that the British had something to hide" (106) Kurt Riezler, Hollweg's private secretary, ²² confided to his diary the chancellor's thoughts on the evening of July 6:

"On the veranda under the night sky long talk on the situation. The secret information [from the German informant at the Russian embassy in London] he divulges to me conveys a shattering picture. He sees the Russian-English negotiations on a naval convention, a landing in Pomerania, as very serious, the last link in the chain. ... Russia's military power growing swiftly; strategic reinforcement of the Polish salient will make the situation untenable. Austria steadily weaker and less mobile" (107)

Yet after the first week of July the scene of activity shifted to Vienna - nobody had remained in Berlin anyway - the Kaiser cruising in Norwegian waters, Jagow still on his honeymoon, and Tirpitz and Moltke on holiday. On July 7, the Austro-Hungarian Joint Ministers met and were briefed by Hoyos, along the lines of the report he had composed, he later claimed,

¹⁹ This was Albertini's eventual conclusion.

²⁰ From the outbreak of war in August 1914 on, the name was used to refer to Germany and Austria-Hungary, to which Turkey and Bulgaria were added later.

²¹ "Russia at Her Greatest"

²² There endures a source-critical of Riezler's diaries, which were published in 1972 (see Christopher Clark's "Sleepwalkers", p. 643, n.52).

for Szoegyenyi. He represented that Wilhelm, Bethmann Hollweg and Zimmermann had assured him of support, come what may - but in November 1933, almost twenty years later, Hoyos told Luigi Albertini that Zimmermann had affirmed that "we [i.e. Germany] are strong enough to take on France and Russia at the same time, so you will be able to let all the weight of your army gravitate to the Balkans." (108)

This statement is so wildly off the mark - as Moltke himself would have been the first to point out - that perhaps Hoyos made it up simply to allay Austrian fears of military inferiority - a result of her defence budget having shrunk continuously in the last two decades before 1912 in the face of increasing Russian militarization. (109) There is little in the relevant time frame - from Hoyos' visit at Berlin on July 5 to July 23, the day of the presentation of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia, to suggest that Germany truly pushed Austria to war - nobody was home in Berlin at any rate, and the Dual Monarchy was far too busy with her own, increasingly sluggish and sometimes chaotic coordination of military and political measures.²³

After the negative outcome of the war, it was in post-war Austria's interest to shift whatever blame she could on Germany, which, as the usual suspect and primary culprit was already in the crosshairs of the Allied war reparations commission. Many of the exculpatory statements which then surfaced are, in hindsight, improbable, or represent homemade distortion. Berchtold's note of July 8 to Tisza - still a dove - is an example how the Austrian hawks usurped the interpretation of German policy statements in their own bellicose interest. Berchtold reported that the German ambassador "Tschirschky has just left after having told me that he has received a telegram from Berlin containing instructions from his Imperial master to emphasize here that Berlin expects the Monarchy to take action against Serbia and that Germany would not understand our letting the opportunity slip without striking a blow." (110)²⁴

Not only was Wilhelm at the time he reportedly sent this telegram to Tschirschky, i.e. on the morning of July 8, at sea - since the morning of July 6 - no such telegram from the emperor to Tschirschky was ever found in the archives of Berlin or Vienna. The text Berchtold quotes also reflects too closely that of Szoegyenyi's message to Francis Joseph of July 5 - which we know was essentially composed by Hoyos. The hawks thus usurped Vienna's interpretation of Germany's pledge.

Yet Austria soon found herself unable to properly justify her dispositions against Serbia, at least as far as most of the Entente press was concerned. The news of the Sarajevo crime had been taken almost with indifference in Paris, which was far too busy following the trial of the century against Mme. Caillaux, the second wife of the former prime minister, who had murdered M. Gaston Calmette, the editor of the FIGARO, in broad daylight, with six bullets, in his office.²⁵ Those who did pay attention to the sordid news from Sarajevo tended to blame Austria for implicating Serbian authorities.

²³ The *conclusion* that many commentators have taken from Hoyos' interpretation of Germany having given Austria "a completely free hand in her action against Serbia," namely that she "pushed" Austria to war rests on a very liberal *translation* of the German original, in which "eine freie Hand" simply indicates *non-intervention* in Austria's determinative political process, whatever its outcome. (111)

²⁴ Indeed, in 1914 the German strategic situation was far from auspicious, as, among others, Hew Strachan has pointed out:

"What it seems fairly clear that Germany did *not* want was war. Many of those who argue that Germany did not plan for war in 1914 point to the 1905 crisis and show how much more favorably to Germany the international position was at that juncture. The French army was still reeling from the Dreyfus affair and from the Third Republic's continuing uncertainty as to its political loyalties. The British army was both small and focused on India. Above all, Russia's preoccupation with Japan removed the threat of a war on two fronts.

The chief of the German general staff, Alfred von Schlieffen, recognized the opportunity for a preventive war. But the focus of the general staff's planning was German security in Europe; whatever German objectives in Morocco, they were not in the first instance concerned with that.

Furthermore, Schlieffen's was not necessarily the dominant voice in German military counsels, let alone in Germany more generally. Of late the navy had enjoyed the higher profile, and yet Tirpitz did not regard the German fleet as ready to take on the Royal Navy. Indeed, the German navy in 1905 had no operational plan for war with Britain or with Britain and France [nor would it have one in 1914, ¶]. (112) Hoyos' post-war statements do not reflect awareness of these issues.

²⁵ In a press campaign against her husband, the FIGARO had printed love letters she had written to Caillaux when he was still married to his first wife. In preservation of her honour, the all-male French jury gallantly acquitted her.

London took the news more sympathetic to the victims; the TIMES of July 16 declared that "the Austrians had every right to insist on vigorous investigation of all the ramifications of the plot and to demand that Serbia henceforth suppress irredentist agitation against the monarchy." (113)

Yet how the news would be received in diplomatic circles, and in particular in Russia was the important question. Here the old ditty of the inevitability of Austro-Hungarian decay showed its derogatory power, for what occurred was

...the accumulation of a fabric of assumptions that minimized the significance of the event and thereby delegitimized it as a potential casus belli. First there was the claim, widely echoed in the diplomatic traffic of the Entente powers and their Italian sleeping partner that the dead archduke had been at the head of an Austro-Hungarian war party - a view that was at variance with the truth. The emphasis on the victim's unpopularity served to cast doubt on the authenticity of Austria's sense of outrage at the crimes, while supporting the claim that the plot reflected the local unpopularity of the Habsburg dynasty among the South Slavs of the monarchy and therefore had nothing whatsoever to do with Serbia.

Then there was the highly adventurous assumption - asserted as if it were the fruit of long and deep research - that official Serbia was completely uninvolved in the attacks at Sarajevo. According to a dispatch of 13 July from the Serbian minister in Berlin, the Russian ministry of foreign affairs had informed the Russian ambassador in Berlin that there was "no Serbian involvement in the assassination at Sarajevo" - this at a time when the Austrian investigation, for all its lassitude, had already produced clear evidence to the contrary. From St. Petersburg, Miroslav Spalajković approvingly reported that, despite the dossier of evidence forwarded by the Austrian Korrespondenz-Bureau to the Russian press, the papers in St. Petersburg were following the Russian government line and treating the Sarajevo incident as a "purely internal Austrian affair." If we follow this theme through the Russian dispatches, we can see how these viewpoints fused into an argument that denied Vienna the right to counter-measures and turned the murders into a manufactured pretext for an action whose real motivations must be sought elsewhere. (114)

In essence, the Entente conjectured their own conspiracy theory, which held that Germany and Austria had cooked up the plot to have a reason to attack Serbia - which leaves unexplained why they did not do so in 1912 or 1913 when the Serbian army was busy in the east and south - and the anti-Serbian propaganda in Vienna was - in the opinion of the Russian ambassador Shebeko, the result of nebulous "German elements", which he replaced, in a later report, with "Bulgarian elements." (115)

From Belgrade, the notorious Russian ambassador Hartwig, believed by many to be the man who did in fact control Serbian policy, reported to St. Petersburg and to everybody who was willing to listen "that all the claims of the Austro-Hungarian authorities were false: there was no schadenfreude²⁶ in Serbia, on the contrary, the entire Serbian nation was moved to sympathy by the appalling murders at Sarajevo; the Belgrade-based networks that had supposedly helped the terrorists in their plot against the archduke did not exist; Cabrinović had not obtained his bombs or his weapons from the Kragujevac armoury and so on." (116)

The conclusion that Hartwig suggested - and which found many followers despite being in conflict with the law of nations - was that Austria simply had no right to seek redress from Serbia at all - for a nation could not be responsible for the actions committed by private people outside of her borders. France was axiomatically expected to subscribe to this view and did quickly - already on July 4 Poincaré had told the Austrian ambassador in Paris that the assassinations - regrettable as they might be - could not be blamed on a political party or country. In London, Grey prevaricated as usual; on July 8 he told the Russian ambassador Benckendorff that "I could only suppose that some discovery made during the trial of those implicated in the murder of the Archduke - for instance, that the bombs had been obtained in Belgrade - might, in the eyes of the Austrian Government, be foundation for a charge of negligence against the Serbian Government. But this was only imagination and guess on my part." (117) No update of Sir Grey's imagination and guesses ever took place; the British government never challenged the Russian version of the murders and their implications; neither did

²⁶ "Schadenfreude"[German]: pleasure derived from somebody else's misfortune.

France. The Triple Entente felt herself thus duty-bound to prevent the "corrupt, collapsing and yet supposedly rapacious regime" the dead archduke had represented - i.e. Austria-Hungary - from attacking "a blameless and peaceful Slav neighbour." (118) This was the official line that led to the Great War.

Again, Grey, and with him the whole Foreign Office appeared unable to make heads or tails of the reports her own men sent in. The British ambassador in Vienna, Bunsen, reported on July 16:

"I gather that [Serbian] situation is regarded at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs [in Vienna] in a serious light and that a kind of indictment is being prepared against the Serbian Government for alleged complicity in the conspiracy which led to the assassination of the Archduke. ... My informant states that the Serbian Government will be required to adopt certain definite measures in restraint of nationalist and anarchist propaganda, and that [the] Austro-Hungarian Governments are in no mood to parley with Serbia, but will insist on immediate compliance, failing which force will be used. Germany is said to be in complete agreement with this procedure and it is thought that the rest of Europe will sympathize with Austria-Hungary in demanding that Serbia shall adopt in future [a] more submissive attitude." (119)

This was an excellent summary of the Austro-German position. On the next day, July 17, Bunsen reported:

"From all I hear the Ballplatz is in an uncompromising mood. ... The authority for the telegram I sent yesterday was Count Lützow, ex-Ambassador at Rome. ... He had seen both Berchtold and Forgach at the Ballplatz the day before. ... He put on a serious face and said he wondered if I realized how grave the situation was. This Government was not going to stand Serbian insolence any longer. ... A note was being drawn up ... demanding categorically that Serbia should take effective measures to prevent the manufacture and export of bombs. ...

No futile discussion would be tolerated. If Serbia did not at once cave in, force would be used to compel her. Count Lützow added that Count Berchtold was sure of German support and did not believe any country would hesitate to approve - not even Russia. ... It all agrees strangely with the language of most of the Press, and almost all the people one meets. ...

Count Lützow said Austria was determined to have her way this time and would refuse to be headed off by anybody. Count Tisza's speech does not seem to me to read very reassuringly. He said: "We must have a settlement (Klärung) with Serbia, and we may possibly achieve it without war." (120)

Sir Grey was thus in possession of an excellent picture of Austrian intentions and German support - what did he do with it? It seems that he embarked on a course of not understanding or not wanting to understand²⁷ the severity of the situation; given the problems with most of his cabinet colleagues, which he had kept in the dark about the degree of actual Franco-British war planning, and the fickle press, his ministry developed "a kind of doublethink. It was understood that Grey must tailor his public statements and even his official communications to the expectations of the noninterventionists in cabinet and among the broader public. Yet, when Paul Cambon listened to his anti-German friends in London, or to Bertie in Paris, he heard what he wanted to hear." (121)

The true situation, however, was by no means hard to read; on May 29 already, Colonel House, President Wilson's chief advisor, had reported to the White House that "the situation was extraordinary. It is jingoism run stark mad. Unless someone acting for you can bring about a different understanding, there is some day to be an awful cataclysm. No one in Europe can do it. There is too much hatred, too many jealousies. Whenever England consents, France and Russia will close in on Germany and Austria." (122)

Yet almost day after day, on July 9, for example, Grey told Lichnowsky, the German ambassador, that "no secret and binding understandings between Britain and France or Russia" existed, (123) which was a fine example of doublespeak and arguably true, for the military talks were not technically secret - anyone hiding under the table could readily listen in, and certainly not binding in the sense that the question of their contractual validity had ever been discussed at a Court of

²⁷ Albertini discusses Grey's intellectual pregnancy in Volume II pp. 208 - 212.

Law. What Grey should have done was to signal Austria that he knew her hand - but his antics indicated the opposite and thus gave rise to the fatal assumption taking hold of Berlin that Great Britain might remain neutral if it came to war.

Meanwhile the scenario Austria found herself in was that of a self-fulfilling prophecy, as Jagow had pointed out in a letter to Lichnowsky on July 18. Because "her prestige had suffered more and more from her failure to take resolute action", her enemies now denied her the status of a Great Power and the rights that came with it. Therefore Germany could not and must not tie her hands now. If we did so, Austria (and we ourselves) could rightly reproach us with having deprived her of her last chance to rehabilitate herself politically. ... [To prevent a Russian hegemony in the Balkans] the preservation of Austria, and that Austria shall be as strong as possible, is essential to us on domestic and foreign grounds." (124)

While the argument in itself was not necessarily unreasonable, Jagow derived from it an ominous non sequitur:

*"We must see to localizing the conflict between Austria and Serbia. Whether this is possible will depend in the first place on Russia and in the second place on the moderating influence of the other members of the Entente. **The more boldness Austria displays, the more strongly we support her, the more likely is Russia to keep quiet.** There is certain to be some blustering in St. Petersburg, but at bottom Russia is not now ready to strike. France and England will not want war now."* [Emphasis added] (125)

This was a fantastic error - Jagow never explained its genesis - that set the signals for a confrontation - the extent of which, however, was still not clear. While Berlin did believe that Russia bluffed, she was ready to call it - better now than later. Meanwhile, she supported Austria ... in what exactly?

On July 6, after Szoegyenyi's telegram - redacted by Hoyos - assuring German support had arrived in Vienna, Conrad visited Berchtold. The Foreign Minister told him that Tisza was still holding out against war on the grounds that Russia certainly was to interfere. On the next day, July 7, the Austro-Hungarian Joint Ministers met, and the protocol of the conference cites Tisza arguing as follows:

"The Hungarian Prime Minister agreed that in the last few days, because of facts revealed by the inquiry and the attitude of the Serbian press, the position had changed and that he, too, regarded the possibility of military measures against Serbia as less remote than he had believed immediately after the Sarajevo outrage.

He would, however, never agree to a surprise attack on Serbia without preliminary diplomatic preparation, as seemed to be intended and as regrettably had been discussed in Berlin by Count Hoyos, because by so doing we should in his opinion thoroughly discredit ourselves in the eyes of Europe and most probably have to reckon with the hostility of the whole of the Balkans - except for Bulgaria - without Bulgaria in her present state of weakness being able to give us corresponding help.

We ought undoubtedly to formulate demands on Serbia and present an ultimatum if Serbia failed to meet them. The demands must be stiff but not impossible of fulfilment. If Serbia accepted them we should have scored a brilliant diplomatic success and our prestige in the Balkans would soar. Were our demands to meet with a rejection, then he, too, would be in favour of military operations, but he must from the onset emphatically state that any such operations, though they might result in a diminution of Serbia, must never aim at her destruction, because on the one hand this could never be conceded by Russia without a life and death struggle and [on the other hand] he himself as Hungarian Prime Minister could never agree to the annexation by the Monarchy of any part of Serbia." (126)

Berchtold and Stuerghk, the Austrian Prime Minister, then proposed a weak compromise - that a diplomatic solution should be sought but war resorted to if the Austrian demands were not to be met immediately. Finance Minister Bilinski and War Minister Krobatin assented, and the protocol ends with the following resolutions:

"1. All those present desire a speedy settlement of the conflict with Serbia by warlike or by peaceful means.

2. The Council of Ministers were willing to associate themselves with Tisza in the view that mobilization should only take place after concrete demands have 'been placed before and rejected by Serbia and an ultimatum has been presented.'

On the other hand all those present, with the exception of Tisza, take the view that a purely diplomatic success, even if it were to end with a resounding humiliation for Serbia, would be valueless and that, therefore, such far reaching demands must be made to Serbia as would render their rejection probable, in order to clear the road for a radical solution by way of military operations." (127)

The summary leaves little doubt that from July 7 on, the majority of the Austrian government was on the war path - too strong was the urge to revenge the slights and insults received from Serbia in recent decades. On the eventuality of Russian involvement, the ministers essentially adopted Conrad's advice of "better now than later", in the awareness that Russia's sponsorship of a second "Balkan League" would sooner or later be directed against the Dual Monarchy. Tisza was aware that the Romanian border presented an open flank, which to cover the army simply did not have the numbers if she were busy with Serbia and/or Russia; an open flank at which a Romanian minority oppressed by the Magyars was waiting for the signal of revolt.

But Tisza's opposition was gradually diminishing, which meant that the war party could hope to win him over to their side, and Conrad, Berchtold and Hoyos bombarded him with memoranda. An Austrian investigator, Dr. Wiesner, was dispatched to Belgrade on July 10, and reported three days later, by telegram:

"There is nothing to show the complicity of the Serbian Government in the directing of the assassination or in its preparation or in the supplying of weapons. Nor is there anything to lead one even to conjecture such a thing. On the contrary, there is evidence that would appear to show that such complicity is out of the question. ...

Depositions of accused place it practically beyond doubt that the outrage was decided in Belgrade and prepared with the help of the Serbian railway officials Ciganović and Major Tankosić, by both of whom bombs, Brownings, ammunition and cyanide of potassium were procured. ...

Bombs definitely proved to have come from Serbian army stores, but nothing to show that they had been taken out for this express purpose, since they might belong to the supplies of the Comitaji in the war. ... Hardly room for doubt that Princip, Cabrinović and Grabez ... [were] ... secretly smuggled across the frontier by Serbian officials. ... Other investigations after the outrage open a glimpse into propaganda organization Narodna Odbrana. Received valuable utilizable material not yet examined, rapid inquiries in progress." (128)

The hawks did not like the report: in a letter to Conrad of July 14, Potiorek thought it "impossible" that not "at least one or another member of the democratic Government of so small a country as Serbia had knowledge of the preparations for the outrage ..." (129) and already a day earlier Tschirschky had reported to Berlin that "Minister [Berchtold] is now himself convinced that speediest action is imperative." (130) Berchtold was to meet Tisza the next day to prepare a draft for the note to be sent to Belgrade, which would be presented to the Emperor on July 15. Yet we have to remind ourselves that these officials did not enjoy the advantage of hindsight, which makes the contemporary observer wonder how they could not realize where they were headed. Sean McMeekin notes that while

... there is a basic consensus now about Serbian complicity in Sarajevo, however, is not to say that there was anything like agreement on the subject in 1914. Just as generals must often make rapid-fire battlefield decisions in the "fog of war," so must statesmen navigate crises with imperfect intelligence, not only in the sense that not all relevant facts can usually be known but that many things presumed to be facts are not true at all. To evaluate the decisions made in European capitals in July 1914, one must therefore disentangle not only what happened when, but what the relevant policymakers knew (or thought they knew), and when they knew it.

To a considerable extent, this work has already been done with regard to both Austria-Hungary and Germany, who usually figure as the guilty parties in the drama. Decades of research and analysis have established a fairly reliable timeline of both intentions and decision making in Berlin and Vienna. The key events have entered the historical lexicon. First came the "Count Hoyos mission" to Berlin, which resulted in the notorious "blank cheque," wherein Kaiser Wilhelm promised on 5 July 1914 that Germany would stand by Austria if she attacked Serbia (a position seconded by Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg the next day).

This assurance was followed by a parade of "injured innocence" as German leaders took their vacations (the Kaiser departing on his Norwegian cruise, Helmuth von Moltke continuing his annual cure at Carlsbad, Bethmann Hollweg summering on the family estate at Hohenfinow in Brandenburg, where Kurt Riezler overheard his remark about the "growth of Russian power". Next, a kind of "gap in the record" opened in mid-July, during which the papers of the principal German and Austrian conspirators fall silent, followed by a premeditated forty-eight-hour ultimatum from Vienna dispatched to Serbia on 23 July 1914, cooked up in quiet (and presumably undocumented) collusion with Berlin, so as to ensure rejection. Finally, the Austrians declared war on Belgrade on 28 July, which prompted Russia's mobilization and German countermeasures, thus plunging Europe into general war.

Although the issue of German war guilt proclaimed in the Versailles Treaty of 1919 was reopened by a flood of confessions regarding Serbian complicity in the Sarajevo outrage in the 1920s, and by revelations from the Imperial Russian archives opened by the Soviet government after the war, Fritz Fischer's bestselling indictment of Germany's bid for world power (GRIFF NACH DER WELTMACHT) largely closed the door again.

Although Fischer, predictably, found plenty of critics in Germany, for the most part western historians have endorsed at least a modified version of his thesis. David Fromkin, for example, answers his own question in EUROPE'S LAST SUMMER: WHO STARTED THE GREAT WAR IN 1914? (2004): "Briefly and roughly stated, the answer is that the government of Austria-Hungary started its local war with Serbia, while Germany's military leaders started the worldwide war against France and Russia that became known as the First World War or the Great War."

Convincing as it is on the surface, however, there has always been serious problems with the full-on thesis about Germany's deliberate launching of a world war. As even its supporters realize, the botched execution of the Austro-German plot to isolate and punish Serbia hardly suggests brilliant, "cold-blooded" design. The original plan conceived by Bethmann Hollweg during the Count Hoyos visit in early July was to forge a fait accompli, a chastisement of Serbia by Austrian arms to be completed before the great powers could react. Bethmann Hollweg was clear from the start about the objective of localizing the conflict. While Moltke, a notorious pessimist, was less sanguine about the prospects for limiting the war's scope, he too chimed in from Carlsbad with the hope that "Austria must beat the Serbs and then make peace quickly."

It was Austria's own prevarication in July that undermined the German strategy: Count Stefan Tisza, the Hungarian minister-president, was notably cool to the idea of a punitive invasion, unless Vienna could first prepare the ground diplomatically. (131)

How then did Conrad, Berchtold and Hoyos attempt to prepare the ground? To allay Tisza's and possible international misgivings, the hawks came up with the idea that, in a note to all governments, Austria would publicly and bindingly promise that, in the case of a Serbian war, she would not seek territorial gain, i.e. refrain from occupying Serbian soil. This would demonstrate that the Monarchy was defending her honour without having enrichment in mind (it turned out later that this was a case of Austrian doublespeak, for the hawks fully intended to carve up Serbia once and for all - but they would give the parts to Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, not keeping any for themselves).

To further ease Tisza's fears, Conrad promised to station troops at the endangered Austro-Romanian border - troops he did not have. Then it was found out that the army could not even begin its mobilization until the troops on harvest leave had returned to their regiments, where they were not expected until July 25. From then on, it was established, another sixteen days were needed - at the bare minimum - for a complete mobilization.

At the next meeting of the Joint Ministers on July 14, Tisza finally consented to the composition and delivery to Serbia of a list of Austrian demands - perhaps on the strength of a note sent by Szoegyenyi from Berlin on July 12, which represented the German government's opinion as "by no means certain that if Serbia becomes involved in a war with us, Russia would resort to arms in her support. ... The German Government further believes it has sure indications that England at the present moment would not join in a war over a Balkan country, even should this lead to a passage of arms with Russia and eventually even with France." (132)²⁸

This communiqué much alleviated the Hungarian Prime Minister's misgivings, and later on the same day, July 14, he reportedly confessed to Tschirschky that "it has not been easy to take the decision of advising war, but I am now convinced of its necessity and will use all my influence on behalf of the greatness of the Monarchy." (133) In a summary of the day's events, Tschirschky then telegraphed to Berlin a clarification on the timing of the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia in regard to the meeting of the French President Poincaré with the Tsar and Sazonov in St. Petersburg on July 20-23: "it is advisable," he wrote, "to wait until M. Poincaré's departure from St. Petersburg before carrying out the démarche at Belgrade." (134) In a note to Francis Joseph dated July 14, Berchtold agreed:

"All those present [at the Joint Minister meeting] were of my opinion that the delivery of the ultimatum during the St. Petersburg meeting would be regarded as an affront and that a personal discussion between the ambitious President of the Republic and H.M. the Tsar of Russia on the international situation created by the dispatch of the ultimatum would heighten the probability of military intervention by Russia and France." (135)

The ultimatum would be presented to Serbia on the evening of July 23, when the Tsar's guests were expected to have already embarked upon the homeward cruise. The coordination of eventual Franco-Russian counter-manoevres should thus be delayed, especially in regard to Germany. Luigi Albertini had readily observed that "in the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the World War, St. Petersburg felt a stronger hatred for Germany than for Austria," (136) and Sazonov considered Austria Germany's vanguard in a plot to dominate the Near East.²⁹ In his memoirs he wrote:

"Germany decided to seize the opportunity thus offered of settling accounts with her Eastern and Western neighbours, and of crushing their power once and for all. She could then proceed quietly to execute her plan of re-casting Central Europe on a new basis, transforming it, for her own purposes, into a corridor to the Near East. In order to realize this plan, it was necessary first to destroy Serbia, and then drive Russia out of the Balkan Peninsula, replacing her influence by that of Austria-Hungary." (137)

This indictment - from Sazonov's memoirs - is of course offered a posteriori, i.e. after the Treaty of Versailles identified Germany as the principal culprit. From July 14 to 19, however, before the arrival of the French delegation in St. Petersburg for the summit, Sazonov took an ominous vacation himself. Yet Chorister's Bridge remained well aware of what the Austrians were planning: on July 16 the Russian Ambassador at Vienna, Shebeko, submitted the following telegram:

"Information reaches me that the Austro-Hungarian Government at the conclusion of the inquiry [at Sarajevo] intends to make certain demands on Belgrade, claiming that there is a connection between the question of the Sarajevo outrage and the Pan-Serb agitation within the confines of the Monarchy.

In so doing it reckons on the non-intervention of Russia and the sympathetic attitude of its own Southern Slave elements towards this measure. It would seem to me desirable that at the present moment, before a final decision on the matter, the Vienna Cabinet should be informed how Russia would react to the fact of Austria's presenting demands to Serbia such as would be unacceptable to the dignity of that state." (138)

Hence less than 48 hours after the conclusion of the Joint Minister Conference in Vienna, the Russian Embassy proved exceptionally well informed. In his memoirs, Shebeko says he was told that the note to Belgrade "was drafted in extremely

²⁸ This report was so exactly aimed at relieving Tisza's opposition that the question arises whether Berchtold had it tailor-made for the express purpose.

²⁹ If Germany planned the conquest of Asia, why did Austria give up the Sanjak of Novi Pazar - and hence the road to Salonika - in 1908?

stiff terms and contained demands unacceptable to any independent state." (139) This knowledge - so close to the truth - would suggest that St. Petersburg had a source in the Austrian Foreign Ministry and so was kept au courant.

For already on the evening of his return to St. Petersburg, Sazonov told Sir George Buchanan, the British ambassador, that "anything in the shape of an Austrian ultimatum at Belgrade could not leave Russia indifferent, and she might be forced to take some precautionary military measures." (140) Sazonov thus seemed all but resolved - as early as July 19, four days before the presentation of the ultimatum to Belgrade - to call for Russian mobilization in return. Such was the diplomatic status quo on the eve of President Poincaré's visit to St. Petersburg.

It was France's and Russia's turn now to provide an enormous "gap in the record" - as explained by Sean McMeekin:

*The biggest documentary gap in the July crisis is not, contrary to popular belief, Bethmann Hollweg's missing papers (the thrust of his thinking is clearly elucidated in both the Riezler diaries and in many other documents dating to July 1914) or evidence relating to Austro-German collusion over the Serbian ultimatum (which is in fact copiously documented in the diplomatic archives of both Berlin and Vienna), but records relating to the crucial four-day French presidential summit with the Tsar and his foreign minister in Petersburg from 20 to 23 July 1914. **Not a single scrap from this summit has ever surfaced**, despite extensive research by both Soviet scholars and the editors of the official French documentary collection on the outbreak of the war.*

*In similar vein, there are conspicuous gaps in the dispatches of Maurice Paléologue, France's ambassador to Petersburg, **lasting an entire week following the archduke's assassination**. Paléologue did not report on Sazonov's reaction to the news from Sarajevo until 6 July 1914 and he omitted the entire period of the **presidential summit** from the 20th to the 23rd. The second gap is particularly suspicious, considering that planning for the July presidential summit had been underway for six months. ...*

Rounding out the picture of selective recordkeeping inside the Franco-Russian alliance, there are substantial gaps in Russia's own diplomatic correspondence with its envoys in Paris and Belgrade in July 1914, in the latter case for ten whole days following the assassination of the archduke on 28 June.

Did the Russians have something to hide? The gaps in the record strongly suggest a good deal of purging took place after 1914. Missing files from Imperial Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs are particularly noteworthy, in that following the October Revolution, Soviet researchers had no compunction in publishing the most incriminating documents they could find in order to indict the benighted "imperialism" of the old regime. Sazonov's memoirs are little help. In typical fashion, the Russian foreign minister plays dumb as he narrates key July events, pretending, for example, that he had no inkling whatsoever of Austria-Hungary's ultimatum to Serbia before he was officially informed of it by her ambassador, Count Friedrich Szapary, on 24 July 1914.

This is almost certainly untrue. Just as the German government falsely claimed that it had not known of the ultimatum before Vienna dispatched it to Belgrade, it served Russian and French interests' to feign ignorance when Austria's terms were fully announced.³⁰ The wonder is that anyone has ever believed this, particularly after it was revealed that Russian cryptographers had broken the Austrian diplomatic codes.

Sazonov's denial of prior knowledge reads today a bit like Captain Renault's famous aside in Casablanca: He was Shocked! Shocked! to learn that Austria planned to punish Serbia for the Sarajevo outrage. Likewise, Entente protestations against the ultimatum invariably stressed the fact that Vienna and Berlin must have colluded over its exceptionally harsh terms, judging from the Germans' public endorsement of the ultimatum after the fact. Of course the Austrians and Germans colluded over its terms: they were close military allies. This is what allies do. ...

³⁰ It would seem that Grey was the only man out of the loop, until he was informed by Buchanan on the afternoon of July 22 (Cf. Albertini 11/193 f).

To sum up the state of the diplomatic game on the eve of Poincaré's arrival in Petersburg: the Austrians and Germans had colluded together on the terms offered Serbia, and (following the delays caused by the need to placate Count Tisza Vienna planned to issue the ultimatum as soon as the French delegation left Petersburg on the night of 23 July 1914. The Austrians knew when Poincaré would take his leave from Russia, and what they would then do. The Russians knew (roughly, at least) what the Austrians would do, and exactly when they would do it. So what did Poincaré, the Tsar, and their foreign ministers talk about? [Emphases added] (141)

By the 19th, the leak of the Austrian ultimatum plan had already been identified as the result of carelessness - and a pinch of treason - on account of the Italian Foreign Ministry: on July 11, Jagow had informed Flotow, his man in Rome, about Austrian intentions as far as they were known at that moment, and Flotow had informally passed on his knowledge to the Italian Foreign Minister San Giuliano. Giuliano's office, however, had felt the urge to inform the Italian embassies in St. Petersburg, Bucharest and Vienna of Flotow's report and - here comes the treason bit, for wasn't Austria Italy's ally? - advised these legations to "prevent the Austrian démarche by adopting a 'threatening demeanour' in Vienna and Berlin." (142) But since essentially everybody had broken the Italian diplomatic code, and Shebeko had received independent confirmation from Lützow in Berlin, Austria's plans had become common knowledge. Now Vienna - livid over Italy and blaming Jagow as well - halted communications with Berlin for a few days, so that Bethmann Hollweg and Jagow did not receive a copy of the ultimatum before the evening of July 22, when it was too late to change anything - assuming that they had wanted to.

By this time, Austria certainly did not want to deviate from the plan. It had taken the hawks long enough to overcome Tisza's opposition, and the portents of mobilization difficulties only amplified their dread that time was running out. They knew, in the abstract, that they risked a general European war - but failed to ask themselves whether the nation, or the present constellation of powers, was fit for it. It was simply assumed that Germany could neutralize both Russia and France - as if it were a law of nature - as Zimmermann reportedly told Hoyos. This was simply not true - Moltke thought that Germany was not even superior to France alone - but no reality-check occurred. In a way, the old ditty of inevitable Austrian decay had done its duty, creating an atmosphere of cognitive inertia - Berthold Molden, a freelance journalist and sometimes writer for the Ballhausplatz, expressed the feeling of Austria's geopolitical isolation by noting that "public opinion in Russia and France ... will always maintain that we are the guilty ones, even if the Serbs, in the midst of peace, invade us by the thousands one night, armed with bombs." (143) Austrian government circles did not doubt the justness of their case against Serbia and hoped for an improvement of the national mood; if the undertaking proved successful, Molden reflected, "Austria-Hungary ... would again believe in itself." (144)

The next meeting of the Austro-Hungarian Joint Ministers occurred on July 19, and approved a preliminary version of the note, although textual changes continued to be made until the 22nd. Berlin did not understand the delay; on July 11 already had Jagow told Tschirschky that "as to the formulation of the demands on Serbia we can take no position, as this is a matter for Austria," (145) and four days later complained that "the sympathetic concurrence and interest in this démarche would be cooled even in Germany by this delay." (146)

Meanwhile Serbia had been warned by Russia about what to expect; the Serbian Embassy in London seems to have been informed by Whitehall of Bunsen's July 16 report of Lützow's indiscretion that "a kind of indictment is being prepared against the Serbian Government for alleged complicity in the conspiracy which led to the assassination of the Archduke." (147) For the Serbian government, i.e. Prime Minister (yet again) Nikola Pasić, the Sarajevo events were an unmitigated public relations disaster, for his administration could not - as the nationalist press and its followers did - celebrate the events but was also prevented from expressing too much official grief, for the risk of alienating the army and the conspirators who enjoyed the backing of the mob. Hence the Serbian government dithered, which only made it look guilty. The possibility that it was indeed Ciganović, the shady railways employee, the link between official and unofficial Belgrade, is here of importance - Pasić knew that his possible knowledge of the plot might be exposed.

In the event, Pasić chose, as so many politicians and generals in these early days of summer 1914, not to be at home. As mentioned above, the conflict between civilian and military authorities over the administration of the newly acquainted provinces in Macedonia had brought on a full-fledged state crisis: Pasić fired the war minister but had to resign

from office on June 2 himself, and on June 24 elections were scheduled for August 1. (148) King Peter abdicated in favour of his son Alexander, who, not surprisingly, "backed Pasić against Apis," the regicide, and the army did not follow the latter when he "ordered a coup on 7 June." (149) While Apis was thus temporarily neutralized, Pasić departed Belgrade to hit the campaign trail, which left him no time to answer questions about unrelated events in Bosnia.

This was much the wiser for the fact that in Sarajevo the name of Ciganović had fallen and the Austrian military espionage service had succeeded in identifying his occupation with the Serbian state railway company and that he had been sent on leave three days before the Sarajevo crime. Potentially worse for the Pasić administration was the revelation that Ciganović's name had been removed from the employee list immediately after the news of the assassination had become known, and literally nobody believed the protestations of the police president who claimed that Ciganović could not be found, although an arrest warrant had been issued in his name. (150)

Milos Bogicević, the Serbian Charge d'Affaires at Berlin from 1906 to 1914, later disclosed that "before the war Ciganović had been a spy and agent provocateur for Pasić and that, as a member of the Black Hand, he kept the Government faithfully informed of what went on in it." (151) Bogicević also reminded everyone that the Black Hand threatened its opponents not only politically, but also physically; that they...

"...were so powerful and had succeeded so well in concealing their actions and in placing accomplished facts before those who, like Pasić, condemned their revolutionary methods of direct action ... that it was impossible to stop them.

Pasić knew! We all knew! But nothing could be done. If Russia had not supported us, if we had to submit to the inquest which the Austrian ultimatum exacted in July 1914, we should have been caught with our hand in the sack." (152)

It might be expected that a gang of officers who had murdered their own royal couple only eleven years earlier would not feel scruples to add a minister or two to the bag, and thus Pasić's caution - and his fortuitous absence from Belgrade - saved him, for the moment, from the necessity of coming to terms with the Black Hand and its designs. Because of his urgent campaigning, he was not in the capital when the Austrian Ambassador Giesl, at 6 p.m. on the evening of Thursday, July 23, presented an important note from the Austrian to the Serbian government to the Minister of Finance Lazar Pacu, who was Pasić's deputy and temporary replacement.³¹

The legate handed Pacu and Gruić, the Secretary General of the Serbian Foreign Ministry, the Austrian demarche, two pages of an annex, and a brief introductory note. The reply, he said, was expected by 6 p.m. on Saturday, July 25, forty-eight hours hence, and he was instructed, should no answer be received or were it unsatisfactory, to leave the capital with his staff immediately and return to Vienna.

The note read:

"On 31 March 1909, the Serbian Minister at Vienna, on the instructions of his Government, made the following declaration to the Imperial and Royal Government:

'Serbia recognizes that her rights have not been affected by the fait accompli created in Bosnia-Herzegovina³² and that consequently she will conform to such decisions as the Powers may take in conformity with Article XXV of the Treaty of Berlin. In deference to the advice of the Great Powers, Serbia undertakes henceforward to renounce the attitude of protest and opposition which she had adopted with regard to the annexation since last autumn and she further engages to modify the direction of her present policy with regard to Austria-Hungary and to live henceforward with the latter on a footing of good neighbourliness.'

³¹ Only five ministers had remained in Belgrade, the rest was electioneering. Pasić was campaigning in Nish but, informed by telephone, declined to return to the capital.

³² That is, the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The history of recent years and in particular the painful events of 28 June have demonstrated the existence in Serbia of a subversive movement the aim of which is to detach from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy certain parts of its territories. This movement, which had its birth under the eye of the Serbian Government, has gone so far as to manifest itself beyond the territory of the Kingdom by acts of terrorism, by a series of outrages, and by murders.

The Royal Serbian Government, far from fulfilling the formal pledges contained in the declaration of 31 March 1909, has done nothing to repress these movements; it has tolerated the criminal machinations of various societies and associations directed against the Monarchy, unrestrained language on the part of the press, glorifications of the perpetrators of outrages, participation of officers and officials in subversive agitation, unwholesome propaganda in public education; in short, tolerated all the manifestations of a nature to inculcate in the Serbian population hatred of the Monarchy and contempt for its institutions.

This culpable tolerance on the part of the Royal Government of Serbia had not ceased at the moment when the events of 28 June last revealed its disastrous consequences to the whole world.

It is shown by the depositions and confessions of the criminal authors of the outrage of 28 June that the Sarajevo murders were planned in Belgrade, that the arms and explosives with which the murderers were found to be provided had been given them by Serbian officers and officials belonging to the Narodna Odbrana and finally that the passage into Bosnia of the criminals and their arms was organized and effectuated by chiefs of the Serbian frontier service.

The results here mentioned of the preliminary investigation do not permit the Imperial and Royal Government to pursue any longer the attitude of expectant forbearance which they have for years observed towards the machinations concentrated in Belgrade and thence propagated in the territories of the Monarchy; the results on the contrary impose on them the duty of putting an end to the intrigues which constitute a permanent threat to the tranquillity of the Monarchy.

It is to achieve this end that the Imperial and Royal Government sees itself obliged to demand from the Serbian Government the formal assurance that it condemns the propaganda directed against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, that is to say the aggregate of tendencies, the ultimate aim of which is to detach from the Monarchy territories belonging thereto, and that it undertakes to suppress by every means this criminal and terrorist propaganda.

In order to give a formal character to this undertaking, the Royal Government of Serbia shall cause to be published on the front page of the OFFICIAL JOURNAL of the 26/13 July³³ the following declaration:

'The Royal Government of Serbia condemns the propaganda directed against Austria-Hungary, i.e. the aggregate of tendencies, the ultimate aim of which is to detach from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy territories which form part thereof, and it sincerely deplores the fatal consequences of these criminal proceedings.'

'The Royal Government regrets that Serbian officers and officials have participated in the above-mentioned propaganda and thereby compromised the good neighbourly relations to which the Royal Government had solemnly pledged itself by its declaration of 31 March 1909.'

'The Royal Government, which disapproves and repudiates all idea or attempt of interference with the destinies of the inhabitants of any part whatsoever of Austria-Hungary, considers it its duty formally to warn the officers, officials and all the population of the Kingdom that henceforward it will proceed with the utmost rigor against all persons who may render themselves guilty of such machinations which it will use all its efforts to forestall and repress.'

³³ July 26 in Austria, July 13 (Old Style) in Serbia.

This declaration shall simultaneously be communicated to the Royal Army as an order of the day by His Majesty the King and shall be published in the 'Official Bulletin of the Army'.

The Royal Serbian Government further undertakes:

1. To suppress any publication which incites to hatred and contempt of the Monarchy and the general tendency of which is directed against its territorial integrity;

2. To dissolve immediately the society styled Narodna Odbrana, to confiscate all its means of propaganda, and to proceed in the same manner against the other societies and their branches in Serbia which engage in propaganda against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy; the Royal Government will take the necessary measures to prevent the dissolved societies from continuing their activities under another name and form;

3. To eliminate without delay from public instruction in Serbia, both as regards the teaching body and the methods of instruction, all that serves or might serve to foment the propaganda against Austria-Hungary;

4. To remove from the military service and the administration in general all officers and officials guilty of propaganda against the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and of whom the Imperial and Royal Government reserves to itself the right to communicate the names and deeds to the Royal Government;

5. To accept the collaboration in Serbia of organs of the Imperial and Royal Government in the suppression of the subversive movement directed against the territorial integrity of the Monarchy;

6. To take judicial proceedings against the accessories to the plot of 28 June who are on Serbian territory; Organs delegated by the Imperial and Royal Government will take part in the investigations relating thereto;

7. To proceed without delay to the arrest of Major Voija Tankosić and of a certain Milan Ciganović, a Serbian State employee implicated by the findings of the preliminary investigation at Sarajevo;

8. To prevent by effective measures the cooperation of the Serbian Authorities in the illicit traffic in arms and explosives across the frontier; to dismiss and severely punish the officials of the Sabac and Loznica frontier service guilty of having assisted the authors of the Sarajevo crime by facilitating their crossing of the frontier;

9. To furnish the Imperial and Royal Government with explanations regarding the unjustifiable utterances of high Serbian officials both in Serbia and abroad, who, notwithstanding their official position, have not hesitated since the outrage of 28 June to express themselves in interviews in terms of hostility towards the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy [and] finally

10. To notify the Imperial and Royal Government without delay of the execution of the measures comprised under the preceding heads.

The Imperial and Royal Government expects the reply of the Royal Government at the latest by Saturday 25 of this month at 5 p.m.³⁴

[A memorandum dealing with the results of the preliminary investigation at Sarajevo with regard to the officials mentioned in Points 7 and 8 is annexed to this Note]

Annex:

The criminal investigation opened by the Sarajevo Court against Gavrilo Princip and associates on the count of assassination and complicity therein, in respect of the crime committed by them on 28 June, has up to the present led to the following conclusions:

³⁴ Albertini remarks: "The figure 5 is struck out and replaced by 6." (153)

1. The plot having as its object the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand on the occasion of his visit to Sarajevo was formed at Belgrade by Gavrilo Princip, Nedeljko Cabrinović and one Milan Ciganović and Trifko Grabez with the help of Commander Voija Tankosić.

2. The 6 bombs and 4 Browning pistols with ammunition with which the malefactors committed the outrage were delivered to Princip, Cabrinović and Grabez at Belgrade by a certain Milan Ciganović and Commander Voija Tankosić.

3. The bombs are hand grenades from the munitions depot of the Serbian Army at Kragujevac.

4. To assure the success of the outrage, Ciganović instructed Princip, Cabrinović and Grabez in the use of grenades, and, in a forest near the rifle-range at Topcider (Park), gave Princip and Grabez shooting practice with Browning pistols.

5. To enable Princip, Cabrinović and Grabez to cross the frontier of Bosnia-Herzegovina and to smuggle in clandestinely their contraband arms, a secret system of transport was organized by Ciganović. As a result of this organization the introduction into Bosnia-Herzegovina of the criminals and their arms was effected by the frontier captains of Sabac (Rade Popović) and Loznica, and the customs official Rudivoj Grbić of Loznica with the aid of various individuals." (154)

This document, it has been said, marked the end of the nineteenth century. Its terms were harsh, yet not entirely without precedent, and certainly more lenient than the conditions the Treaty of Versailles would impose five years hence on Germany, which empowered an Allied Control Commission to roam the length and breadth of the country in search of contraband in addition to imposing reparation payments and giving German territory to every neighbour state except Switzerland and Austria. The demands inflicted on Belgrade in 1914 might also be compared - favourably, as Christopher Clark points out - to the ultimatum of Rambouillet the NATO addressed to the Serbian government in 1999 to stop the genocide of non-Serbs in Kosovo. The Rambouillet memorandum commanded that NATO forces "shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft and equipment free and unrestricted and unimpeded access through the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, including associated airspace and territorial waters," and gave the troops the right of manoeuvre in and the utilization "of any areas or facilities as required for support, training and operations." (155)

In comparison, the Austrian demands of 1914 almost appear quaint. It is true that Points 5 and 6 impeded Serbian sovereignty, but some of the evidence was unimpeachable - the hand grenades, say - and Austria had good reasons to doubt the efficiency of Serbian law-enforcement. "Vienna," Christopher Clark diagnosed, "did not trust the Serbian authorities to press home the investigation without some form of Austrian supervision and verification. And it must be said that nothing the Serbian government did between June 28 and the presentation of the ultimatum gave them any reason to think otherwise." (156) Certainly the possibility of subsequent negotiations on the more intrusive points was not excluded per se, and all that Belgrade had to do in this respect would be to send a few suspected conspirators abroad or into Russian exile for some months until the affair had died down. What real harm could a few more Austrian detectives do, when Dr. Wiesner had already been in Belgrade since July 10 and the heavens had not fallen?

It is not clear, however, whether the Austrians realized that Belgrade's problem was not the conspiracy in itself or the identity of the true conspirators - that is, the Black Hand instead of the Narodna Odbrana - but the fact that its extent reached into Belgrade's highest places and neither Pasić's civilian government, nor, of course, the Black Hand itself could allow their mutual relations to see the light of day. But the carefree absence of rationality in Balkan politics pretty much guaranteed that Serbia would reject the note, which was exactly the outcome Austria sought to achieve. Vanity, they knew, would prevail in Serbia, as vanity had prevailed in 1870 when Napoleon III declared war on Prussia over a telegram that seemed to infringe on France's Imperial self-esteem. In comparison, Austria had a reasonably valid reason for war.

After the Austrian ambassador had left, the five ministers presently in Belgrade perused the note while attempting to reach the prime minister by telephone. When a connection to Pasić - who was wrapping up his campaign stop in the southern town of Nis - was finally established, Pasić declared his general disinterest in Austrian notes and announced his decision to take a short holiday in Salonika; he was tired of campaigning, he told his staff, and had his salon

car coupled to the next train southward. Only after the train had reached Lescovac, fifty kilometres south of Nis, it was stopped and an urgent telegram from Prince Alexandar delivered to the prime minister. Pasić then ordered to return to Belgrade. (157)

We are not sure what the Serbian government's immediate reactions were - except that the Russian embassy was consulted at the same hour. First the acting prime minister Pacu and then Prince Alexandar dropped by to have counsel with Basil Strandmann, the acting Russian ambassador.³⁵ In essence, two topics developed from the discussion: one, that the Serbian government could not accept these demands, but, two, remembering Sazonov's advice - or order - to remove their troops from Albania in October 1913 in the face of Austria's ultimatum, the Serbian ministers were unsure whether Russia was indeed prepared to back them up in the case of war. The French opinion could not be sounded out right away, because Poincaré and Viviani were at sea, and the French ambassador Leon Descos had returned to Paris after a nervous breakdown and had not yet been replaced. (158) Pacu directed a circular to all Serbian embassies to inform them of the Austrian ultimatum, Strandmann alerted St. Petersburg, but nothing else could be done this evening and the improvised meeting was adjourned until Pasić's arrival on the morning of the 24th - and then it was only decided to wait until Russia's position was known.

That Serbia would seek Russian support was clear to the Austrian decision-makers, but, they figured, Russia would shrink from war - why, exactly, was not clear, but of this fact they had been assured by Wilhelm and Bethmann Hollweg and they were only too happy to take their word. How the German government arrived at this altogether surreal conclusion remains, to some degree, a mystery. The reality, however, was that when Austria threw down the gauntlet at Serbia, it was swiftly picked up by Russia, too swiftly, perhaps. Indeed, in hindsight it is hard not to suspect that Russia, forewarned by Shebeko already on July 16, was expecting exactly this Austrian move. On July 18, we remember, only two days after Shebeko's cable and four days after Tisza had agreed to the ultimatum at the Joint Minister conference, Sazonov had already admitted far more knowledge of Austrian intentions that he was supposed to possess -informing Buchanan that "anything in the shape of an Austrian ultimatum at Belgrade could not leave Russia indifferent and she might be forced to take some precautionary military measures," that is, mobilization.

Strangely enough, the story goes that Sazonov was alerted of the Austrian ultimatum around 9 p.m. on the evening of July 23, at Tsarskoe Selo³⁶ not via Strandmann, his man in Belgrade, nor via Spalaiković, the Serbian ambassador at St. Petersburg, but via Marquis Carlotti, the Italian envoy, who had allegedly alerted a lower-level Russian diplomat at Chorister's Bridge, who in turn sent a cable to Sazonov at Tsarskoe Selo. (159) Yet the Foreign Minister did not return to the capital until 10 a.m. or so on the 24th, but, reportedly, exclaimed immediately after only cursory examination of the Austrian note, "C'est la guerre européenne!" (160)

He then proceeded to receive the Austrian Ambassador Count Szapary, who officially delivered the Austrian notification to the Russian government of the note to Serbia plus a few other documents and informed Sazonov that a dossier with evidence of Serbian guilt would be forwarded to the ministry soon.³⁷ A few hours later, Sazonov received a telegram from the Serbian Prince-Regent, Alexandar, directed to the Tsar, in which he indicated Serbia's preparedness to submit to those parts of the Austrian demarche "whose acceptance shall be advised by Your Majesty." (161) Hence the burden was squarely put on Sazonov's shoulders, who immediately, that is about 11 a.m., met with the Chief of the General Staff Yanushkevich, whom he advised to make "all arrangements for putting the army on a war footing"; it might become necessary to "proclaim only partial mobilization against Austria-Hungary," in which case Yanushkevich was to take care that "nothing must give Germany occasion to perceive in it any hostile intentions against herself." (162)

As Sean McMeekin points out, the order as well the concept underlying it was - quoting General Dobrorolski, the Chief of the Army's Mobilization Section - a "folly": "impossible both in the general sense, in that [the Russian Mobilization]

³⁵ To complicate matters after the Sarajevo incident, the Russian Ambassador to Serbia, the much-mentioned Hartwig, had died of a stroke - during a visit to the Austrian Embassy to boot - on July 10.

³⁶ The Tsar's summer palace, literally "The Tsar's Village".

³⁷ This dossier was essentially identical with the Annex to the Austrian note, see n. 153, which delineated the results of the Sarajevo investigation.

Plan 19 required mobilization against Germany and Austria simultaneously with no variant separating the two, and in the more specific sense that it was physically impossible to mobilize against the Austrian border without extensively using the Warsaw railway hub, which would inevitably alarm the Germans." (163)

Originally, the plan to mobilize against Austria only but not Germany had been an idea of War Minister Sukhomlinov that had been kicked around during the Council of Ministers' meeting of November 23, 1912 - during the First Balkan War - when it had almost been attempted, as far as a nonexistent plan could have been implemented. The problem on this July 24, however, was that Yanushkevich - promoted to Chief of Staff only five months earlier, unfamiliar with the mobilization plan and hence a disaster waiting to happen³⁸ - had already promised Sazonov that the imaginary option was indeed viable and would be implemented forthwith.

As Luigi Albertini has pointed out, the absurdity to insist on a non-existing mobilization plan, which to implement immediately Yanushkevich ordered Dobrorolski despite the latter's protestations around noon of July 24, was to have the most lethal consequences. "Had Yanushkevich from the beginning warned Sazonov of the mistake he would be making in proclaiming partial mobilization, Sazonov would never have got the Council of Ministers on 24 July and the Tsar on 25 July to approve it in principle, nor would he have proclaimed it on the evening of 28 July with incalculable consequences. If he had been asked to choose between no mobilization and general mobilization against the Central Powers, Sazonov would have hesitated to plunge headlong into the venture, whereas, believing he could threaten Austria without provoking Germany, he found out too late that this could not be done." (164)

Yet since Yanushkevich was eager to please but unprepared to admit his lack of knowledge of the true mobilization plan, the catastrophe ran its course.³⁹ At the emergency meeting of the Council of Ministers that convened at 3 p.m. of the same day, the following resolutions were approved, and signed into law by Tsar Nicholas II on the next morning, July 25 (165):

That (1) Austria would be asked to extend the 48 hour deadline, (2) that Serbia pull back her army into the inner country without attempting to resist an eventual Austrian invasion, (3) to inaugurate the "Period Preparatory to War"³ in the military districts of Kiev, Moscow, Odessa and Kazan, (4) to authorize the War Minister "without delay to speed up the stockpiling of war materials for the army", (166) and (5) the Finance Minister to immediately retransfer liquid Russian assets in Germany and Austria-Hungary to the Russian Central Bank.

³⁸ An acquaintance described him as having "nothing to recommend him but the personal favour of the Tsar." (167)

³⁹ There is some disagreement over Sazonov's cognizance of the implications of his scheme. L.C.F. Turner believed that Sazonov "did not understand that a partial mobilization involving thirteen Russian army corps along her northern border would compel Austria to order general mobilization, which in turn would invoke the Austro-German alliance and require general mobilization by Germany." (168)

Sean McMeekin, however, points out that "there is good reason to believe that Sazonov himself knew perfectly well what he was doing when he proposed Sukhomlinov's "partial mobilization" plan to the government - that is, that he was knowingly plunging Russia into war. Sazonov, after all, had been present [unlike Yanushkevich] at the emergency ministerial council held at Tsarskoe Selo on 23 November 1912, when [Prime Minister and] Chairman Kokovtsov had warned everyone that the "partial mobilization" plan, by forcing Austria to order general mobilization, could not but lead to a European war. As Kokovtsov had concluded his winning argument, then, 'no matter what we chose to call the projected measures, a mobilization remained a mobilization, to be countered by our adversaries with actual war.' [Emphasis in Original] (169) But this July 24 was the day after which the French President and Prime Minister had just left St. Petersburg - in the wake of the summit - and it is unlikely that the Austrian ultimatum of which, we know, Sazonov was warned as early as the 16th, or at least its eventuality had not been discussed at this meeting and a strategy developed how to respond to it. If nothing else, probability speaks for the theory that Sazonov had indeed asked for, and received, a "Blank Cheque" of his own, drawn on the Bank of Paris.

3 The "Period Preparatory to War" meant "the period of diplomatic complications preceding the opening of hostilities, in the course of which all Boards must take the necessary measures of preparation for security and success at the Mobilization of the Army, the Fleet, and the Fortresses, as well as for the march of the Army to the threatened frontier." The military commission upon whose work the official "Regulation Concerning the Period Preparatory to War" was based, had explained that 'it will be advantageous to complete concentration without beginning hostilities, in order not to deprive the enemy irrevocably of the hope that war can still be avoided. Our measures for this must be masked by clever diplomatic negotiations, in order to lull to sleep as much as possible the enemy's fears.' [Emphases in original] (170)

Thus, only twenty-two hours after the presentation of the Austrian note in Belgrade, Sazonov had his arrangements approved and, save for a miracle, committed Russia, France and - most likely - Great Britain to war; given the flanking measures, it seems likely that he did so in full awareness of the consequences.

Around 7 p.m. Sazonov received the German Ambassador Count Pourtales, whom Bethmann Hollweg had already on the 22nd instructed to express "the view that the present question is purely a matter for settlement between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, and that to confine it to the parties directly concerned must be the earnest endeavour of the Powers. We urgently desire the localization of the conflict, because any intervention by another Power might in consequence of the various alliances bring incalculable consequences in its train." (171)

How the German Chancellor could hope to get away with this remains a mystery - in essence, he demanded liberty for Austria to beat Serbia to a pulp, yet warned everybody that Germany would be on Austria's side should anyone complain. Luigi Albertini rested on this utter and undisputed blunder the following indictment of the German government:

Let us ... turn our attention to the fact that Germany demanded a free hand for Austria against her small Slav neighbour under threat otherwise of going to the help of her ally. This thesis was summarized in the expression "localization of the conflict" which has remained notorious....

Let us pause a moment to analyze this thesis, bearing in mind that it formed the basis of German diplomatic action from 24 July onward and that the European conflagration broke out precisely because at the opportune moment the German Government refused to renounce it, and in order to ensure its success, urged the Austrian Government to make haste and declare war on Serbia.

"Localization of the conflict" meant that: 1. no one else was to have a say in the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia (not that this would have been possible in the brief time limit set for the reply), [and] 2. unless Belgrade played the dirty trick on Austria of submitting for the time being to all her demands, the invasion of Serbia would take place, and if it took place no one was to interfere on pain of war.

It is sufficient to define the terms of this injunction to measure the immensity of the miscalculation it contained. It was universally admitted that Russia, for reasons of kinship and because of her own designs on Constantinople and the Straits, had a special interest in the autonomy and evolution of the small Balkan States. The history of Europe in the previous half-century was shot through and through with disputes between Russia and Austria over their rival claims for hegemony in the Balkans. War had been just round the corner in 1908-9 and 1912-13 over the struggle between Austria and Serbia in which Russia had always taken her stand with Serbia.

And now the rulers in Berlin thrust themselves forward and thought they could solve the knotty problem once and for all by confronting Russia, her ally France, her all-but-ally England and indirectly Italy as well, with a blustering out-aut⁴⁰ - the misguided notion that they would all bow to the German fiat. But this was tantamount to willing war, the war of which, when it did break out, they declared that their hands were clean.

We have in fact already seen that they were prepared to have a war, while at the same time thinking it on the whole improbable and counting above all on England's standing aside and letting them have an easy victory. The reasoning was absurd, almost unbelievable, all the more as the German rulers were on the point of violating Belgian neutrality to make a speedy end of France. (172)

The portrayal of Germany deliberately provoking the Great War has become an article of faith for almost a century - even more so when it incorporated, in the 1960s, many of Fritz Fischer's and Immanuel Geiss' writings on actual or imaginary German war aims. We will see below how well or not this judgement has passed the test of time.⁴¹ Meanwhile in St.

⁴⁰ Latin, "either ... or".

⁴¹ A few obvious problems with the theory of Austro-German aggressiveness and Russian-French philanthropic support of a small country may briefly be mentioned (see bottom, page 417):

Petersburg, Sazonov informed Pourtales that Russia considered Austria's accusations of Serbia as groundless and that he thought she was only seeking a pretext to "swallow" the smaller country. "In that case, however," Sazonov blurted out, "Russia will go to war with Austria." (173) Pourtales replied -- quite truthfully, as far as we know, that...

... in the most extreme case it would only be a matter of an Austrian punitive expedition against Serbia and that Austria was far from contemplating territorial acquisitions. At this M. Sazonov shook his head incredulously and spoke of far-reaching plans of Austria's. First Serbia was to be devoured, then it would be Bulgaria's turn and then 'we shall have them at the Black Sea'. I answered that such fantastic exaggerations did not seem to me worthy of serious discussion." (174)

Yet how do we reconcile the following, rather optimistic report which Pourtales dispatched to Berlin later on the same day with Sazonov's explicit threat of war? The German ambassador related his impression...

"that Russia will not take up arms except in the case that Austria were to want to make territorial acquisitions at Serbia's expense. Even the wish for a Europeanization of the question seems to indicate that an immediate Russian intervention is not to be anticipated." (175)⁴²

Pourtales's was a quite erroneous and tragically optimistic assessment in the light that Sazonov had already ordered preparative measures for Russia's mobilization. The country's inner situation may have contributed to the idea that the immediacy of war and an ensuing wave of patriotic fervour would disengage the people's attention from the extensive strikes momentarily petrifying St. Petersburg - thus providing "a desperate way of escape from domestic difficulties." (176)

On the next morning, Saturday, July 25, the Council of Ministers met again, in the presence of the Tsar, Grand Duke Nicholas, prospective C-in-C of the Russian forces, and General Yanushkevich. The measures agreed upon the previous day were formally enacted, and Sazonov informed the attentive luminaries of Germany's far-reaching designs. Austria he deemed but a "stalking horse for a malevolent German policy," whose "ultimate objectives," however, "beyond the acquisition of 'hegemony in the Near East,'" remained, alas, "unclear". (177)

If we subscribe to the view that Bethmann Hollweg and Jagow viewed Sazonov's handling of the Sarajevo crisis as a litmus test for Russia's peaceful or warlike intentions, we must note that the difference between the German option of "accepting a war, should Russia choose to start one", (178) which could not - and was not - used to justify pre-emptive military preparations against Russia (before the latter began her general mobilization) and the Russian measures enacted on July 25 was exactly that the latter explicitly effected policies that were "proactive in nature, did not arise from a direct threat to Russia, and were highly likely (if not certain) to further escalate the crisis." (179)

(1) The notion of Austria's shortcomings acted as a self-fulfilling prophecy on the way to war; after Hoyos' mission in Berlin, Falkenhayn wrote to Moltke -- who was still holidaying in Carlsbad -- that both he and Bethmann Hollweg doubted very much that Austria "would follow through the forceful language which it had so far employed," and since Tisza had demanded ab initio that Austria was not to annex Serbian territory, it was very much the question before, say, July 28, whether Austria would indeed resort to full-fledged war as opposed to a punitive expedition - which also would be cheaper. (2) Unlike Russia, Austria did not have any designs on "hegemony in the Balkans," or to build a road to Salonika, as Sazonov claimed: the voluntary surrender of the Sanjak of Novi Pazar in 1908 had buried the issue. (3) Unlike Russia, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece or Turkey, neither Austria nor Germany had participated in any of the Balkan Wars between 1876 and 1913. (4) Austria, not Russia, had been the bulwark against the Ottoman Turks from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century - despite the latter's designs on Constantinople. (5) The "easy victory" is an argument based on hindsight - given that Franco-Russian military strength in 1914 was twice that of Germany and Austria combined. (6) As we shall see below, both France and England had no qualms about violating Belgian neutrality if necessary - but after the Germans, if possible - and, lastly, as Christopher Clark reminds us, (7) "the Anglo-Russian alliance was under serious strain -- it looked unlikely to survive the scheduled date for renewal in 1915," (180s) in which case the war would have to be called off.

⁴² It seems quite possible that Sazonov's bellicosity was not completely de rigueur at court. Albertini cites the German General Chelius, who observed - and wrote to Kaiser Wilhelm on the 26th - that the "Tsar, as often as I was able to observe, treated Poincaré very coldly and condescendingly, as was remarked by the whole entourage. Army headquarters pay altogether scant regard to the Entente with France and incline must more to the imperial alliance with Germany. The Tsar himself, as Baron Grünwald said to me, has no liking for the whole friendship with France, and is said to have many times said so." (181) Yet Yanushkevich's example would argue that the Russian army was not necessarily well informed of its own strengths and weaknesses.

What exactly were these measures? Following the Council of Ministers, the Russian General Staff held its own meeting, late on July 25, resolving that...

... not only Moscow but also St. Petersburg, a city nearly a thousand miles from the Austro-Hungarian border (and still farther from Serbia) was placed under martial law. Everywhere in Russia, training manoeuvres were broken off and troops recalled to quarters. Cadets enrolled in Russia's military academies were immediately promoted officers, thus not only filling gaps in the army's command structure with new subalterns but also "freeing for active service in the field many mature officers who had hitherto been detailed on educational work."

Yanushkevitch emphasized that all of these tasks should be carried out "energetically" and stipulated crucially that, if necessary, mobilization officers "would be permitted ... to overstep the boundaries laid down in the 'Period Preparatory to War' regulations." Taking the hint, General Dobrorolski had already wired Zhilinsky in Warsaw, instructing him to recall all troops in his districts to quarters. At 1 am the night of 25-26 July, the Warsaw district (that is, Russian Poland) was placed under martial law.

Later that night - at 3:26 am - Yanushkevitch wired Warsaw that the morrow (26 July 1914) would mark "the beginning of the 'Period Preparatory to War' in the entire region of European Russia," covering all six of the main military districts - Warsaw, Vilna (Vilnius, i.e., the Baltic area), Kazan, Kiev, Moscow, and Odessa. What this meant in practice was that "all fortresses in the Warsaw, Vilna, and St. Petersburg districts were placed 'in a state of war,' frontier guards were brought up to strength and the frontier posts were fully manned, censorship and security measures were tightened, harbours were mined, horses and wagons were assembled for army baggage trains, depots were prepared for the reception of reservists, and all steps were taken to facilitate the impending mobilization."

The Period Preparatory to War inaugurated on 26 July further allowed for the "call-up of the three youngest classes of reserves in areas threatened by enemy action," including, significantly, Russian Poland west of the Vistula. Expanding the net of Russia's "intended partial mobilization" still further, on 27 July 1914 Yanushkevitch wired Tiflis command that the Period Preparatory to War was now also in force for the military districts of Omsk, Irkutsk, Turkestan, and the Caucasus.

Russia may have begun mobilizing in Omsk and Tiflis even earlier than this, as Norman Stone, drawing on Austrian sources, concluded: "There is also certain evidence to suggest that the Russians began to mobilize considerably earlier than they made out: at a comparably early stage in the Lemberg campaign, Austro-Hungarian units took prisoners from Siberian and Caucasus units, which could scarcely, in view of Russia's great transportation problems, have reached the West if mobilized only at the end of July."

Manfred Rauchensteiner,⁴³ a leading Austrian historian of the eastern front, went still further than this, arguing that the unexpected speed of Russia's mobilization against Austrian Galicia in August 1914 suggests that "the Russians began mobilizing towards the beginning of July and systematically prepared for war." An early, secret mobilization of this kind was entirely consistent with the understanding of the Period Preparatory to War by the members of Russia's General Staff - and by Tsar Nicholas II. (182)

On the late evening of July 24, Sazonov held counsel with Maurice Paléologue, the belligerent French ambassador, whom he apparently assured - upon the diplomat's question whether the Russian government had "ordered any military preparations?" - "None whatever." (183) Yet Sazonov's Head of Chancery Baron von Schilling reports from the same day a conversation with Paléologue in which the envoy discusses at length the pros and cons of Russia's secret mobilization. (184) The issue, however, is not reflected in those cables to Paris which Paléologue did not manage to lose.

At any rate, the Journal of the Russian General Staff Committee reported in its June 25 edition that "according to information received, certain preparatory measures for mobilization were being taken in Austria-Hungary and Italy.

⁴³ Manfred Rauchensteiner, "Der Tod des Doppeladlers. Österreich-Ungarn und der Erste Weltkrieg", Styria Verlag, Graz 1993.

Therefore H.M. the Tsar has been graciously pleased to confirm the order of the Council of Ministers that in the night of 25/26 July the pre-mobilization period shall begin." (185) Whatever hopes on the secrecy of the measures the Russian staff may have hedged were, however, in vain, for already on 3:25 pm on the 26th, the German military attaché in St. Petersburg, Major Eggeling, wired to Berlin that "mobilization had been ordered in Kiev and Odessa. Habsburg consuls in Kiev, Moscow, and Odessa sent in reports of Russian mobilization measures on 27 July 1914." (186)

In some way the Russians were in a dilemma - exactly because everything went slower and took much longer due to the lack of infrastructure, their mobilization had to start as early as possible, and there remains a debate whether or not, as in other countries, the order of mobilization necessarily comprised - once the units had arrived at the frontier - the order to open hostilities according to whichever plan was momentarily in force. Yet in the strategic aspect, the acute Serbian crisis delivered the suitable inception scenario - result of the Balkanization of the Franco-Russian Alliance in 1913 -- to provide Russia with "the optimal casus belli," (187) and it was thus only logical for Sazonov to instruct Belgrade "not to accept a British offer of mediation," should one be received. (188) One must keep in mind that St. Petersburg - different from the other parties - saw the Serbian crisis necessarily in the context how it could best be exploited to serve the overriding strategic issue, that is, Constantinople and the Straits; the Serbian affair, even the European war - which, for her vastness alone, Russia believed she could not truly lose - were only a theatre secondary to the true battleground. General Dobrorolski put it in simple terms by observing that, after the Council of Minister meetings of July 24 and 25, "the war was already a decided thing, and all the flood of telegrams between the governments of Russia and Germany were nothing but the staging for an historical drama." (189)⁴⁴

Naturally, much work remained to be done. Both Sazonov and Sukhomlinov faced a few uncomfortable minutes being confronted in their offices by Pourtales and Eggeling on the night of July 26. The German envoys desired to have the military moves explained - Sazonov promised Pourtales, on his "word of honour" that "no such mobilization order had been issued" while Sukhomlinov told Eggeling that "not a horse was being requisitioned, not a reservist called up." (190) The lies did not help the situation - whole artillery divisions on the westward trail could scarcely be overlooked, but the official denials all but solidified the impression that the Russians had something to hide.

The less obvious but - in the greater picture - perhaps more decisive side-effect was that the Russian decisions obliterated any chance that the Serbian government would back down -- which it had contemplated earlier. Spalajković had kept Belgrade informed of the Russian deliberations, and his second telegram of the night of 24/25 July, 1:40 am, "reported that the Russian Ministerial Council had decided to take 'energetic measures, even mobilization', and were about to publish an 'official communiqué in which Russia takes Serbia under its protection.'" (193)

⁴⁴ In this context, the Russian measures after July 25 must be juxtaposed against the venerable post-Fischer consensus, which argued, as summarized by Sean McMeekin:

"An important argument advanced by supporters of the modified Fischer thesis is that the timing of Russia's decision for general mobilization [which officially followed] on 30 July and its public announcement the next day was ultimately immaterial: Moltke and the generals had already decided on German mobilization before the Russians did. Fischer himself claimed that the Russian proclamation [of mobilization] on 31 July was a tremendous stroke of luck, allowing Bethmann Hollweg to bamboozle Germany's Social Democrats into believing that Russia had drawn first blood - whereas in fact Bethmann Hollweg had already been won over by Moltke to mobilization by 9 pm the night of 30 July.

"Sazonov," Fischer concludes, "had put this trump into his hand." Immanuel Geiss added another layer to Fischer's argument, claiming that the key decisions were made in Berlin as early as 29 July, following Sazonov's announcement of partial mobilization against Austria on 28 July, in response to Vienna's declaration of war on Serbia.

While Fischer was right that Bethmann Hollweg did not give Moltke the green light for mobilization until 30 July, Geiss points out that the chancellor himself threatened to mobilize in a dispatch to Pourtales on the 29th, and also agreed that day to inaugurate the **'situation of the threatening danger of war' (Kriegsgefahrzustand) on 31 July - akin to Russia's Period Preparatory to War. ...'**

All this is true, so far as it goes. But it does not go very far if the goal is to prove that the Germans beat Russia to the punch. If decades of research have by now proven only that the decision to mobilize was made in Berlin by Moltke and Bethmann Hollweg (if not yet the Kaiser) as early as 29 July, this is **still five full days after Sazonov, Yahushkevitch, and the Council of Ministers made Russia's decision** to begin secretly mobilizing in the districts adjoining Austria-Hungary (including, still more secretly, also the Warsaw and Baltic districts, targeting Germany), along with the mobilization of Russia's Baltic and Black Sea fleets.

It was not, *pace* Fischer, Geiss, and Herwig, in reaction to Sazonov's public declaration of partial mobilization against Austria on 28 July that the Germans first took counter-measures, but rather after receiving four days of reports that a much broader secret mobilization was already underway, despite Sazonov's increasingly implausible denials." [Emphases in original] (191)

Paléologue himself "exchanged impressions" when saying goodbye to his Paris-bound Russian colleague Izvolsky at Warsaw station in St. Petersburg on the evening of July 25, and the two, noting the bustling activities, "came to the same conclusion: 'It's war this time.'" (192)

Within the next days, his enthusiasm only grew. On July 26 and 27, he reported that the Russians were mobilizing 1,700,000 men, who were "immediately to commence an energetic offensive against Austria-Hungary as soon as it attacks Serbia," (194) and ventured the opinion that the current situation "presents to us a splendid opportunity to use this event wisely and achieve the full unification of the Serbs. It is desirable, therefore, that Austria-Hungary should attack us." (195)

His messages did much to lift the mood of the Serbian government. At the improvised meeting of the cabinet early on July 24, Pasić's initial reaction had been to bow to the demands as much as possible, for he doubted the Russian resolve. After the tonic of Spalajković's telegrams, Belgrade cheered up and began to prepare a reply that Musulin, Berchtold's Head of Chancery at the Ballhausplatz, called "the most brilliant specimen of diplomatic skill" that he had ever seen. (196) It went as follows:

"The Royal Serbian Government has received the communication of the Imperial and Royal Government of the 10th inst. [old style], and is convinced that its reply will remove any misunderstanding which may threaten the good neighbourly relations between the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Kingdom of Serbia. ...

Serbia has several times given proofs of her pacific and moderate policy during the Balkan crisis, and it is thanks to Serbia and to the sacrifice that she has made in the exclusive interest of European peace' that that peace has been preserved.

The Royal Government cannot be held responsible for manifestations of a private character, such as articles in the press and the peaceable work of societies -- manifestations which take place in nearly all countries in the ordinary course of events, and which, as a general rule, escape official control. The Royal Government is all the less responsible, in view of the fact that at the time of the solution of a series of questions which arose between Serbia and Austria-Hungary it gave proof of a great readiness to oblige, and thus succeeded in settling the majority of these questions to the advantage of the two neighbouring countries.

For these reasons, the Royal Government has been pained and surprised at the statements according to which members of the Kingdom of Serbia are supposed to have participated in the preparations for the crime committed at Sarajevo. The Royal Government expected to be invited to collaborate in an investigation of all that concerns this crime, and it was ready, in order to prove the correctness of its attitude, to take measures against any persons concerning whom representations were made to it.

Falling in, therefore, with the desire of the Imperial and Royal Government, it is prepared to hand over for trial any Serbian subject, without regard to his position or rank, of whose complicity in the crime of Sarajevo proofs are forthcoming, and more especially they undertake to cause to be published on the first page of the JOURNAL OFFICIAL, on the date of the 13th (26th) July, the following declaration:

'The Royal Government of Serbia condemns all propaganda which may be directed against Austria-Hungary -- i.e., the general tendency, the final aim of which is to detach from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy territories belonging to it, and it sincerely deplores the fatal consequences of these criminal proceedings.

The Royal Government regrets that, according to the communication from the Imperial and Royal Government certain Serbian officers and functionaries participated in the above mentioned propaganda, and thus compromised the good neighbourly relations to which the Royal Government was solemnly pledged by the declaration of 31 March 1909 [new style].' ... [continuing with the text demanded by the Austrians]

The Royal Government further undertakes:

1. To introduce at the first regular convocation of the Skupstina [Parliament, ¶] a provision into the press law prohibiting incitement to hatred and contempt of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and [allowing] for taking action against any publication the general tendency of which is directed against the territorial integrity of Austria-Hungary. The Government engages, at the approaching revision of the Constitution to cause an amendment to be introduced into Article 22 of the Constitution of such a nature that such publications may

be confiscated, a proceeding at present impossible under the categorical terms of Article 22 of the Constitution.

2. The Government possesses no proof, nor does the note of the Imperial and Royal Government furnish it with any, that the Narodna Odbrana and other similar societies have committed up to the present any criminal act of this nature through the proceedings of any of their members. Nevertheless, the Royal Government will accept the demand of the Imperial and Royal Government and will dissolve the Narodna Odbrana Society and every other society which may be directing its efforts against Austria-Hungary.

3. The Royal Serbian Government undertakes to eliminate without delay from public instruction in Serbia everything that serves or might serve to foment the propaganda against Austria-Hungary, whenever the Imperial and Royal Government furnishes it with facts and proofs of this propaganda.

4. The Royal Government also agrees to remove from the military service all such persons as the judicial inquiry may have proved to be guilty of acts directed against the integrity of the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and it expects the Imperial and Royal Government to communicate to it at a later date the names and the acts of these officers and functionaries for the purpose of the proceedings which are to be taken against them.

5. The Royal Government must confess that it does not clearly grasp the meaning or the scope of the demand made by the Imperial and Royal Government that Serbia shall undertake to accept the collaboration of the representatives of the Imperial and Royal Government upon its territory, but it declares that it will admit such collaborations as agree with the principle of international law, with criminal procedure, and with good-neighbourly relations.

6. It goes without saying that the Royal Government considers it its duty to open an inquiry against all such persons as are, or eventually may be, implicated in the plot of 15 June [old style], and who happen to be within the territory of the kingdom. As regards the participation in this inquiry of Austro-Hungarian agents or authorities appointed for this purpose by the Imperial and Royal Government, the Royal Government cannot accept such an arrangement, as it would be a violation of the Constitution and of the law of criminal procedure; nevertheless in concrete cases communications as to the results of the investigation in question might be given to the Austro-Hungarian agents.

7. The Royal Government proceeded, on the very evening of the delivery of the note, to arrest Commandant Voja Tankosić. As regards Milan Ciganović, who is a subject of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and who up to 15 June [old style] was employed (on probation) by the directorate of railways, it has not yet been possible to arrest him. The Austro-Hungarian Government is requested to be so good as to supply as soon as possible, in the customary form, the presumptive evidence of guilt, as well as the proofs of guilt, if there are any (eventuelles), which have been collected up to the present at the inquiry at Sarajevo, for the purposes of the later inquiry.

8. The Serbian Government will reinforce and extend the measures which have been taken for preventing the illicit traffic in arms and explosives across the frontier. It goes without saying that they will immediately order an inquiry and will severely punish the frontier officials on the Sabac-Loznica line, who have failed in their duty and allowed the authors of the crime of Sarajevo to pass.

9. The Royal Government will gladly give explanations of the remarks made by its officials whether in Serbia or abroad, in interviews after the crime which, according to the statement of the Imperial and Royal Government, were hostile towards the Monarchy, as soon as the Imperial and Royal Government has communicated to it the passages in question in these remarks, and as soon as it has shown that the remarks were actually made by the said officials, although the Royal Government will itself take steps to collect evidence and proofs.

10. The Royal Government will inform the Imperial and Royal Government of the execution of the measures comprised under the above heads, in so far as this has not already been done by the present note, as soon as each measure has been ordered and carried out.

If the Imperial and Royal Government is not satisfied with this reply, the Serbian Government, considering that it is not in the common interest to precipitate the solution of this question, is ready, as always, to accept a pacific understanding, either by referring this question to the decision of the International Tribunal of the Hague, or to the Great Powers which took part in the drawing up of the declaration made by the Serbian Government on the 18th (31st) March 1909." (197)

Had Austria in sending, and Russia - in receiving by proxy - not been preoccupied with their own particular designs, the Serbian reply might have served as a reasonable basis for continued negotiations. The sole point in which Serbia showed a complete unwillingness to yield was Point 6, and in this regard some misunderstanding may have played a part. Internal Austrian statements on the Serbian reply show that Vienna in principle was out to secure the operative participation of her own investigators like Dr. Wiesner in the criminal probe - nobody trusted the Serbs to police themselves - rather than to play a role in the subsequent judicial proceedings.⁴⁵

Naturally, the Serbs attempted to concede as little as possible, and Albertini, for one, clearly recognized that the reply at times "sounded a lot and meant nothing at all." (198) But since the Serbs had sent copies of the reply to the Entente governments, who leaked it to their major newspapers, "not only European public opinion and the Entente Chancelleries, but also Kaiser Wilhelm and his Chancellor, carried away the impression of a full capitulation on the part of Serbia such as ought to render a peaceful solution of the dispute possible." (199)

The Austrian Ambassador Giesl and his staff had received clear instructions. He presented himself a few minutes before 6 pm at the Belgrade Foreign Ministry and received the reply of the Serbian Government from the hands of Nikola Pasić. Since - not surprisingly - the note failed to fulfil Berchtold's precise demands, Giesl and his retinue left Belgrade with the evening train to Vienna and the diplomatic relations between Austria and Serbia were thus ruptured. Once on Austrian soil, Giesl began to telephone and telegraph and by 8 pm of the same evening both Vienna and Budapest were in the picture - which included that the Serbian government had ordered general mobilization already at 3 pm of the same day, July 25, and evacuations to the mountainous inner parts of the country were already under way.

Yet suddenly Vienna seemed to hesitate. On the 26th, Giesl noted in his diary, after having delivered his report to Berchtold, that the Foreign Minister had observed "the breaking off of relations is not by any means war," and a day later quoted the Emperor contemplating that "we are not at war yet, and if I can, I shall prevent it." (200) Interestingly enough, however, in a 1933 letter to Albertini Giesl pointed out that "by the words "This does not yet mean war" the Emperor clearly referred solely to the war with Serbia. There was not yet the thought of a world war breaking out, seeing that not even mobilization against Serbia had as yet been ordered and nothing was yet known exactly of the Russian and French will to war." (201)

That was the question: what did Paris and London think? For reasons that don't appear readily comprehensible, it has often been overlooked that Paléologue in St. Petersburg exactly knew by the evening of July 25 what the Russians were playing and kept Paris informed, not only, as Sean McMeekin points out, "that the ministerial council at Tsarskoe Selo had decided that morning 'in principle' to mobilize thirteen army corps against Austria, but also the cynical corollary that this mobilization would not be made public until Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. In a **stunning admission that has escaped the notice of nearly all historians of the war's outbreak,**" McMeekin continues, "France's ambassador added in his 25 July report that 'meanwhile secret [Russian military] preparations will begin today' (**Les préparatifs clandestines commenceront néanmoins des aujourd'hui**)." [First Emphasis added, second in original] (203)

⁴⁵ The Austrian Foreign Office commented: "We desired: ... (2) The collaboration of representatives of the Imperial and Royal Government in the investigations relating thereto ("**recherches**" as opposed to "**enquête judiciaire**"). It never occurred to us that representatives of the Imperial and Royal Government should take part in the Serbian judicial proceedings; it was intended that they should collaborate only in the preliminary police investigations, directed to the collection and verification of the material for the inquiry." [Emphases added] (202)

Paris's military attaché in St. Petersburg, General de Laguiche, reported to the Quai d'Orsay that Sukhomlinov, the Russian Minister of War, has "repeatedly assured us of his desire to leave to Germany the initiative in launching an attack on Russia." (204)⁴⁶ This was, finally, what the Franco-Russian Alliance had anticipated since its inception and things seemed to run smoothly - except that England had yet to be coaxed to cooperate.

Sir George Buchanan, the British Ambassador in St. Petersburg, had noticed on July 26 the bustling activity in town, but had been assured by Sazonov that this was a result of strikes. Yet the ambassador eventually wondered, for "strikes here are practically over," (205) whether the activity might instead point to mobilization and reported this possibility to London - where, whatever Buchanan thought, Sir Grey was ostensibly informed far better. Earlier this day, he "had been told by the German Ambassador Lichnowsky that Berlin had 'received information that Russia was calling in 'classes of reserves,' which meant mobilization.' Grey dismissed Lichnowsky's complaint out of hand, telling him that 'we had no information as to a general mobilization or indeed of any mobilization immediately.' With curious conviction, Grey further assured Lichnowsky that the Russian 'ukase to mobilize 1,100,000 men has not been issued.'" (206)⁴⁷ Since Buchanan failed to discover until the 29th what German diplomats had already established on July 26, the British government was not officially notified until the evening of the 29th of the Russian mobilization ordered already on the 25th, which by then also included the key district of Warsaw. It is highly questionable whether Grey was truly as ignorant as the surviving sources seem to indicate, but it was highly advantageous for him to be able to profess official ignorance - neither the British cabinet, nor the court, nor the public was told that Russia was mobilizing since July 25.

His official "incuriosity" then allowed Grey to propose - independent of the laws of political probability - an international conference between the leaders of England, France, Germany and Italy, which would somehow prevent Serbia, Austria and Russia from fighting one another - in essence a repetition of the ambassadorial conference that had ended the First Balkan War. But this had worked when the Great Powers united against the Small Powers, which was not the case now and thus the whole scenario remained highly unlikely, not the least because Grey's idea apparently forwent the presence of Austria and Russia at the table.

By putting Great Britain on a diplomatic detour - there was no chance for a conference - the Russian minister had pulled a fast one on Whitehall and indeed to the whole of the British Empire, which, in the last consequence, was to perish for its failure to recognize Sazonov's sleight of hand - which Sean McMeekin summarizes as follows:

The Serbian ultimatum had been conceived in Berlin and Vienna as the centrepiece of the Austro-German plan to win a quick coup against the Entente. Because Sazonov had sniffed out the ultimatum early, he instead used it as a smokescreen to distract London from Russia's military preparations, ruining Bethmann Hollweg's efforts to keep Britain out of the war. ...

The upshot of Sazonov's masterful diplomacy was one of Russia's ideal war-gaming scenarios. On the night of 28 July, just hours after Sazonov had sent off his phony announcement of "partial mobilization,"⁴⁸ Yanushkevitch wired the commanding officers of all of Russia's military districts that "30 July will be proclaimed the first day of our general mobilization. The proclamation will follow by the regulation telegram."

The general mobilization the Russian high command had thus decided on by 28 July - more than three days before Germany even began its pre-mobilization - was for "a war with a coalition" ("Variant 4"), in which the participation of both Britain and France was assured, and in which - as Yanushkevitch revealingly wired to

⁴⁶ To evade the truth seems to have become so ingrained a habit with Sukhomlinov that he at this occasion - perhaps accidentally - even misinformed his ally: the Russians knew that East Prussia would be defended only by a comparatively weak German force (8th Army, with eleven infantry and one cavalry division) (207). That Russia would attack at this front as early as possible had been demanded by the French, who in 1911 informed the Russians that they would be able to attack Germany on the 12th day of their own mobilization (i.e., "M+11") and expected a quasi-simultaneous Russian offensive into East Prussia (Plan 19G) by Russia's M+15. In the actual event, Russia dispatched First and Second Armies, with thirty infantry and eight cavalry divisions, and since a Russian infantry division was composed of sixteen battalions compared to twelve in a German division, Russian numerical superiority was even bigger. (208)

⁴⁷ Which was *exactly* the number of troops - eleven corps - the Russians *did mobilize* in Kazan, Kiev, Moscow and Odessa - how did Grey arrive at the correct number?

⁴⁸ i.e., the official proclamation of the measures initiated on July 25.

Tiflis on 29 July 1914 - "Turkey does not at first take part" (sluchai voyni ... v'kotoroi Turtsii snachala uchastiya ne prinimaet). ... It was a brilliant plan, which just barely came off. [Emphases in original] (209)

But we're not there yet. The German military intelligence service had detected the Russian mobilization around noon on July 26 and informed Vienna; now the question was how long the Central Powers' mobilization could be delayed without risking defeat by default. Despite all hawkish ado, Austria found herself unable to publish her call to arms until July 31 - with August 1 becoming the effective launch date. Alexander Musulin, one of the few Austrian doves, testified that some hesitation remained on account not only of the military but the government as well:

"Berchtold, like the majority of the officials at the Ballplatz, although sceptical as to the outcome of a peaceful solution, nevertheless at the bottom of his heart hoped and wished for it. No preliminaries of mobilization were begun precisely because of the persuasion that Serbia would accept the note.

The General Staff on their side were unwilling to mobilize if there was no certainty of war, because, as Conrad had said, 'a horse three times taken up to an obstacle and each time reined back will refuse to jump it'. ...

Undoubtedly, the form of the ultimatum was categorical and gave Serbia no loophole for discussion, but that was from a desire to prevent tricky answers, in short to obtain some practical result. And in fact if Russia had not intervened and advised against acceptance, the Serbian Government would have given in. ...

Nevertheless even after the rupture of diplomatic relations, itself intended as a form of pressure, Vienna cherished the hope that Serbia would give way under pressure from the Powers. This is shown in the telegram to Mensdorff saying that Serbia could avert war by integral acceptance and payment of the costs of Austrian mobilization necessitated by the unsatisfactory reply.⁴⁹ Even the declaration of war was regarded by Berchtold as not more than an extreme form of pressure to obtain a diplomatic surrender from Serbia" (210)

Certainly this was taking things too far, as events were to show. Even the generals' proverbial doyen, Carl von Clausewitz, had always emphasized the primacy of politics, and declarations of war were essentially admissions that a policy had ended in bankruptcy - unless one won the subsequent war.

In the event, Sir Grey - who was still enjoying the weekend - was notified on the morning of Sunday, July 26, of the rupture of Austro-Serbian relations by Sir Arthur Nicolson, Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, who also read his chief a telegram by Sazonov which categorized that "Russia cannot allow Austria to crush Serbia and become the predominant Power in the Balkans," proclaimed the prospective mobilization of the twice aforementioned 1,100,100 men, and advised that "necessary preliminary preparations would, however, be begun at once." (211) Then Nicolson opined to Grey that the latter immediately "telegraph to Berlin, Paris, Rome, asking that they shall authorize their Ambassadors here to join you in a Conference to endeavour to find an issue to prevent complications and that abstentions on all sides from active military operations shall be requested of Vienna, Serbia and St. Petersburg pending results of [the] conference." (212)

⁴⁹ Musulin himself had authorized Count Mensdorff, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador at London in a telegram on July 23 to inform Sir Grey that:

"If the time limit expires without result, it will for the time being be followed only by the breaking off of diplomatic relations and the beginning of necessary military preparations, since we are quite determined to insist on our justifiable demands. Your Excellency is empowered to add that if Serbia were to yield after expiry of [the] time limit only under the pressure of our military measures, we should have to hold her responsible for the reimbursement of our expenditure arising therefrom; we have, as is known, had in 1908 and 1912 twice to mobilize on account of Serbia." (213)

Whatever the merits of Musulin's instructions, they do reflect that Vienna at that time only contemplated war with Serbia - not (yet?) with Russia.

The plan was indicative of the pathetic ignorance of reality in which British diplomacy operated. As late as 6 pm on the evening of July 27, when the British Ambassador Goschen officially informed Berlin of the British conference proposal, Grey was still contemplating that his government "must be ready ... to give or get guarantees that there would be no mobilizations during the Conference," that is *three days after* Sazonov had ordered Yanushkevich to put Russia on a wartime footing. (214)

Not only was Grey not in the picture: because he had done the best he could to hide the catholicity of Anglo-French and Anglo-Russian military planning not only from the radicals in his own party but from his cabinet colleagues and the court as well, his taciturnity only served to direct England's attention almost exclusively on the issue of Irish Home Rule. The Commons had passed the respective law in a third reading on May 21, 1914, but the House of Lords immediately rejected it. (215) The Lords were aware that southern, Catholic Ireland would sooner or later win some degree of independence, but they fought tooth and nail to keep in the union Protestant Ulster, which also possessed over 90% of the Irish industry, in particular shipbuilding.

Both sides had founded paramilitary forces, but the Unionist Protestant loyalists commanded not only the support of the Conservative Party and the Court but also of most of the officer corps, as was seen when, in the notorious Curragh Incident of March 20, fifty-seven British officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade threatened resignation rather than to enforce Home Rule by military means. (216) General Henry Wilson, Chief of British Military Operations and an ultra-unionist, then proffered a memorandum to the cabinet in which he claimed that the entire British army, six infantry and a cavalry division, would be required were Home Rule imposed in Ireland by force, and hence Great Britain would be without military options on the continent. Wilson knew that "officers of unionist sympathies," i.e., the majority, "were inclined to see in a British continental intervention one possible means of postponing or preventing altogether the introduction of Home Rule." (217)

Sir Grey always professed to be bound by public opinion - Christopher Clark observed that by this "he essentially meant published opinion," i.e. the newspapers -which was either the true cause of or a welcome detraction from his meandering antipathy to straightforward expressions. (218) But at least until August, the British press did not seem to care much for war. The MANCHESTER GUARDIAN opined that "if it were physically possible for Serbia to be towed out to sea and sunk there, the air of Europe would at once seem cleaner," (219) and concluded that "Manchester cared for Belgrade as little as Belgrade cared for Manchester." The DAILY NEWS balked at the idea of sacrificing British blood for "the sake of Russian hegemony of the Slav world", and its editor pointed out on August 1 that the only effect of "crushing Germany" would be to "establish a Russian dictatorship over 'Europe and Asia'". Tory papers were more intervention-oriented, so THE TIMES from July 22 on. (220)

Grey's first mission was to draw in the Prime Minister, Asquith, who at first could not fathom why a German victory in 1914 should upset the European equilibrium when it had not done so in 1871. Yet it is very questionable in how far Sir Grey's ministrations advanced the cause of peace as opposed of war. Hew Strachan remarks:

Grey's self-appointed role as mediator between 24 and 29 July was not, therefore, adopted for the benefit of Germany. Domestically, he both had to create time for a public awareness of the crisis to grow and had to have tried a diplomatic solution before he could hope to argue for the commencement of hostilities.

Abroad, his purpose was to restrain Russia and France: he feared that by openly affirming the solidarity of the Entente he would encourage both powers to precipitate action.⁵⁰ His allies, on the other hand, contended [in hindsight] that a united front could have deterred Germany.

Certainly the consequence of Grey's ambivalence was apparent failure: his efforts at negotiation did not moderate Austro-German behaviour, but they did alarm the Russians and the French. Grey could not afford to follow an independent line indefinitely. He had recognized in 1911 that Britain's own interests were too closely intertwined with those of the Entente for neutrality to be a genuinely viable option. By allying with

⁵⁰ This is the cart before the horse. It was exactly because of Britain's dilly-dallying and Sir Grey's endless pontification that Sazonov and Poincaré decided to prepare a menu surprise for him.

France, Britain was better able to manage its own relationship with Germany, and to give itself the sort of continental military clout which its diminutive army could not.

Even more important was the link with Russia: Russia's membership of the Entente committed it to rivalry with Germany, gave its policy a European twist, and so relieved the British of the challenge of its main rival in Central Asia. If Britain had failed to support France and Russia in 1914, its links with them would have been forfeit, and the reopening and deepening of those old and more traditional rivalries would have driven Britain into the only alternative, an Anglo-German alliance. (221)

Much as they are indebted to hindsight, variations of the above have been something like the British "standard view" on the genesis of the war and the justification of English policy - until Niall Ferguson in 1999 posed the question what, after all, would have been so wrong with an Anglo-German alliance⁵¹ - conceivably, the British Empire would have survived longer, and in a healthier state. The "standard view" necessarily incorporates the old ditty of German militarism dragging everybody to war, which is simply not borne out by the facts. Not only, as detailed above, did Russia begin clandestine mobilization already on July 24, as early as on July 26, the British Admiralty put the naval reserves at stations, i.e. on notice, and on July 27 both army and navy were alerted - that is, four days before Germany began her pre-mobilization. (222) On the same day, that is, before both the publication of the Russian mobilization order and the Austrian declaration of war on Serbia, Grey already "enquired whether the cabinet would support intervention if France were to be attacked by Germany," but failed to convince his fellow ministers of the danger. (223) The essence of Grey's view was summarized by Eyre Crowe, author of the famous or notorious Memorandum of 1907, as early as July 25 in a note to Buchanan:

"Whatever we may think of the merits of the Austrian charges against Servia, France and Russia, consider that these are the pretexts, and that the bigger cause of Triple Alliance versus Triple Entente is definitely engaged. I think it would be impolitic, not to say dangerous, for England to attempt to controvert this opinion, or to endeavour to obscure the plain issue, by any representation at St. Petersburg and Paris. ... Our interests are tied up with those of France and Russia in this struggle, which is not for the possession of Servia, but one between Germany aiming at a political dictatorship in Europe and the Powers who desire to retain individual freedom." (224)

Crowe underlined his dire prophecy with the false allegation that "Austria is already mobilizing". (225) The perception of the crisis had now been shifted completely: from being just another Balkan conflict to Armageddon to the Decisive Battle between Good and Evil - Grey and Crowe merely wanted to ensure that Britannia fought on the side of the angels. Characterizing the approaching conflict in such terms shows to which degree British pre-war policy was based on a self-convincing propaganda of German dreadfulness, which à la longue allowed the Germanophobe faction in the Foreign Office to define the political parameters for the nation. The fate of Serbia or Belgium mattered only in the official proclamations designed to convince of the necessity of war a mostly pacifist English public. Nobody seriously denies today that Great Britain respectively France would have violated Belgian neutrality in the very moment it became a military necessity, and behind this particular smokescreen, we can make out the core issue behind Grey's argument: while he uncritically "accepted ... the legitimacy of a Russian strike against Austria," he denied Austria the prerogative to strike at Serbia. (226)

It was the old divide et impera - the classic ploy of British diplomacy - to pose as the protector of the weak against the strong. This made for excellent press and hid the true aim - to forestall under all circumstances a continental hegemony by France, Germany or, in the old days, Habsburg Spain. Already on July 26, Grey and Nicolson had surprised Lichnowsky by opining that it would be "difficult and delicate for us to ask Petersburg not to mobilize at all when Austria was contemplating such a measure" - they had it or put it exactly the wrong way around. (227)

As Luigi Albertini lines out in some detail,⁵² the British suggestion of yet another international conference produced little but confusion in the capitals of the Great Powers and was eventually rejected by all parties. But the British

⁵¹ Niall Ferguson "The Pity of War", Basic Books 1999, see Bibliography.

⁵² See Albertini, Volume 2, Chapters VIII - X. Alfred Dumaine, the French Ambassador in Vienna, for example, cabled to Paris on the 24th that the Austrian Government's "military preparations are, it seems, complete ...", when in fact they were not even begun for another

proposal did shift the focus of attention from Vienna and St. Petersburg to Berlin, and it was there that the mistakes occurred which only served to escalate the situation further.

In the spotlight now stood Bethmann Hollweg. The German chancellor was an educated man, well versed in Homer, whom he read in the Greek original, and an esteemed pianist who rendered competent interpretations of the sonatas of Mozart and Beethoven. Less informed was he about the modern age as a whole, his knowledge of the twentieth century in general and military affairs in particular was below par, and thus he seemed not too well qualified to deal with the present crisis. His complete misreading of the situation in a July 27 telegram to the Kaiser - who was still on board of his yacht - shows that, whatever the true intentions behind the British mediation proposal, it had completely hoodwinked him:

"Austria seems not to be able to begin war operations until 12 August; Serbia seems to intend to stand entirely on the defensive. Serbia's reply to the ultimatum, the text of which has not yet been obtainable,⁵³ is said to have accepted all points, including punishment of all officers excepting those in senior command; also collaboration but with certain reservations.

The diplomatic situation [is] not quite clear. England and France [are] desirous of peace, Italy likewise, the issue being unpopular and allegedly against Italian interests. Russia on the latest reports seems not yet to be mobilizing⁵⁴ and to be willing for negotiations with Vienna over slight modifications of the demands not yet made by Serbia.

Vienna's attitude to this [is] so far unknown. I have sent word to all Cabinets that we regard Austro-Serbian conflict as an affair concerning these two states alone and have drawn Russia's attention to the consequences of any military measure in any way directed against ourselves." (228)

Hollweg's interpretation of the crisis so far was essentially shaped by two assumptions. The first, mentioned earlier above and developed by Jagow in his letter to Lichnowsky in London on July 18, argued that "the more boldness Austria displays, the more strongly we support her, the more likely is Russia to keep quiet." (229) The second he derived himself from Berchtold's concession to Tisza that Austria would not seek to annex any Serbian provinces; this territorial désintéressement, Hollweg believed to bear the key to a peaceful solution of the crisis. His territorial instinct, that he seemed to think a few square miles of Serbian soil seized or not would make a difference, characterizes him a political child of the nineteenth rather than of the twentieth century. True to his belief, he then telegraphed to Pourtales in St. Petersburg on the afternoon of July 26 that "now that Count Berchtold has declared to Russia that Austria plans no territorial gains in Serbia but only means to restore peace and quiet, the preservation of European peace depends entirely on Russia." (230) Not only was Hollweg incapable of understanding that Berchtold's - dishonest, we will find out - offer only served Sazonov's strategy of delaying Austrian plans while St. Petersburg was mobilizing, his misjudgement in elevating the Austrian proposal to the status of a panacea and adopting it as the official German policy can in retrospect only be judged the result of either unbelievable stupidity or devilish cunning. On the evening of July 26, he wired to Pourtales:

"Preparatory military measures on the part of Russia directed in any way⁵⁵ against ourselves would force us to take countermeasures, which would have to consist in mobilizing the army. Mobilization, however, means war, and would moreover have to be directed simultaneously against Russia and France, since France's engagements with Russia are well known.

week. (231) Of the same opinion seems to have been his colleague in Montenegro, who telegraphed to the Quai d'Orsay that "Austro-Hungarian troops will be entering Serbian territory without delay." (232) Such French panic-mongering tended to undercut -- perhaps by design -- the British conference proposal.

⁵³ Both of Hollweg's remarks show how utterly he was out of the loop. He did not get a copy of Serbia's reply until around noon on July 27, almost 48 hours after it had been presented to Giesl in Belgrade, and his error regarding the Russian mobilization meant that he had not consulted with Jagow, whose attaches and consuls reported the Russian activities since mid-afternoon of the 26th.

⁵⁴ See Footnote 53, above.

⁵⁵ i.e., including the casus foederis, a Russian mobilization against Austria.

We cannot believe that Russia means to unloose a European war of this kind. In view of Austria's territorial désintéressement we rather take the view that Russia can adopt a waiting attitude towards the issue (Auseinandersetzung)⁵⁶ between Austria—Hungary and Serbia.

Russia's desire not to have the integrity of the Serbian Kingdom called in question can receive our support, the more as Austria-Hungary has stated that she does not intend to call this integrity in question. This might provide a common basis of agreement also in the further course of the affair." (233)

The German chancellor threatens mobilization and subsequent war - against both Russia and France -- unless they allow Serbia to be fed to the Austrian wolves. But this they will not permit - did Hollweg really not understand that? By military necessity, an Austrian attack must violate Serbian territory - this is what invasions do - and will provoke a Russian response. The chancellor's telegram shows him either in a state of blissful ignorance or coldly planning war. Did he misperceive the situation or was he calmly stoking the fire?

His interpretation of the crisis - based upon the two fallacious conclusions mentioned above - imputed an intrinsically aggravating quality to his measures, for he seemed unable to realize that his catholicon, Austria's putative non-interest in Serbian territory, means nothing to Sazonov and Poincaré - far from adopting "a waiting attitude" towards the issue, Russia is already mobilizing. But if Hollweg is out to further German aggression by successfully obfuscating the true issues, then he is throwing away the laboriously gained strategic advantage by not ordering Moltke to mobilize immediately.

Kaiser Wilhelm had meanwhile arrived at Potsdam by noon of the 27th and summoned Hollweg and the military high command to meet him at 3 pm. No official record of the meeting exists, and we do not know whether those present were acquainted with the latest news from the Wilhelmstrasse - the Serbian reply to Vienna's ultimatum, for example - but since Moltke later on the same day wrote to his wife that "the situation continues to be extremely obscure" and that "it will be another fortnight before anything definite can be known or said," (234) it may be assumed that the conference did not proceed beyond guesswork. Upon an inquiry of Senator Albertini in 1936, the retired Kaiser's aide-de-camp replied that "decisions in this sense were not taken on 27 July," (235) and the German historian August Bach summarized the mood of this day as follows:

"Since the beginning of Austrian operations against Serbia was not to be reckoned on for another couple of weeks, it is clear that on 27 July the political and military directors in Berlin thought that they had enough time ahead of them for diplomatic negotiations." (236)

Yet on the diplomatic front, in particular in London, there had been developments of which the Potsdam circle was unaware of. When Sir Grey had returned from his weekend on the 27th, he received Lichnowsky before noon and asked him to convey to Berlin his opinion that the Serbian response had surprised him - positively - "to a degree which he [Grey] would never have thought possible," and consequently he appealed to the German government to use its "influence with Vienna to have the reply from Belgrade regarded as either satisfactory or as a basis for negotiations." (237)

Indeed, the Serbian reply - cunning or not - might have provided a basis for talks had Austria been interested in, or satisfied with talks. Lichnowsky got the message; he cabled Berlin that "if war now comes, we could no longer count on English sympathies and British support, since the Austria action would be regarded as showing all signs of lack of good will. Everybody here [in the German embassy] is convinced, and I hear the same thing from my colleagues, that the key to the situation is Berlin and if Berlin seriously means peace, Austria can be restrained from pursuing a foolhardy policy, as Grey calls it." (238) This was, in a nutshell, a reasonable request and there cannot be much of an argument that, had Germany indeed restrained Austria - which was plainly within her power - peace might well have been saved. On the same day's

⁵⁶ Albertini cites here the German word used in the original text, to point out its ambiguity: "Auseinandersetzung" may denote a process, a trial, or a fight, i.e. war.

afternoon, Lichnowsky sent two more telegrams to Berlin arguing the importance of his message. The first, sent at 5 pm, read:

"Here the impression gains ground, and I noticed it clearly in my talk with Sir Edward Grey, that the whole Serbian question is working up to a trial, of strength between [the] Triple Alliance and Triple Entente. Should Austria's intention to use the present occasion to crush Serbia, as Sir E. Grey expressed it, become still more evident, England will, I am convinced, range herself on the side of France and Russia, in order to show that she does not mean to tolerate a moral or still more a military defeat of her group.

If war comes in these conditions, we shall have England against us. The feeling that, in view of the far-reaching compliance of the Serbian Government, the war might have been avoided will be of decisive importance for the attitude of the British Government." [Emphasis added] (239)

This was explicit enough, one would think. But Lichnowsky deemed it necessary to send one more missive the same day, pointing out that if there were no change in Hollweg's policy of "localization" of the conflict - being the equivalent of letting Austria attack Serbia - he had no hand to play, for Grey would not interfere in the Austro-Serbian conflict if it would not develop into an Austro-Russian conflict. But the one would precipitate the other, and hence...

... the Austro-Russian conflict is inseparable from the Austro-Serbian ... as Grey said to me. An understanding between Austria and Russia hangs on the settlement of the Austro-Serbian rift. Without this settlement, according to opinion here, all mediation is useless.

How can I advocate localization of the conflict when nobody here doubts that Austria-Hungary's procedure seriously jeopardizes Russian interests, and that, if we exercise no pressure on Austria, Russia will be forced to intervene against her will? I only make people shrug their shoulders in amusement.

If an agreement between Vienna and St. Petersburg on the basis of the Serbian note were attainable without the use of military measures against Serbia, Sir E. Grey would have achieved all he desires. What he wants to avoid is an Austrian passage of arms with Serbia because he fears this will disturb the peace of Europe. He [Grey] confirms, today, that no Russian call-up of reserves has taken place." (240)

The last sentence, however, indicates that Great Britain was deceived by her presumptive partners too - no doubt in the venerable tradition that all is fair in love and war. Yet Grey was certainly correct in his assumption that Berlin had enough influence on Vienna to stop the escalation; the question was whether Berlin was willing to do so, i.e., whether Bethmann Hollweg would advise Tschirschky, his man in Vienna, to counsel the Austrian government in favour of the British proposal to accept, to a degree, the Serbian reply as a basis for negotiation instead of war. Around midnight of July 27/28, Hollweg telegraphed Tschirschky the following:

"After our having declined an English proposal for a conference, it is impossible for us to reject this English suggestion a limine. By a rejection of all mediatory action we should be held responsible for the conflagration by the whole world and be represented as the real warmongers. This would make our own position in the country impossible where we should appear as having been forced into war.

Our position is all the more difficult as Serbia has apparently yielded very much. We cannot therefore reject the role of mediator and must submit the English proposal to the Vienna Cabinet for consideration, as London and Paris are all the time using their influence with St. Petersburg. I want Count Berchtold's views on the English suggestion and on M. Sazonov's desire to negotiate directly with Vienna." (241)

Even taking the nightly hour of its composition into account, the message depicts the chancellor as being more interested in the judgement of his actions by posterity than in preserving peace. He treats the English proposal as a somewhat tedious affair which diplomatic courtesy directs him to forward to Vienna, but he makes it clear that the measure lacks his support. Only five hours later, at 5 am of the following morning, July 28, he informed the Kaiser of Lichnowsky's telegrams as follows:

*"I humbly submit to Your Majesty a telegram that has just arrived from Prince Lichnowsky. On Your Majesty's instructions, I have submitted Sir Edward Grey's suggestion to Count Berchtold. **It will be for Austria to decide what attitude she will take to it.** Were we to reject the role of mediator a limine, since Paris and London are all the time using their influence with St. Petersburg, we should stand before all the world as responsible for the conflagration and as the real war makers. That would on the one hand make it impossible for us to maintain the present good mood in our own country and **on the other cause England to give up her neutrality.**" [Emphases added] (242)*

This message summarizes Hollweg's position well. First, we are told that the chancellor seems to have forwarded the British messages to Vienna only under his monarch's instructions, not by his own volition; second, that he - obviously - does not agree with them; third, that he refuses to exert pressure upon Austria ("...it will be for Austria to decide ...") and fourth, since he cites only one telegram from Lichnowsky when there were plainly three, we may infer that Hollweg took the precaution not to provide Wilhelm with copies of Lichnowsky's originals but with some sort of a synopsis. Sir Grey's proposal is buried without much ado, the more so when, around 9 am on the 27th, the Austrian Ambassador in Berlin, Szoegyenyi, informed Berchtold in Vienna of what Jagow told him on behalf of Bethmann Hollweg:

*"The Secretary of State [Jagow] told me very definitely in a strictly confidential form that in the immediate future mediation proposals from England will possibly (**eventually**) be brought to Your Excellency's knowledge by the German Government. The German Government, he says, tenders the most binding assurances that it in no way associates itself with the proposals, is even decidedly against their being considered, and only passes them on in order to conform to the English request.*

*In so doing the Government proceeds from the standpoint **that it is of the greatest importance that England at the present moment should not make common cause with Russia and France.** Consequently everything must be avoided that might disconnect the telegraph line between Germany and England which till now has been in good working order. Were Germany to say flatly to Sir E. Grey that she is not willing to pass on his wishes to Austria-Hungary, by whom England believes these wishes will sooner find consideration if Germany is the **intermediary, then the situation would arise which, as has just been said, must at all costs be avoided.***

*The German Government would, moreover, in respect of any other request of England to Vienna, assure the latter most emphatically that it in no way supports any such demands for intervention in regard to Austria-Hungary and only passes them on **to comply with the wish of England.***

*For instance only yesterday the English Government approached him, the Secretary of State, through the German Ambassador to London and directly through its own representative here, asking him to support the wish of England in regard to a toning down by us of the note to Serbia. He, Jagow, gave answer that he would certainly fulfil Sir E. Grey's wish and pass on England's desire to Your Excellency, **but that he could not support it himself,** since the Serbian conflict was a question of prestige for the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in which Germany was also involved.*

He, the Secretary of State, had therefore passed on Sir E. Grey's note to Herr von Tschirschky, but without giving him instructions to submit it to Your Excellency; thereupon he had been able to support the English Cabinet, that he did not directly decline the English wish, and had even forwarded it to Vienna. In conclusion the Secretary of State reiterated his standpoint to me and, in order to prevent any misunderstanding, asked me to assure Your Excellency that, also in the case just adduced, he, in acting as intermediary, was not in the slightest degree in favour of consideration being given to the English wish." [Emphases added] (243)

While we perhaps have to take these telegrams cum grano salis for the conditions under which they were created, they show that Lichnowsky's warnings went unheeded by Hollweg's way of thinking, which was a prime example of "the tendency we can discern in the reasoning of so many of the actors in this crisis, to perceive oneself as operating under irresistible external constraints while placing the responsibility for deciding between peace and war firmly on the shoulders of the opponent." (244)

It had been essential for Hollweg's idea of "localization" that Austria move quickly - as Moltke had formulated it on July 13: "Austria must beat the Serbs and then make peace quickly, demanding an Austro-Serbian alliance as the sole condition. Like Prussia did with Austria in 1866." (245) Whether the latter part of the equation would have worked with diplomats like Berchtold may, however, be doubted. Still, although the Germans "repeatedly urged the Austrians to get their skates on," Vienna dithered. (246) While the expectedly insufficient Serbian response to the Austrian ultimatum had eventually overcome Tisza's reservations, and Emperor Francis Joseph had signed the mobilization order against Serbia at 9 pm on the evening of July 25 in the presence of Berchtold and Krobatin, the Minister of War, the order by and itself did not change much for the Austrian military: all Conrad could do was to pronounce that the first day of mobilization would - hopefully - be the 28th. On this day in Berlin, Willy finally laid eyes on the Serbian reply.

He was much impressed by it and commented - with famous footnotes:

A brilliant achievement in a time limit of only forty-eight hours! It is more than one could have expected! A great moral success for Vienna; but with it all reason for war is gone and Giesl ought to have quietly stayed on in Belgrade! (247)

But when he was told of the Austrian mobilization order against Serbia, he was upset and remarked "I would never have ordered a mobilisation on that basis." (248) It was quite possible and is also what Niall Ferguson suspects, that in the face of war he was beginning to lose his nerve. (249) His adjutant General Plessen had accompanied Wilhelm on the morning ride of July 28 and subsequently noted in his diary that His Majesty "tells me England thinks the Serbian answer to the Austrian ultimatum such that in essence all the demands are conceded and therewith all reason for war is gone." (250) Only two hours later, the emperor fired off a letter to Jagow in which he presented a plan of his own:

"On reading through the Serbian reply, which I received this morning, I am persuaded that on the whole the wishes of the Danubian Monarchy are met. The few reservations made by Serbia on single points can in my opinion well be cleared up by negotiation. But capitulation of the most humble type is there proclaimed urbi et orbi and thereby all reason for war falls to the ground.

Nevertheless, this scrap of paper together with what it contains can only be regarded as of limited value as long as it is not translated into deeds. The Serbs are Orientals, therefore liars, deceitful, and master hands at temporizing. In order that these fine promises may become truth and fact, the exercise of gentle (donée) violence will be necessary.

This will best be done by Austria's occupying Belgrade as security for the enforcement and execution of the promises and remaining there until the demands are actually carried out. This is also necessary in order to give an outward satisfaction d'honneur to the army which has for a third time been mobilized to no purpose, an appearance of success in the eyes of the rest of the world and enable it to have at least the consciousness of having stood on foreign soil.

... Should Your Excellency share this opinion of mine, I should propose to say to Austria: the retreat of Serbia in a very humiliating form has been attained and we congratulate her on this. Thereby of course a reason for war no longer exists, but what is necessary is a guarantee that the promises would be put into execution. This would doubtless be attainable by the temporary military occupation of a part of Serbia. Just as we in 1871 left troops posted in France until the milliards were paid up. On this basis I am ready to mediate for peace in Austria. ... This I will do in my own way and thus in a manner sparing of Austrian national sentiment and the military honour of her army. The latter has already been appealed to by the supreme war lord and is about to respond to the appeal. It must therefore unquestionably have a visible satisfaction d'honneur; that is a prerequisite of my mediation.

Will Your Excellency therefore submit to me a proposal in the sense here outlined, which shall be communicated to Vienna. I have ordered Plessen, who entirely shares my views to write in the above sense to the Chief of the General Staff." (251)

The proposal to occupy Belgrade and use the capital as a collateral for Serbian compliance became famous under the moniker of HALT IN BELGRADE, but its creator was badly out of the loop and his noteworthy suggestion essentially ignored - when Bethmann Hollweg met with the British Ambassador on the same evening, i.e. July 28, he mentioned not a word of Wilhelm's design (so much for the Emperor's true power). (252) The Kaiser was completely unaware that - with the knowledge of Hollweg and Jagow - Vienna was already preparing the declaration of war on Serbia. In the same hour that the emperor sent his letter to Jagow, Hollweg telegraphed to Tschirschky in Vienna a much redacted form of Wilhelm's proposals - he eliminated the Kaiser's remark that the reason for war had evaporated, but reiterated his own earlier view that Germany would not "hold the Austrians back." (253)

At any rate, even the watered-down version of Wilhelm's message was not presented to Vienna before it was too late, for the speed of events quickened. From St. Petersburg, General Chelius reported to Berlin that he detected "all preparations for mobilization against Austria," and an alarm for German spies in Russia soon brought independent confirmation which was forwarded to Vienna. (254) Already on the 27th, Berchtold had misinformed Francis Joseph that "Serbian troops yesterday fired on our troops from Danube steamers near Temes-Kubin," (255) and included the following telegram to be transmitted in open form to the Serbian Foreign Ministry:

"The Royal Government of Serbia not having replied in a satisfactory manner to the note which had been handed to it by the Minister of Austria-Hungary at Belgrade dated 23 July 1914, the Imperial and Royal Government finds it necessary to see to the safeguarding of its rights and interests and with this object to have recourse to force of arms, all the more so since Serbian troops have already attacked a detachment of the I. and R. army near Temes-Kubin. Austria-Hungary accordingly regards herself from this moment as in a state of war with Serbia.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria-Hungary

Count Berchtold" (256)

Around noon of July 28, Francis Joseph approved the declaration of war, but then it turned out that Berchtold did not know how to serve it to the addressee - Ambassador Giesl and the whole embassy staff having left Belgrade on the evening of the 25th. Thus the document was sent by telegram, and since the direct line had been cut, the Serbian government, which at first considered the possibility of a hoax, had to ask for and receive confirmation of the Austrian declaration of war from St. Petersburg, London and Paris, all of whom had received copies of the message. (257) Only on the next day did Berchtold have to admit that nothing had happened at Temes-Kubin. But by then the war was on, although little happened in the opening days except for the Serbs dynamiting the bridges over the Danube and some Austrian artillery firing a few shells in the direction of Belgrade. (258)

On the same day, July 28, the French President Poincaré and Prime and Foreign Minister Viviani arrived back in Paris. The president had telegraphed ahead and ordered the cabinet to take all "necessary precautions", and consequently he was satisfied when told at his arrival that all pre-mobilization measures had been effected. "Soldiers on leave had been recalled, troops in training camps had returned to their garrisons, the prefects had been placed on alert, civil servants had been instructed to remain at their posts and key supplies had been purchased by Paris; 'in short, the steps had been taken which, in the event of need, would permit an immediate mobilization,'" (259) as the president was told at disembarking in Dunkirk by ministers Ferry and Renoult. The French Council of Ministers in a subsequent session expressly approved, as it had done on the 26th and 27th, the Russian mobilization measures on the 29th once again. They were "in accordance with the Balkan inception scenario and with French strategic thinking, which laid great weight upon the speed and effectiveness of Russian mobilization. But this priority had to be balanced with the need to secure British intervention." (260) The Austrian declaration of war on Serbia made this much easier.

There has been much discussion on the exact order of events on that fatal July 28 in Berlin and Vienna, about Wilhelm's Halt in Belgrade proposal and the almost contemporaneous Austrian declaration of war, especially in regard to Hollweg's - no doubt intentional - failure to give Wilhelm's proposal the necessary impetus. Instead he buried it, which caused Albertini to comment that "while Wilhelm was coming round to a peaceful solution of the conflict, the Wilhelmstrasse was deceitfully evading the spirit of his instructions while feigning to obey them." (261) Hollweg was

unwilling to change his strategy on what he perceived as the monarch's whim, although it appears that he never discussed the merits of the proposal with anyone. More astonishing even seems the aloofness with which he reacted to the fait accompli of Austria's declaration of war; on the evening of its issuance, 11 pm on July 28, he telegraphed to Pourtales in St. Petersburg to explain to Sazonov that:

"We are continuing our endeavours to persuade Vienna to have a frank discussion with St. Petersburg for the purpose of clarifying the aims and extent of the Austrian procedure in Serbia in an unexceptionable manner which it is hoped will be acceptable to Russia. The declaration of war issued in the meanwhile does not change this in any way." (262)

As it turned out, it did change things in Russia. We do not know how far Bethmann was informed about the Russian mobilization; as late as 3 pm on the 28th he had replied to an inquiry from Conrad in Vienna via Tschirschky "that the rumours of Russian military preparations were not confirmed," (263) and because he knew that Austria could not attack Serbia en masse before August 12 or so, he believed to have time enough for negotiations. But all he did was to play into Sazonov's hands.

Still, fairness demands to mention that Hollweg received no firm guidance from Pourtales in St. Petersburg. On the 27th the German envoy reported on a meeting with Sazonov that the Russian minister was calm and constructive, yet one day later he reported that "mobilization was underway and picking up speed, that reserves were being called up, and that cavalry units were seen mustering horses in Courland (Latvia), near the borders of East Prussia." (264) While Sazonov succeeded in confusing both Pourtales and Hollweg to a degree - although German military intelligence knew that something was afoot - in regards to Great Britain Sazonov had achieved complete disinformation. On the same July 28 when he - delayed and disingenuously - allowed the order for partial mobilization against Austria to be publicized and looked forward to convince the Tsar and the cabinet of the necessity for general mobilization, the clueless British Ambassador Buchanan asked him "to refrain from any military measures which might be construed as a challenge by Germany," utterly unaware that exactly such measures had been going on for three full days. (265) Sazonov also made sure that the order for partial mobilization was not telegraphed to Count Benckendorff, the Russian minister in London, for his and Whitehall's information, on the direct route, but was sent to the Russian Charge d'Affairs in Berlin, who forwarded it to England at leisure's pace and addressed it to Nicolson, not Grey, who thus only received the crucial message in the night of July 29, five days *after* the Russian Council of Ministers had authorized the Period Preparatory to War. To deceive England further, Sazonov forgot to mention that, by the 28th, actual mobilization already extended to "all of European Russia plus Siberia and the Caucasus, the Baltic and Black Seas, and particularly Poland. It was a masterful performance." (266)

Now the question was how Russia was to react to the Austrian declaration of war. On the 28th, Baron von Schilling, head of Sazonov's Chancery, entrusted to his diary the content of one of the telegrams Paléologue later "lost", in which the Gallic diplomat assured Sazonov that "on the instructions of his Government, the French Ambassador acquainted the Foreign Minister with the complete readiness of France to fulfil her obligations as an ally in case of necessity." (267) Sazonov's target now became Tsar Nicholas II, but before he set out to meet him, the Foreign Minister - who had received the news of the Austrian move around 4 pm on the 28th - summoned General Yanushkevich to discuss the state of Russian preparations. It seems that the Chief of the General Staff had meanwhile figured out that no mobilization plan for a "partial" emergency existed, and therefore called on Sazonov to declare general mobilization, for which there was a plan, # 19.

It would seem that either just before or shortly after this meeting, Paléologue was received again by the Foreign Minister, to whom he declared France's readiness and recommended to order the full mobilization of the Russian army.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ In this context Albertini points out - again - that Paléologue, far from counseling peace as he claims in his memoirs, fans the flames. Sazonov's next move was to proclaim general mobilization, for which he needed the Tsar's approval, and he was preparing to visit the monarch when he received the French envoy:

"Far from dissuading him from this course, Paléologue, who was always hinting at the inevitability of a European war brought on by Germany, must now have approved of Sazonov's decision [to openly declare mobilization] - and promised full French solidarity. That this was so may be gathered not only from Schilling's evidence but also from a telegram sent next day (29th) to the Russian Ambassadors in Paris, London, Vienna, Rome, and Berlin, saying: 'all we can do is speed up our armaments and reckon with the probable unavoidability

At any rate, the measure became a reality within the same night by Yanushkevich informing his staff by a - wholly unauthorized - telegram that "30 July will be proclaimed the first day of our general mobilization." (268) This offhanded instruction seems to have been based upon Sazonov's own questionable telegram below. The official discussion of the proper Russian reaction to the Austrian act began on the very evening of July 28, 6 pm, with a council at the Peterhof palace that included the Tsar, Sazonov and the usual assorted ministers and generals. The Foreign Minister officially informed Nicholas of the Austrian declaration of war on Serbia, and presented two ukases - prepared by Yanushkevich on the Tsar's order - one for the official announcement of the "partial" mobilization scheme" running unofficially since the 25th, the other for general mobilization.

As important the next twenty-four hours would be, they were confusing, too, for from July 28 on, "there followed a hysterical series of meetings and telephone conversations as Sazonov and his colleagues tried to persuade the vacillating Tsar to agree to full mobilization." (269) We know that on the same evening of July 28 - presumably, as Turner observes, with the Tsar's permission - an order signed by Sazonov was issued that made the "partial" mobilization official and informed the embassies at London, Paris, Rome and Vienna, who received copies, that ...

*"In consequence of the Austrian declaration of war on Serbia, we shall tomorrow proclaim mobilization in the districts of Odessa, Kiev, Moscow and Kazan. Inform the German Government of this and **lay stress on the absence of any intention on the part of Russia to attack Germany.**" [Emphasis added] (270)*

It was perhaps on the strength of this order that Yanushkevich had issued his own alert. From Paris, Joffre chimed in with the urgent exhortation not to forget, whatever else would be decided, to give priority to attacking Germany, not Austria. In his memoirs, the French Chief of Staff explained:

"The direction which events were taking left me with no illusion -- we were headed straight for war and Russia was going to find herself drawn in at the same time as ourselves. My first thought, therefore, was to strengthen the liaison between us and our Allies and I asked the Minister [of War] to endeavour through all possible means to make sure that, if hostilities broke out, the Government of St. Petersburg would immediately take the offensive in East Prussia, as had been agreed upon in our convention." (271)

The attentive reader will have noticed contradictions in the last two messages as far as Russian intentions in respect to Germany are concerned. At any rate, the libretto for the opera that subsequently played at the palace directed, as Albertini remarked, the Tsar "to take general, as well as a partial mobilization into consideration, inclining possibly more towards the former but leaving the decision open to the last minute. It thus became necessary to have the ukases for both contingencies ready and signed." (272) This last minute, the monarch was told by his generals, was next day's evening, at which time a decision had to be arrived at.

Courtiers, generals and diplomats are well versed in the art of persuading a hesitating monarch, and the Tsar's quick assent to Sazonov's "partial" mobilization order may have been the first sign that Nicholas's defences yielded under siege. Neither must we be surprised that very soon a telegram materialized, in which Shebeko, the Russian Ambassador in Vienna, alarmed the honoraries with the entirely fictitious news that an Austrian "order for general mobilization has been signed." (275) On the morning of the 29th, the crown council resumed discussion. The task of following its proceedings is made difficult by the intricacies of the Russian bureaucracy, which also bowed to the necessity to keep the German embassy in the dark as long as possible. Procedure was complicated enough; in order for one of the ukases to become

of war.' Izvolsky was instructed to communicate this [message] to the French Government [while] 'at the same time conveying our sincere gratitude for the declaration, which the French Ambassador made to me in his Government's name, that we may count in full measure on the support of France under the alliance. In the present circumstances this declaration is of especial value to us.'

This is evidence which cannot be brushed aside and the French Government would have been better advised if it had shouldered the responsibility for the assurance given by its Ambassador to the Russian Government, an assurance for which it had the most excellent reasons. Instead of so doing, the Government tried to cover up the fact with versions and telegrams which do not square either with the Russian or with the English record ... or with the situation. The result is that the French Government comes to the point of admitting that its Ambassador, far from working for peace, actually fanned the flames of war." (273)

² L.C.F. Turner observed that "from a military point of view it would have been quite possible for Russia to carry out a partial mobilization, but this would still have led to a major war because Austria would have been compelled by the threat to her defenceless northern frontier to respond with general mobilization, thus invoking the Austro-German alliance." (274)

operative, "it had to bear the signatures of the Minister for War, the Navy Minister and the Minister of the Interior," and when General Dobrorolski could not find the Navy Minister, the respective ukase "remained suspended for some hours." (276) Although many historians now believe that the Tsar had already signed both ukases on the morning of this fateful July 29, Nicholas took pains to send a personal message via General Yanushkevich to the German Military Attaché Major Eggeling around 7 pm, the content of which the officer reported to Berlin as follows:

"Chief of General Staff [Yanushkevich] sent for me and said he had just been with His Majesty. War Minister has instructed him to confirm once more that everything is still as the Minister told me two days ago. He gave me his solemn word of honour and offered a written undertaking that up till 3 this afternoon there was no mobilization anywhere, not the calling up of a single man or horse. He could not vouch for the future but could emphatically confirm that His Majesty, now as before, desires no mobilization on the fronts facing our confines." (277)

This renewed dishonesty occurred, we may remind ourselves, five days after the Council of Ministers had authorized Sazonov's limited mobilization scheme on the meetings of the 24th and 25th. At the trial of Sukhomlinov for High Treason in the summer of 1917, Yanushkevich replied on why he had lied so flagrantly to Eggeling that "I regarded myself as justified in giving him this statement in writing because, at that moment, mobilization had in actual fact not taken place. The ukase for mobilization I still had in my pocket." (278) Hence the Russian leadership continued to deny until July 30 that any mobilization, general or limited, was taking place, which backfired badly when the Germans eventually found out the truth.

In order to be ready for whatever contingency was to occur, Yanushkevich took the two orders "bearing His Majesty's signature" on the afternoon of July 29 and submitted them "to the Supreme Senate for counter signature. On the basis of these orders the General Staff prepared the corresponding telegrams [to the military districts] which also received the signatures of the three Ministers." (279) Everything was readied for the immediate execution of either plan.

Earlier on the afternoon of the 29th, the monarch had authorized Sazonov, Sukhomlinov and Yanushkevich to discuss among themselves the mobilization scenarios and to render him advice. They met at the Foreign Ministry, where Baron von Schilling, Sazonov's Head of Chancery, listened in and later entrusted his diary that:

"These decisions were awaited with some trepidation, since all concerned knew how important in respect of our military preparedness even a partial mobilization would be if it were ordered, and still more a general mobilization, as, in the first case, a partial mobilization would render difficult a general mobilization, if such should prove necessary subsequently.

After examining the situation from all points, both the Ministers and the Chief of the General Staff decided that in view of the small probability of avoiding a war with Germany, it was indispensable to prepare for it in every way in good time, and that therefore the risk could not be accepted of delaying a general mobilization later by effecting a partial mobilization now.

The conclusion arrived at this conference was at once reported by telephone to the Tsar, who authorized the taking of steps accordingly. This information was received with enthusiasm by the small circle of those acquainted with what was in progress." (280)

The decision for general mobilization having been reached around 8 pm, General Dobrorolski, Chief of the Mobilization Office, headed for the Central Telegraph Station, where he arrived about an hour later and began to prepare the transmissions to the commanding officers of the military districts. The bureau had shut down all other nonessential traffic and was just about ready to send the order out when the telephone rang and Yanushkevich ordered Dobrorolski to stand down for an important message which a courier was already on the way to hand him.

A staff captain then materialized and told the general that the Tsar "had changed his mind. Instead of the mobilization order, an order for partial mobilization was to be promulgated, along the lines resolved 'in principle' at the meetings of 24 and 25 July. The new order was duly drawn up and transmitted at around midnight on 29-30 July, triggering

mobilization measures in the Kiev, Odessa, Moscow and Kazan districts. This sudden reversal produced almost comical levels of confusion at the French embassy." (281)

Meanwhile Sazonov in the Foreign Ministry was receiving Pourtales at 11 am of the 29th and informed him that, as a reaction of Austria's declaration of war on Serbia, Russia felt obliged to effect the "partial" mobilization of the thirteen army corps in the aforementioned districts.⁵⁸ This was not only a non sequitur, as Luigi Albertini pointed out - "eight Austrian army mobilized against Serbia were in no wise a threat to Russia, whereas the mobilization of thirteen Russian army corps in addition to those of Serbia was a real threat to Austria" (282) -- it essentially compelled the country to declare general mobilization herself, which would, by triggering the *casus foederis* for the German ally, result in European war. It is not clear whether Sazonov understood the consequences, for he assured Pourtales more than once that "no measures were being taken against Germany," but in so doing, he drew "a distinction between Austria and Germany which it was not possible to make." (283) The ambassador then left Chorister's Bridge in order to communicate with Berlin, but was recalled only a few hours later to attend to Sazonov's complaint that Berchtold seemed uninterested in the direct Austro-Russian talks, which Sir Grey in the meantime had recommended as an alternative to his earlier proposal of an international conference and Bethmann Hollweg had claimed to support. Pourtales promised to send an inquiry concerning the matter to Berlin.

Soon after Pourtales left the Ministry for the second time, the Austrian Ambassador Szapary showed up in Sazonov's office with a copy of the Austrian mobilization order. He had come to clarify, he said, that Vienna's eight army corps at the Serbian border were in no way a threat to Russia. Sazonov countered that "in the present case, Russian interests are Serbian interests," and told his visitor that Russia considered ordering mobilization "on a fairly large scale." (284) The meeting came to a rather inauspicious end when the discussion turned on the Austrian shelling of Belgrade.

At around 7 pm, Pourtales reappeared - for the third time on this day - to bring Sazonov the German Chancellor's most recent cable. Unfortunately, the message proved Hollweg's best effort yet to secure the further escalation of the crisis: "Kindly impress on M. Sazonov very seriously that further progress of Russian mobilization measures would compel us to mobilize and that then European war would scarcely be to be prevented." (285)

In the face of this, Sazonov exploded. Whatever intentions Hollweg - not much of a diplomat - may have had when drafting this note, and perhaps they were at variance from what their final form suggested, but it was a blunt statement and Pourtales obviously felt the need to soften its impact on the Foreign Minister by explaining that it "was not a threat

⁵⁸ It was here that Clausewitz's primacy of politics over the military backfired, for neither politicians nor crowned heads were familiar with the implications of the mobilizations they contemplated. Luigi Albertini observed:

"One of the decisive factors in the crisis of July 1914 was the absence of all understanding of military matters on the part of the responsible statesmen who had to make the decisions on war and peace, decisions which were closely connected with military problems, in particular with those of mobilization.

They had no knowledge of what mobilization actually was, what demands it made on the country, what consequences it brought with it, to what risks it exposed the peace of Europe. They looked on it as a measure costly, it is true, but to which recourse might be had without necessarily implying that war would follow. They thought that as long as armies remained within their own frontiers, diplomacy could still continue to work for peace not only while mobilization was in progress but even after it was completed." (286)

Yet to complicate matters, some very possible scenarios were beyond the confines of diplomacy a posteriori. Austria's case against Serbia was one of them, for the German statesmen knew that, for Germany, mobilization was tantamount to war, but they did not realize that if Russia mobilized against Austria, Austria would have to order general mobilization and this in turn, under the terms of the alliance and the interpretation given to them, and because of the assurances given to Austria in July, would call forth German mobilization and, consequently, war.

There was still a further point. The Austrian General Staff needed to be quite certain of Russia's intentions before going ahead with mobilization against Serbia. If Russia were not to intervene, Conrad would take the offensive against Serbia with seven army corps, i.e. 412,000 men (Case B, i.e. war in the Balkans). But if Russia came in, he would remain on the defensive on the Serbian front with three army corps (190,000 men) and send the remaining four corps to Galicia together with nine others (Case R, i.e. war against Russia). All doubt on the point must be cleared up by the fifth day of mobilization (1 August), when he must decide whether the remaining four army corps were to be sent against Serbia or against Russia.

This is an aspect of the 'localization of the conflict' which had never been considered by the statesmen of the Central Powers. For Austria to successfully take the field against Serbia it was needed that not only that Russia should not come in but that she should a priori pledge herself to remain out of the conflict. Suppose that she had given no hint of any intention to mobilize and that Conrad after 1 August had sent towards the Save those four army corps that would have been needed in Galicia. Then if after August 1 Russia had gone over from words to deeds, Austria would not have had sufficient sources to meet her [in Galicia and the Carpathian Mountains] and the consequences might have been incalculable." (287)

but a friendly opinion." (288) This was at least debatable, and Sazonov treated it as the former - which fit in his strategy. After curtly informing the German diplomat that he was to forward the cable to the Tsar, the minister terminated the audience. That Bethmann Hollweg later on the day sent another, "more temperate and reasoned telegram", could not repair the damage wrought, for Sazonov did not receive it until the next day. (289) What he did receive instead was a telephone call from the Tsar, informing him of the receipt at Peterhof of a telegram from "Willy". It read:

"It is with the greatest concern that I hear of the impression which the action of Austria against Serbia is creating in your country. The unscrupulous agitation that has been going on in Serbia for years has resulted in the outrageous crime, to which Archduke Franz Ferdinand fell a victim. The spirit that led Serbians to murder their own king and wife still dominates the country.

You will doubtless agree with me that we both, you and me [sic], 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 punishments. In this case politics play no part at all.

On the other hand I fully understand how difficult it is for you and your Government to face the drift of your public opinion. Therefore, with regard to the hearty and tender friendship which binds us both from long ago with firm ties, I am exerting my utmost influence to induce the Austrians to deal straightly to arrive to a satisfactory understanding with you. I confidently hope you will help me in my efforts to smooth over difficulties that may still arise.

Your very sincere and devoted friend and Cousin Willy." (290)

The problem of this dispatch was that it had not given much thought to its addressees' state of mind. International diplomacy assumed that Germany had complete control over her Austrian puppet, and thus when Berchtold earlier in the day had brusquely rejected bilateral Austro-Russian talks, Sazonov had assumed - and was probably correct - that this was a result of German, i.e. Hollweg's, intervention. If this was the case, then Wilhelm's promise of exerting his "utmost influence" towards Austria was either a fabrication - for it clearly had not worked - or, at best, sincere but naive. For the former assumption spoke that Wilhelm's advice directly contradicted Hollweg's veiled threat, so if there was a change in the German position, neither the Chancellor nor Pourtales were aware of it; a conclusion which in turn convinced Sazonov that no such change existed and Wilhelm's telegram was but another German ruse. He must have put this conclusion to the Tsar, who took it up at once in his reply to Wilhelm at 8:30 pm, July 29:

*"Thanks for your telegram conciliatory and friendly. Whereas official message presented today by your Ambassador to my Minister was conveyed in a very different tone. **Beg you to explain this divergence.** It would be right to give over the Austro-Serbian problem to the Hague conference. Trust in your wisdom and friendship." [Emphasis added] (291)*

Willy replied quickly and reiterated his idea that "a direct understanding between your Government and Vienna [is] possible and as I already telegraphed to you, my Government is continuing its exertions to promote it." (292) Nicholas was willing, it seems, to give his cousin the benefit of the doubt and as a result of Willy's note undertook the telephone call to Dobrorolski via Yanushkevich that changed the mobilization order from general back to limited. But in his desire to appear open to any political compromise, the Tsar directed the following, ill-conceived response to his cousin in the same night, i.e. around 1:20 am on July 30:

*"Thank you heartily for your quick answer. Am sending Tatistchev ⁵⁹ 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 all 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." [Emphasis added] (293)*

⁵⁹ The Tsar's personal representative at the Hohenzollern Court.

It was a most unfortunate note. Even Wilhelm knew that eight Austrian army corps at the border to Serbia could in no way threaten Russia, and the Tsar's casual admission that his government had lied the last five days over its military preparations prompted the Kaiser to consider to support Falkenhayn, the Minister of War, who was pressing for immediate German mobilization against a hesitant Moltke and Bethmann Hollweg. But we're not there yet.

In St. Petersburg, meanwhile, the hawks pressed on for general mobilization, and Sazonov, Sukhomlinov and Yanushkevich continued to probe the Tsar's defences. Angered over the back and forth of the monarch's decisions, the Chief of Staff threatened to disappear, "smash my telephone and generally adopt measures which will prevent anyone from finding me for the purpose of giving contrary orders which would again stop our general mobilization." (294)

At 3 pm, July 30, the Tsar received Sazonov and Tatistchev to another conference at Peterhof, the results of which Baron von Schilling reported as follows:

"The firm desire of the Tsar to avoid war at all costs, the horrors of which filled him with repulsion, led His Majesty, in full realization of the heavy responsibility which he took upon himself in this fateful hour, to explore every possible means for averting the approaching danger. Consequently, he refused during a long time to agree to the adoption of measures which, however indispensable from a military point of view, were calculated, as he clearly saw, to hasten a decision in an undesirable sense.

The tenseness of feeling experienced by the Tsar at this time found expression, amongst other signs, in the irritability, most unusual in him, with which His Majesty interrupted General Tatistchev. The latter, who throughout had taken no part in the conversation, said in a moment of silence: 'Yes, it is hard to decide.' His Majesty replied in a rough, displeased tone: 'I will decide' - in order by this means to prevent the General from intervening any further in the conversation. ...

Finally, the Tsar agreed that in the existing circumstances it would be very dangerous not to make timely preparations for what was apparently an inevitable war, and therefore gave his decision in favour of an immediate general mobilization.

S. D. Sazonov requested the Imperial permission to inform the Chief of the General Staff of this immediately by telephone, and, this being granted, he hastened to the telephone on the ground floor of the palace. Having transmitted the Imperial order to General Yanushkevich, who was waiting impatiently for it, the Minister, with reference to the conversation that morning, added: 'Now you can smash your telephone.'" (295)

It was not immediately clear whether Nicholas realized the consequences of his decision. Not only betrayed his diary entry for this July 30 no reflections on mobilization or, actually, any politics at all, but evidenced the impressions of a languid summer holiday:

"After lunch I received Sazonov and Tatistchev. I went for a walk by myself. The weather was hot. At 6 received Count Frederiks with Voiekov and then Nilov. Had a delightful bath in the sea." (296)

Dobrorolski made another trip to the Central Telegraph Office, and this time nothing interfered - around 5 pm the military district commands were alerted that general mobilization was to begin the following day, July 31. Although Sazonov attempted to keep the order secret, the red placards posted the length and breadth of the country calling up reservists could not but attract the attention of the German military intelligence service, which reported the commotion to Pourtales early enough on the next morning for his use at the audience of the Tsar which he had asked for and obtained on short notice.

In his memoirs, the ambassador describes the audience as earnest and sincere but essentially fruitless, for he had "the impression that His Majesty either possessed an unusual degree of self-control or else had not yet fully understood the gravity of the situation in spite of my very serious representations." (297) The envoy's proposal to withdraw the mobilization order in view of the consequences the Tsar denied on reasons of practicability, and showed Pourtales the draft of a telegram to Wilhelm, in which he declared that "it is technically impossible to stop our military preparations

which were obligatory owing to Austria's mobilization,"⁶⁰ but promised the Kaiser that "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." (298) Whatever the Tsar's knowledge of the repercussions of the call to arms, the generals were aware of its consequences. Dobrorolski reflected in his memoirs:

"The choice of the moment is influenced by a complex of political factors of all kinds. But once the moment has been fixed, everything is settled, and there is no turning back. The beginning of war is automatically regulated in advance." (299)

In hindsight, it seems that the Russian generals failed to represent this automatism to the Tsar and Sazonov with the necessary impetus, and Albertini observed that had the Foreign Minister "known as a mathematical certainty that to order mobilization was to decide irrevocably on war, most probably he would have hesitated yet awhile longer before advising the Tsar to take the step." We may recall in this context that, only a few days earlier, Sazonov had asked Pourtales: "Surely, mobilization is not tantamount to war with you either, is it?" and received the answer: "Perhaps not in theory. But ... once the button is pressed and the machinery of mobilization set in motion, there is no stopping it." (300)

But there was another theoretical matter - that of the treaty with France. Article II of the Franco-Russian Military Convention as in effect then demanded that "German mobilization obliges Russia and France to mobilize immediately and simultaneously all their forces at the first news of the event and without there being need of previous agreement. ... But in the case of the partial, or even the general mobilization of Austria or Italy singly, previous agreement ('concert') is indispensable." (301) Since for the moment, an Austrian partial mobilization against Serbia was all that could be made out on the threat horizon - which did not compel France to do anything - and it was quite debatable whether the French public would accept war with Germany over a Balkan issue, the cases *foederis*, i.e. the obligation, nay, the inevitability of France's entry in the war had to be secured by other means, and false representations were deemed the best way to arrive at the desired result.

In this regard it was a very useful contingency that had brought the leaders of the French Republic to the state visit at St. Petersburg from July 20-23. We know that the importance of the measures discussed at the summit prevented, and still prevents their publication, but since the French honoraries would be out of the reach of reliable communications during their trip back, on which they also were to pay state visits to Sweden, Denmark and Norway, Ambassador Paléologue was briefed extensively on his duties in the imminent future. It may thus not come as a surprise that His Excellency discovered, as he entrusted to his diary on July 29, that "yesterday evening [i.e. July 28] the Austro-Hungarian Government ordered the general mobilization of the army," (302) a most decisive and exciting event which would have been even more significant had it truly happened.

Nonetheless, the danger remained that an unprovoked Russian mobilization, limited or not, might fail to provide the nexus required for France's participation in the coming war, and Paléologue, as Albertini shows in detail,⁶¹ took it upon himself to represent the glorious nation at St. Petersburg with the understanding that he needed to effect a Russian general mobilization, for only this would compel Germany to mobilize herself in support for Austria-Hungary and only this scenario promised to bring in England on the side of France and Russia.

Thus when Poincaré and Viviani made landfall at Dunkirk early on July 29, they were greeted, as the president remarked in his memoirs, "by a united France," (303) while War Minister Messimy gave his feelings the following expression:

⁶⁰ There is no doubt that the Austrian mobilization order against Russia - as opposed to against Serbia - was not given until 12:23 on July 31st (i.e. a day later), as a reaction to the Russian step - not, vice versa, the Russian order on the 30th as a reaction to Austrian mobilization, as a forged telegram from Ambassador Paléologue in the post-war French document collection wanted to establish. (304) Moreover, for technical difficulties, in the Austrian order of July 31, the first day of mobilization "was named as 4th August. What this meant in practice was that not a man would have to report to the colours before 5th August, since the first day of mobilization was given to the men to arrange their own affairs." (305) Hence no Austrian threat to Russia existed on July 29/30.

⁶¹ Cf. Albertini, Volume II, pp. 582 - 626.

"Right at that very moment my attention turned to the Russian Army. The two General Staffs had long ago formed the habit of working together. General Dubail in 1911 and General Joffre in 1912 had been in Russia working on joint plans with the Supreme Command. Through our Military Attaché, by the channel of the Foreign Ministry and our St. Petersburg Ambassador, I urged with all my might that, in spite of the slowness of Russian mobilization, the Tsar's armies should as soon as possible take the offensive in East Prussia." (306)

It was the result of Poincaré's genius and Paléologue's ministrations in St. Petersburg that a nationalist and revanchist French policy could not only be maintained despite the losses the Right encountered in the parliamentary elections of spring 1914, but that public opinion - as soon as Mme. Caillaux was acquitted on July 28 - could be re-focused on the necessity of war with Germany.

In St. Petersburg, Ambassador Paléologue had continued a policy of unconditional support for Russian military measures, not only during his conferences with Sazonov on the 24th and 25th but also, perhaps more decisively, on the fatal day of July 28, when he backed Russian mobilization by confirming "the complete readiness of France to fulfil her obligations as an ally in case of necessity." (307) Far from slowing down Sazonov by pointing out that under the present circumstances Russia was contractually obliged to consult Paris before ordering mobilization, he chose not to inform the French caretaker government⁶² - Poincaré and Viviani were still at sea - of the true character of Russia's call to arms.

Meanwhile in Paris, "whether from apprehension or foresight, the War Minister Messimy, who was receiving reports of German war preparations from various points of the frontier especially from Alsations, had already before the return of Poincaré and Viviani obtained the approval of the Cabinet for effective military measures," which began on July 26. (308) The bourgeois and nationalist French press proactively deplored Austrian rapaciousness and German aggression - neither the Austrian declaration of war nor German mobilization had yet occurred - and on the 27th, Joffre noted in his diary his having asked Messimy "to endeavor through all possible means to make sure that, if hostilities broke out, the Government of St. Petersburg would immediately take the offensive in East Prussia, as had been agreed in our conventions." (309) In view of the situation, Izvolsky felt thoroughly entitled to report to Sazonov on July 29 in three telegrams that:

"The firm attitude adopted by the French press still continues. It is very severe on the Austrian aggression and the patent complicity of Germany and unhesitatingly agrees that this touches us very closely and that we cannot remain indifferent. As to their solidarity with us, this question simply does not come under discussion as being a perfectly unequivocal fact. This is the line taken by all journalists including such prominent personalities of various parties as Pichon, Clemenceau, even Jaures and the pioneer of anti-militarism, Herve." (310)

And then:

"The same spirit prevails even among a great proportion of the Radical-Socialists. The attempts at anti-military demonstrations by the revolutionary party are not taken seriously by the Government and it intends to take strong measures against them.

The preparatory military measures are the subject of a detailed report by Count Ignatiev [the Russian Military Attaché in Paris]. The morale in military circles and the Supreme Command is very high. A further special detailed report on the press will follow." (311)

The first paragraph, at least, seemed to imply that there existed a minority still opposed to war. Yet Izvolsky's last telegram brought more glad tidings:

"Viviani has just assured me that the determination of the Government to proceed in perfect unity with us finds support in the widest circles and parties, including the Radical Socialists who, he said, had just handed him a resolution expressing their full confidence and the patriotic sentiments of their group." (312)

⁶² Headed by Jean-Baptiste Bienvenu-Martin, Minister of Justice and acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Adolphe Messimy, Minister for War.

Meanwhile in St. Petersburg, on the evening of July 29, Paléologue discovered yet more evidence of Austro-German aggression, alerting the Quai d'Orsay via telegram that "according to information received by the Russian General Staff, the general mobilization of the German Army will be ordered tomorrow, 30 July." (313) That this message had no more basis in reality than Paléologue's previous news on Austrian mobilization did not hinder the ambassador's friends at the Foreign Ministry, who were naturally inclined to trust their colleague, to inform the nation's newspapers, whose excitement subsequently reached new heights, of the German perfidy.

Yet the sensational news of the Russian general mobilization, ordered on four in the afternoon on the following day, July 30, and, as mentioned above, technically illegal without France's prior notification and consent, could not incite Paléologue to urgent action - in a routine telegram sent at 9.15 pm he casually mentioned that "the Russian government had decided to proceed secretly to the first measures of general mobilization," (314) a disclosure that was still considered far too revelatory of French knowledge, association, and, perhaps, culpability and subsequently erased in the official French document collection on the origins of the war.

Through the good offices of Poincaré and Paléologue, France was by now securely on board of the Russian steamer - London was the next port of call. But ere we cross the English Channel we shall stop in Berlin.

UN BALLO IN MASCHERA

France will have but one thought: to reconstitute her forces, gather her energy, nourish her sacred anger, raise her young generation to form an army of the whole people, to work without cease, to study the methods and skills of our enemies, to become again a great France, the France of 1792, the France of an idea with a sword. Then one day she will be irresistible. Then she will take back Alsace-Lorraine.

Victor Hugo

An outstanding peculiarity of the crisis of July 1914 was that it was handled by a cast of characters ill-suited to the promotion of peace. Christopher Clark observed:

If we survey the European chancelleries in the spring and early summer of 1914, it is impossible not to be struck by the unfortunate configuration of personalities. From Castelnau and Joffre to Zhilinsky, Conrad von Hötzendorf, Wilson and Moltke, the senior military men were all exponents of the strategic offensive who wielded a fluctuating but important influence on the political decision-makers.

In 1913-14 first Delcassé, then Paléologue, both hardliners, represented France in St. Petersburg; Izvolsky, still determined to avenge the "humiliation" of 1909, officiated in Paris. The French minister in Sofia, Andre Panafieu, observed in December 1912 that Izvolsky was the "best ambassador in Paris," because he had "personal interests against Germany and Austria," and his Russian colleagues noticed that whenever he came to speak of Austrian policy vis-a-vis Belgrade his voice took on "a palpable tone of bitterness which had not left him since the time of the annexation."

The excitable Austrophobe Miroslav Spalajković was now at the Serbian ministry in St. Petersburg - his old enemy Count Forgach was helping to formulate policy in Vienna. One is reminded of a Harold Pinter play where the characters know each other very well and like each other very little. (1)

Yet behind the facades, their masculinity was of the brittle sort. If we look at the photographs - as Stefan Zweig observed, their pompousness makes us laugh - that portray their stiff officiousness, burliness, lovingly tendered moustaches and uncomfortable clothing, we recognize vanity - men for whom appearances were the armour of the soul and who projected overdrawn notions of ego and honour as well as clandestine dread of volatility and impotence upon the battlefield of diplomacy, and when words failed they substituted blood - that of younger men.

At no time was the "honour" of nations an important if imaginary quality like then, in whose pursuit tens of millions of men were slaughtered and maimed. The sizable egos of fin-de-siècle manhood, however, came with that sort of irascibility which the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia had so successfully targeted. Of course, the Serbian government - well aware of its laxity towards terrorist organizations - could have taken the unruffled point of view that ten years later no one would care whether a few Austrian detectives had pursued their own investigations in Belgrade or not, and it would seem that except for the rapid Russian intervention Pasić would have grudgingly submitted to the Austrian yoke. But once the

honour of the Serbian nation - not always its most conspicuous characteristic - was in doubt, acquiescence was impossible - et pereat mundus.

While St. Petersburg discussed the mobilization scenarios, Bethmann Hollweg in Berlin presented Wilhelm's idea of an Austrian HALT IN BELGRADE, as the Kaiser's proposal of the 28th came to be known, to Vienna on the evening of the same day - albeit in a watered-down form. In his initial cable, a sceptical Hollweg minimized the impact of His Master's Voice by cautioning Tschirschky to carefully "avoid giving the impression that we wish to restrain Austria." (2) But on the next day, July 29, the chancellor changed his tune, perhaps cautioned by Lichnowsky's warnings that England seemed likely to stand by the Triple Entente yet considered a demarche in the direction of a HALT IN BELGRADE solution possible, and instructed Tschirschky to:

"Please communicate the enclosed¹ to Count Berchtold at once, adding that we regard such compliance on the part of Serbia as suitable basis for negotiations on condition of an occupation of Serbian territory as a guarantee." (3)

Initially, Hollweg had been less than pleased with Wilhelm's initiative for, essentially of little flexibility, he was loath to give up his policy of 'localization' of the conflict, although it became more likely with every passing day that Russia could not be neutralized. The chancellor did not believe that Russia would resort to war, but if she threatened to do so, he was prepared to call the bluff. It was no bluff, it turned out - Russia, sure of France and almost sure of Great Britain, did not blink. The prospect of unintended consequences occasioned a change in the chancellor's opinion - Wilhelm's offer of mediation began to make sense. In the night of July 29/30, Hollweg instructed Tschirschky to tell Berchtold that:

"We are, of course, prepared to fulfill our duty as allies, but must decline to let ourselves be dragged by Vienna, irresponsibly and without regard to our advice, into a world conflagration." (4)

Suddenly the dynamics of Austro-German relations had exchanged their polarity - initially the German government had urged Vienna to speedy action, so as to pre-empt all these problems that now towered before the two, while Austria had been her usual perfunctory self - now, as Hollweg sought to pull the emergency brake, Berchtold turned a deaf ear. But instead of doubling his efforts, Hollweg quickly fell back into apathy, submitting his own fate and that of the nation to the preordained but unfathomable offices of Divine Providence. It should have been clear by then that the best scenario available to the German chancellor was to urge on, nay, force the Kaiser's proposal, HALT IN BELGRADE, down Berchtold's throat, no matter the cost.

But this Hollweg did not do - he did not correspond at all with Tschirschky on the matter on this morning of July 30. Instead, he spent the day preoccupied by the tumultuous commotion but little constructive discussion precipitated in Berlin by the Tsar's ominous telegram of 1:20 am, July 30 - the one that mentioned the "military measures ... decided five days ago," and the delayed receipt of Pourtales's message sent on 3 pm the day before, informing Berlin of the Russian mobilization. The bad news sparked the Kaiser's famous comments:

"So that [the five days mentioned by the Tsar] is almost a week ahead of us. And these measures are supposed to be of defence against Austria, who is not attacking him!!! I cannot commit myself to mediation any more, since the Tsar, who appealed for it, has at the same time been secretly mobilizing behind my back. ... It is only a manoeuvre to keep us dangling and increase the lead he has already gained over us... According to this the Tsar with his appeal for my help has simply been acting a part and leading us up the garden path! That means I have got to mobilize as well!" (5)

The Kaiser's well-known excitability led him, for the moment, to ignore that Jagow only two days earlier had pointed out that a limited Russian mobilization would not, by itself, trigger the cases foederis with Austria, nor per se necessitate

¹ A copy of Lichnowsky's telegram from London, which laid out an Italian proposal to get the Great Powers, i.e. France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy to formulate terms under which Serbia could accept the Austrian ultimatum in toto, and cited Sir Grey's opinion that it might be "possible to bring about an understanding as to the extent of Austrian military operations and demands," which in turn Hollweg thought close enough to the HALT IN BELGRADE proposal that England would also support the latter. (6)

German countermeasures. But now the problem resurfaced that monarch and chancellor did not quite trust each other, and research has since established that Bethmann Hollweg had no qualms to redact the diplomatic materials he presented to his sovereign as he saw fit. Yet he shied away from confrontations, and it seems that he never asked Wilhelm outright whether it was to be peace or war. But with every day passing by, the latter case became the more likely outcome.

Neither was Hollweg much versed in military matters. At 11:30 on the same morning of July 30, he cabled Lichnowsky a plea to ask Sir Grey "to insist on the dropping of military preparations by France and Russia on grounds that 'Austria will hardly be able to refrain from answering Russian mobilization with corresponding measures.'" (7) It seems that Hollweg had no idea of the impossibility of his demand.

Meanwhile the Kaiser took the initiative and telegraphed "Nicky" a reply - drafted by Jagow, it would seem - to the latter's demand to explain the divergences between Wilhelm's first telegram and Ambassador Pourtales's request:

"Best thanks for telegram. It is quite out of the question that my ambassador's language could have been in contradiction with the tenor of my telegram. Count Pourtales was instructed to draw the attention of your Government to the danger and grave consequences involved by a mobilization; I said the same in my telegram to you.

Austria has only mobilized against Serbia and only a part of her army. If, as is now the case, according to the communication of you and your Government, Russia mobilizes against Austria, my role as mediator you kindly entrusted me with, and which I accepted at you[r] express prayer, 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." (8)

As usual in this crisis - one is tempted to say - the protagonist places the responsibility for peace or war firmly on his counterpart's shoulders. Around noon - still July 30 - another telegram from Pourtales materialized, in which he provided details of the Russian mobilization but pointed out explicitly that the military districts vis-a-vis Germany, i.e. Warsaw, Vilnius and St. Petersburg, had not yet been alerted. Nonetheless, the topic of an eventual German counter-mobilization came up again, and it seems that around this time, noon, July 30, Moltke, who had joined the debate, changed his mind in favour of it.

His argument was that the German predicament - facing a two-front war - explicitly obliged the Austrian army to tie up at her Galician border enough Russian forces to enable the small German army defending East Prussia to hold out until the battle in France was won and reinforcements could be thrown east. Given the presumed sluggishness of Austria's mobilization, her army consequently needed to begin immediately to prepare against Russia - which in turn would constitute the *casus foederis* for Germany and precipitate her own mobilization. Yet on the day before, nay, even on the same morning, Moltke had expressly denied the necessity of a German mobilization and even refused to argue in favour of the proclamation of the "State of Imminent Danger of War" (i.e. the step before mobilization, Germany's equivalent of the Russian "Period Preparatory to War").

But around noon on July 30, Moltke changed his mind. We are not sure of the motives, but Albertini, who investigated the details at length, reasons as follows:

As we have previously noted, the docility and circumspection manifested by Moltke during July 29 and Falkenhayn's air of resignation were in all probability entirely due to the Kaiser's pacific state of mind at Potsdam on that date. As long as the Sovereign was openly in favour of peace, his Chief of Staff did not venture to ask for war.

Then came Wilhelm's marginalia and footnotes to the two telegrams from St. Petersburg, which gave the impression that he no longer meant to use his influence to compose the conflict and intended to the contrary to mobilize. This was just what Moltke wanted.

Doubtless regretting what he had said to Fleischmann,² fully understanding the difficult position of Austria, knowing how the Schlieffen mobilization plan was designed to work, he did not wait for the statesmen to straighten out their ideas but suddenly dropped his cautious attitude and launched out into vigorous action in favour of war.

But how did he find out so soon about the Imperial marginalia? There is much likelihood that somebody very high up at the Wilhelmstrasse, who, like him, thought that war was necessary, kept him abreast of all that went on there. When Pourtales's telegram arrived at 11:30 am on the 30th with details of the districts in which Russian partial mobilization was being operated, Moltke learnt immediately of its contents. He in his turn at once informed Fleischmann, who at 1:15 pm telegraphed the news to Vienna, adding: "Chief of General Staff [Moltke] requests communication of decision taken by you [Conrad]."

It may be objected that this proves nothing, since the news from Pourtales was of a nature to be communicated at once to the Chief of Staff. But we shall see farther on that a very important telegram sent to Vienna by Bethmann on the evening of the 30th to persuade Berchtold to agree to the Halt in Belgrade and mediation also became at once known to Moltke, who thus had time to enter protest against it and get the instructions contained in it cancelled.

This could only happen if someone in a very high position was in league with him. Therefore nothing was more natural than that as soon as Moltke's informant read the Kaiser's comments and thus learnt what he had in mind; this personage at once let the General know that he could go ahead without fear of being at cross-purposes with his Imperial master. Only in this way can it be explained that at 10 am Moltke was speaking to Fleischmann in terms which made Conrad feel doubtful of German support, while about noon he was suddenly saying the very opposite. ...

Many other factors confirm that the Kaiser's words throwing up the role of mediator and contemplating mobilization leaked out. The Berlin correspondent of the Neues Wiener Tagblatt, on information from one of the Kaiser's Aides-de-Camp, telegraphed to his paper at 10 am announcing German general mobilization. The same news was given at 1 pm in an extra edition of the Berliner Lokal-Anzeiger, a semi-official publication regularly read by the Kaiser and much in favour in high circles. This extra edition contained the [false, ¶] announcement: "We learn that the Kaiser has just ordered the immediate mobilization of the German army and navy." (9)

In hindsight, such leaks, telegrams and headlines - causing much consternation - were typical products of a palace camarilla, obvious attempts at forcing Wilhelm's hand against the chancellor's resistance. Yet in a Cabinet meeting at 5 pm, at which Falkenhayn and Tirpitz partook as well, Bethmann Hollweg stood his ground, if barely, unwilling to yield to the generals before Berchtold's reply to the HALT IN BELGRADE proposal had come in. Addressing the conference, the chancellor admitted that while "all the Governments - including that of Russia - and the great majority of the nations are in themselves pacific," the situation "had got out of hand", but he "did not yet, as long as his démarche had not been rejected by Vienna, give up hopes and endeavours for the preservation of peace." (10) Again, we observe firm planting of the responsibility on an opponent's shoulders; the German chancellor had passed the decision over peace or war on to Berchtold as if it were of no significance. That Hollweg thus had voluntarily relinquished the diplomatic control over events was noted, among others, by General Wenninger, the Bavarian Military Attaché in Berlin, who cabled to his boss, the Bavarian Minister President Lerchenfeld that "if Vienna rejects today's German attempt at mediation, there will today follow imminent danger of war [SIDW] and then mobilization." (11)

Hollweg's lack of urgency in the HALT IN BELGRADE matter indicates that he expected a negative reply from the Ballhausplatz. The same scepticism asserted itself in yet another telegram, this one from Wilhelm to Francis Joseph, proposing that "after occupying Belgrade or other places, Austria should make known her terms," but, instead of urging

² Captain in the Austrian General Staff and Conrad's liaison officer with Moltke, who was told as late as 10 am on the 30th, two hours before Moltke changed his mind, that the "Russian [partial] mobilization [is] still no reason for [German] mobilization; not until commencement of state of war between Monarchy and Russia." (12)

the Austrian Emperor on to the constructive task merely lets him know that "I should be most sincerely obliged to you if you would let me know your decision as soon as possible." (13)

On the evening of July 30, the Chancellor composed another telegram to his man in Vienna - on Wilhelm's proposal the Austrian government had not yet replied to Tschirschky - which became known, for its serial number, as Telegram # 200. It demonstrates Hollweg's strange overemphasis on appearances and in particular on being able to blame the war, should it arise, on Russia:

"If, as is to be presumed from Your Excellency's telephone conversation with Herrn von Stumm,³ all compromise, in particular Grey's proposal,⁴ is rejected, it will scarcely be possible to cast the blame on Russia for the European conflagration now about to break out. At the Tsar's request His Majesty (Wilhelm) has undertaken mediation at Vienna, because he could not decline without arousing the irrefutable suspicion that we wanted the war.

The success of this intervention is, it is true, hampered by the fact that Russia has mobilized against Austria. This we have communicated today to England with the addition that we had already in a friendly way suggested at St. Petersburg and Paris a suspension of Russian and French military measures, and therefore felt that we could only make a fresh démarche in that direction by an ultimatum which would mean war.

We have therefore made strong representations that he [Grey] on his side should act in this sense at Paris and St. Petersburg and have just received a corresponding assurance through Lichnowsky. If England succeeds in these efforts while Vienna rejects everything, then Vienna brings documentary proof that it really wants war into which we shall be drawn, while Russia remains free from blame.

That will put us in an untenable position in the eyes of our own people. We can therefore only recommend most urgently that Austria should accept Grey's proposal, which in every respect preserves her status. Your Excellency should at once hold most emphatic language in this sense with Count Berchtold, and, if necessary, with Count Tisza." (14)

As Luigi Albertini correctly pointed out, it was very doubtful whether such cautious language was to have any effect in Vienna. What Bethmann Hollweg should have done was to cable directly to or even telephone Berchtold that unless Austria stopped her military operations - which at any rate had not yet reached a level at which a practical invasion of Serbia was possible, as opposed to some shelling of Belgrade from the distant Austrian border - Germany would not recognize the *casus foederis*. That, however, in the face of the Russian mobilization, would amount to suicide for both nations. The problem was that Hollweg and Grey attempted to stop the second, i.e. Austrian, mobilization, without having an idea how to or the means to stop the first, i.e. earlier, Russian mobilization. This was a problem without a viable solution - for an Austrian government that would not call to arms against a looming invasion would commit the highest form of treason.

It took a few hours for the diplomats and generals of both countries to figure out the contradictions, but when they finally did, more strange telegrams were added to the tally of the day. Zimmermann at the Foreign Office abruptly ordered Tschirschky at 11:20 pm on the night of July 30-31, en clair, "Please do not for the time being carry out Instruction No. 200," (15) and prepared the following explanation to be sent later in the night under the chancellor's signature:

"I have suspended the execution of Instruction No. 200 because General Staff just tells me that military preparations of our neighbours, especially on the east, compel speedy decision if we do not wish to expose ourselves to surprises. General Staff urgently desires to be informed definitely and with the least possible

³ Wilhelm von Stumm, Baron von Holstein's successor as Political Director at the German Foreign Ministry 1911-1916.

⁴ Sir Grey had told Lichnowsky - under the mistaken assumptions that "the French were using their whole influence at St. Petersburg in the cause of peace," and that "war preparations had not taken place" - that he would talk to the French and Russian Ambassadors, Cambon and Benckendorff, and hoped, together with the initiative of the Kaiser, to arrive at a solution in which Austria could accept HALT IN BELGRADE as a gage for the Serbians' fulfilment of conditions laid out by the Four Powers not party to the conflict, i.e. France, Germany, Great Britain and Italy. (16)

delay of decisions taken in Vienna, especially those of a military nature. Please act quickly so that we receive answer tomorrow." (17)

The odds of those who thought that it had been Zimmermann who had been informing Moltke all along the day were rapidly improving, and the brusque order to disregard Entry No. 200 seemed to invoke a military attempt to usurp the powers of the civil government. Eugen Fischer⁵ put it this way:

"The General Staff rose in protest. If the Chancellor's telegram [# 200] were to have the effect of making Vienna postpone still longer its mobilization against Russia, then German mobilization would not be able to get under way.⁶ The Russians would be enabled to complete theirs against Germany undisturbed. It just would not do. Nobody could put up with that! Had the Chancellor still not recovered from his 'English malady' [play of words on this popular German name for 'rickets']? Herr Zimmermann got to hear of it and made himself the spokesman of the General Staff with the Chancellor. Tschirschky received a message countermanding the instruction. He was not to carry out the order and, on the contrary, was to press Vienna for a military decision." (18)⁷

To change his mind over a military scenario was Moltke's right, even his duty, yet the matter in which he expedited the consequences of his ruminations over the heads of the civil government invoked the likeness of a dress rehearsal for a military coup. It appears that, having lost the argument with Hollweg at the 5 pm conference whether or not to declare SIDW, he sent, interestingly, not for Captain Fleischmann, but for the Austrian Military Attaché at Berlin, Lieutenant-Colonel Biehner, who is quoted in Conrad's memoirs to have related that:

"It may have been about 2 pm.⁸ His Excellency, as far as my memory serves, came from the Foreign Ministry and was extremely agitated, as I had never before seen him. Moltke said he would think the situation critical unless the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at once mobilizes against Russia. This would give the casus foederis for Germany. Bring about honourable arrangement with Italy by assurances of compensation. ... Reject renewed English démarche for maintenance of peace. Last means of preserving Austria-Hungary is to fight out (durchhalten) a European war. Germany with you unconditionally." (19)

Again, this comes to us via Conrad's memoirs, which are far from being above the suspicion of bias. The Austrian Chief of Staff was in a bind of his own making, the problem of the incompatibility of the major Austrian mobilization plans. They will be discussed further in the next chapters, but their wide-ranging consequences merit a brief introduction, here provided by Hew Strachan:

Conrad's real problem was that the offensive interpretation of his defensive task, given the rising strength of the Serbian and Russian armies, and the acceleration in Russian mobilization times, looked increasingly impossible to fulfill. ...

Conrad calculated that he would need twenty divisions to defeat Serbia, leaving a minimum of twenty-eight to go to Galicia. He therefore organized his army in three parts. Eight divisions, forming the 5th and 6th

⁵ Eugen Fischer, Historian and secretary of the "Reichstag Commission of Inquiry into War Guilt" in the post-war Weimar Republic.

⁶ One must keep Hollweg's blame game in mind. The casus foederis, i.e. German mobilization, was to arise automatically only following the proclamation of full Austrian mobilization against Russia (in the alternative, inoperable in 1914, Turkey); an Austro-Serbian conflict did not qualify.

⁷ Richard Grelling described Zimmermann's self-appointed task as "to undo the next day the cloth that the Chancellor, like another Penelope, had woven during the night - particularly in the night of 29-30 July - and by skillful countermeasures, orders, counter-orders, disorders, render harmless (from the point of view of the General Staff) Bethmann's feeble mediatory démarche with Berchtold." (20)

⁸ It must have been later, after the 5 pm conference.

armies were to go to Serbia, this being sufficient to hold the empire's south-eastern frontier. The 1st, 3rd, and 4th armies, a total of twenty-eight divisions, were to go to Galicia.

The balance of twelve divisions, the 2nd army, was to constitute a reserve, to go to Serbia if Russia did not support its Balkan ally and go to Galicia if it did. The main Galician group would be concentrated between the fifteenth and nineteenth days of mobilization. However, the 2nd army's mobilization and concentration would both be separate and later. In the event of war with Russia, it would not arrive in Galicia until between the twenty-first and twenty-fifth day. Austria-Hungary could not begin active operations in Galicia until after then.

Moltke warned Conrad that Russia's mobilization was becoming faster, and in February 1914 correctly calculated that two-thirds of the Russian army would be mobilized by the eighteenth day, not the thirtieth as in the past. ... [But] Conrad was, to a considerable extent, in the hands of his railway department. In 1912-13 both the operations and the railway departments assured Conrad that a decision to mobilize against Serbia could be replaced by a full mobilization against Russia without disturbance to the overall deployment scheme.

The significant expectation in this note of comparative optimism was that one option would replace another; no consideration was given to the two operating in tandem. What followed was the decision - in itself a reflection of railway capacity - to mobilize and concentrate the 2nd army separately. (21)

Yet the harsh light of actuality moved quickly to disclose the limitations of the plan. Following Conrad's instructions, the railway department had developed a Plan R like Russia, which endeavoured the transport of thirteen corps to Galicia while three corps defended the Serbian frontier, and a Plan B like Balkan, that would send seven corps to attack Serbia while nine corps were to cover the Austrian border along the Carpathian Mountains against the Tsar's legions. But Plan B would jeopardize the whole German strategy of defeating France first by leaving East Prussia and the Posen area with few defences unless there was an Austrian presence strong enough to fix the Russian troops in the Polish salient.

Unlike England and France respectively France and Russia, the German and Austrian general staffs had not undertaken bilateral consultations, much less actual meetings, and thus "in July 1914 the two Central Powers were still remarkably ignorant of each other's plans." (22)

Indeed it was not before July 30 that Moltke began to contact Conrad directly. The Austrian mobilization against Serbia, ordered in the night of the 25th at the expiry of the ultimatum, had, while not yet showing outward signs of progress, resulted in the activation of railway schedule B, and since Conrad had to decide where to send 2nd Army by the fifth day of mobilization - which was technically August 1, discounting Sunday, July 26, and Monday, July 27, the "personal day" given off - Moltke's urgent demands beginning on this July 30 narrowed the options and indicated that Austria would have to reverse her mobilization's direction and turn the bulk of her troops against Russia. There existed, however, the slight problem that...

... on 30 July Conrad's first reaction to Germany's pleas that he look to Russia was to abide by his original decision [for Plan B]. Since the first day of actual mobilization had been 28 July and major movements were not due to begin until the following day, 31 July, it was still possible for the 2nd army to be redirected towards Galicia. But Conrad asked the railway department to find a way to continue the movement of the 2nd army to Serbia and simultaneously begin the mobilization of the 1st, 3rd, and 4th armies against Russia.

The implementation of partial mobilization against Serbia had been sufficiently lackadaisical thus far to suggest that, even at this late stage, Conrad's request might have been met without undue chaos. That, however, was not the view of the railway department. Although told to prepare such a plan in November 1913, it had done nothing, nor had it made any approaches to the Germans with regard to the possible exploitation of their underused south-eastern railways.

It concluded that simultaneous mobilization could only be achieved by delaying the first day of mobilization against Russia until 4 August. Conrad accepted this arrangement. On 31 July he issued the order for the mobilization of the Galician front, specifying 4 August as the first day. But that evening the persistent pressure from Germany -- and also Hungary (Tisza was worried about Romania coming in on the Russian side) -- caused Conrad to change his mind about the 2nd army; he now asked the railway department to send it north.

He was told it was too late. The railway system could not cope with yet another simultaneous movement in two different directions. Its head, Johann Straub, argued that units would be split up, unless those already in the Balkans were brought back to their home garrisons and then re-embarked for Galicia. The 2nd army would therefore have to continue on its journey to the Balkan front, and then turn round and go back to Galicia. (23)

On this July 30, these practical tribulations were still a part of the future, but on the evening of the day Moltke finally decided to contact Conrad directly. In grandiose overstepping of his legal authority, he advised his Austrian colleague by telegram to "Mobilize at once against Russia. Germany will mobilize." (24) It was this cable that prompted Berchtold, who saw it on the next morning, July 31, to famously inquire - rhetorically - "Who rules in Berlin, Moltke or Bethmann?" (25) More decisively, however, Hollweg never repudiated the suspension of Telegram No. 200, thus letting his hopes evaporate and his reliance on Divine Providence take over. Moltke knew how to press his attack into the chancellor's retreat, bolstering his arguments with a message he had meanwhile received from Conrad (sent late on July 30, it was not delivered until early morning July 31), who informed him that "On the basis of His Majesty's [Francis Joseph] decision the resolve is: to go forward with the war against Serbia. Mobilize remainder of army, assemble in Galicia." (26)

A second telegram from Conrad, received in Berlin around 11 am on July 31, informed Moltke that Austrian "General mobilization is expected today. 4 August first day of mobilization. Deployment and operation against Serbia still remain on their previous scale." (27) Conrad was well informed. At a meeting of the Imperial War Council on the morning of July 31 in Vienna summoned by Berchtold, the Foreign Minister informed its members that "I have sent for you because I had the impression that Germany was beating a retreat, but now I have the most reassuring pronouncement from responsible military quarters," i.e., from Moltke. (28) This reflects exactly the events as they had transpired in Berlin, and it allows us to assume that, had Berchtold not been saved by Moltke's intrusion from the obligation to declare his position on HALT IN BELGRADE, Yes or No, the Foreign Minister would have answered in the negative - the decision made easier by the suspension of Telegram No. 200.

Thus Moltke's cold coup d'état had succeeded more drastically than he had, perhaps, expected. The Crown Council dutifully decided to recommend the declaration of general mobilization, and around noon on July 31, the eighty-four-year old emperor signed the order that became the epitaph of his realm. Yet Moltke felt that Conrad still saw the war against Serbia (the only one, really, which he had a chance to win) as his main task, but this, as pointed out above, would leave East Prussia almost defenceless to a Russian invasion and could not be allowed. First Moltke sent a few polite messages, but when Conrad continued his usual prevarications, the former felt the need to clarify the stakes; this he did by ending his next telegram to Conrad with "We expect from Austria immediate active participation in the war against Russia." (29)

Meanwhile in Berlin, the news of the Russian general mobilization ordered on the evening of July 30, and possible verified by Moltke's own sources⁹ before Pourtales's official telegram arrived in Berlin at 11:40 am, July 31, had much diminished the chancellor's position, for Moltke's and Falkenhayn's arguments for declaring SIDW immediately and following it up with the mobilization order now had a more urgent quality. It seems that the Chancellor had promised the generals on the preceding evening to rethink and decide the possibility of declaring SIDW by noon of the 31st, depending

⁹ Theobald von Schaefer reports a conversation between Moltke and General Hall, Chief of the XX Corps stationed in Allenstein, East Prussia, early on the morning of July 31, in which Hall describes the red mobilization posters posted in Mlava, the Russian town across the border, of which he had a grab commando get a specimen at utmost speed. The report was confirmed by a First Lieutenant Köstring, who had just arrived from Moscow before the border had been closed and verified that full mobilization had been ordered across Russia. (30)

on more information from Russia, but by then had resolved on the far more radical tactic of confronting Russia with an ultimative request to stop mobilization within twelve hours. Wilhelm von Stumm, the new director of the Political Section at the Wilhelmstrasse, explains the circumstances under which this decision was reached:

"Early on 31 July I again called up the Ambassador [Tschirschky, at Vienna] asking him to let me know that the answer of the Vienna Cabinet [to HALT IN BELGRADE] might be expected not to be in the negative. Herr von Tschirschky at the same time told me that - as counter-measure to the Russian mobilization of the military districts of Kiev, Odessa and Kazan - general mobilization had been ordered. In the course of the forenoon I was summoned to the Reichskanzlerpalais to a conference presided over by the Imperial Chancellor, von Bethmann Hollweg, and attended by the Chief of General Staff and the War Minister, at which a discussion took place on the increasingly threatening bulletins about Russian military measures also on the German frontier. The discussion was proceeding when the telegram from Count Pourtales was brought in announcing the general mobilization of the Russian army and navy. A decision was then taken to address the well-known ultimatum to Russia, summoning her to suspend her military measures." (31)

Hollweg's ability to resist the generals dwindled, and it seems that he remembered Bülow's successful démarche of 1909 that had threatened Russia with war unless she abided by the Austrian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Perhaps a similar message now would do the trick, call the Russian bluff, or at least bring confirmation of war. As insurance for the latter case, so to say, the generals finally "wrung out" of Wilhelm his consent to SIDW, which was officially declared at 11:55 am on July 31 with the avis that unless a positive reaction from St. Petersburg was received within twelve hours, mobilization was to follow within the next forty-eight hours. (32) Then the following telegram was issued to Pourtales at 3:30 pm:

"In spite of the still pending negotiations for mediation and although we had up to the present taken no measures for mobilization, Russia has mobilized [her] entire army and navy, that is also against us. By these Russian measures we have been compelled for the security of the Empire, to proclaim imminent danger of war, which does not yet mean mobilization.

But mobilization must follow unless within twelve hours Russia suspends all war measures against ourselves and Austria-Hungary and gives us a definite assurance to that effect. Please notify M. Sazonov of this at once, and wire hour of notification. I know that Sverbeev [the Russian Ambassador at Berlin] yesterday telegraphed to St. Petersburg that we had mobilized, which to the present hour is still not the case." (33)

Negligence or propaganda has presented this telegram as a threat of war instead of, as it is plain to see, the pointing out of the military necessity of getting even in terms of mobilization. Russia has been mobilizing in the one or other form since the Crown Councils of July 24 and 25, that is, almost a week; unless Russia was to stop, Germany was obliged to mobilize herself - not to do so was equivalent to national apocalypse.

Less clear is what moved Bethmann Hollweg to send the following telegram to Wilhelm Baronet Schön, the German Ambassador at Paris, for there was no chance of a positive French reply:

"In spite of our still pending mediatory action and although we ourselves had taken no mobilization measures, Russia has decreed mobilization of her entire army and navy, thus also against us. We have, thereupon, proclaimed imminent state of war, which must be followed by mobilization unless within twelve hours Russia suspends all war measures against ourselves and Austria. Mobilization inevitably means war. Pray ask French Government whether it will remain neutral in a Russo-German war. Answer must be given within eighteen (18) hours. Wire at once when demand presented. Utmost speed necessary." (34)

A postscript added that if Paris were miraculously willing to declare neutrality in a Russo-German war, Marianne would still have to deliver the fortresses of Toul and Verdun to the temporary possession of the German army - to be returned after the defeat of Russia. This demand was awesomely presumptuous, literally unheard-of, and eminently suitable to raise French enmity to a fever pitch.

Yet if war was what it had to be, Hollweg needed to resolve the issue of Great Britain's inclinations - neutrality or support of the Entente. Around 3 pm on this July 31, the Chancellor informed Lichnowsky in London of the declaration of SIDW and its possible repercussions, but did not mention the twelve-hour ultimatum to St. Petersburg. Of this complication he advised Lichnowsky only in a second telegram, dispatched at 8:30 pm. Yet in the meanwhile, around 3:25 in Berlin, a message from Lichnowsky arrived, summarizing his latest discussion with Sir Grey:

"In regard to Austro-Russian talks, he [Grey] thought everything depended on Austria's making such a concession that Russia would be in the wrong if she rejected it, then he would be in a position to put pressure on Paris and St. Petersburg. He would have to be in a position, at need, to motivate an attitude of reserve on the part of England by some tangible evidence of Russia's bring in the wrong.

He let it clearly be understood that he could sponsor the idea of not immediately taking the part of France only if he were in a position to point to some evidence of a conciliatory spirit [on the part of Germany]. He repeatedly stressed that England was bound by no treaties. I surmise that he has in mind his original suggestion for the suspension of military operations in Serbia." (35)

Prima facie the proposal seemed a continuation of British mediation, but a closer look at its implications reveals Sir Grey's bias in favour of the Entente. Naturally, the "concession" Austria would have to make would be the suspension of her general mobilization - which she had declared only two hours earlier in the wake of the realization that Russia had been mobilizing since the 26th, five days earlier. To suspend her preparations now, however, would ensure military catastrophe, be tantamount to national suicide. If one were to ask simply why it should not be Russia - her mobilization five days ahead - to make a concession, Sir Grey's seemingly even-handed proposal reveals its imbalance. Indeed, one might ask, why Germany, which had not yet mobilized, should evidence "conciliatory spirit" and not, for example, France - perhaps using her influence to moderate Russia - is another question Sir Grey never seems to have asked himself.

Moreover, since the tardiness of the Austrian mobilization against Serbia - inclusive of the aforementioned railway problems - had not yet resulted in other military action than the brief shelling of Belgrade from the distance, there were no other military operations on Serbian soil Austria might suspend - unless Grey would propose to end Austrian mobilization in tandem with Germany foregoing mobilization altogether - while allowing Russia, and subsequently France, as per the *casi foederis* of the Entente, to continue their preparations - and in logical consequence damning the Central Powers to military impotence. Grey's instructions to Sir Goschen, his man in Vienna, illustrate this doublethink: if, he said, "Germany could get any reasonable proposal put forward which made it clear that Germany and Austria were striving to preserve European peace and that Russia and France would be unreasonable if they rejected it, I would support it at St. Petersburg and Paris and go to the length of saying that, if Russia and France would not accept it, His Majesty's Government would have nothing to do with the consequences, but, otherwise, I told [the] German Ambassador that if France became involved we should be drawn in." (36)

This meant that if France and Russia were behaving badly, England would remain neutral instead of threatening them with war; in the case of Germany and Austria misbehaving, Great Britain's reaction would be to declare war instead of remaining neutral. This remarkable interpretation of British non-partisanship has eluded the attention of quite a number of historical observers. It is true that Austria's policies were to a degree motivated by a fear that letting Serbia get away with murder - literally - would end her status as a Great Power, but a Whitehall faction used the same argument for Great Britain: "If," wrote Eyre Crowe, the 'well-established harbinger of the German menace' on July 31, "England cannot engage in a big war [it] means her abdication as an independent State." (37) The problem remained for Albion to find an official excuse to support France, which by no simple means of imagination could be threatened by a war between Austria and Serbia. Finally, Britannia had to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of choosing friends; Sir Buchanan, England's Ambassador at St. Petersburg, opined, in a letter to Sir Arthur Nicolson, Grey's Undersecretary of State, in April 1914 that "Russia is rapidly becoming so powerful that we must retain her friendship at almost any cost," (38) thus spinning further Nicolson's own ruminations of 1912, in which he decided that...

...it would be far more disadvantageous to have an unfriendly France and Russia than an unfriendly Germany. [Germany can] give us plenty of annoyance, but it cannot really threaten any of our more important interests,

while Russia especially could cause us extreme embarrassment and, indeed, danger in the mid—east and on our Indian frontier, and it would be most unfortunate, were we to revert to the state of things which existed before 1904 and 1907." (39)

Meanwhile in St. Petersburg, Count Pourtales had asked for and was granted an audience of the Tsar on the afternoon of the same day, July 31, to inform Russia of Germany's declaration of SIDW. In his memoirs, the ambassador reported:

"I particularly emphasized that the [Russian] mobilization was a threat and a challenge to Germany. My impression was that His Majesty ... had not yet fully grasped the seriousness of the situation. When I remarked that the only thing which in my opinion might yet prevent war was a withdrawal of the mobilization order, the Tsar replied that I, as a former officer, must realize that on technical grounds a recall of the order issued was no longer possible." (40)

There followed quite a number of telegrams being sent forth and back between Russia and Germany on July 31 and August 1: some more "Nicky" and "Willy" messages but also various diplomatic proposals detailed between Sazonow in St. Petersburg and Hollweg and Jagow in Berlin, but the underlying situation remained unchanged: Russia was continuing the mobilization that she had begun five days earlier, while Austria's mobilization against Russia - officially declared only a few hours earlier - would not begin until August 4, and Germany had not yet mobilized at all.¹⁰ Whatever the true motives underlying Sazonov's protracted diplomatic activities on that July 31 were, they could not fool the Serbian Premier Pasić, who wrote to his Chief of Staff, Radomir Putnik, on the same day:

"The reports from our Minister in St. Petersburg declare that Russia is now talking and drawing out the negotiations in order to gain time for the mobilization and concentration of her army. When that is complete she will declare war on Austria." (41)

At 11:10 pm Western Russian time Hollweg's ultimatum landed on the desk of Pourtales, who brought it immediately to Sazonov's attention. In their conversation, the issue resurfaced whether German mobilization irrevocably meant war, and in a telegram to all Russian ambassadors on the morning of the next day, August 1, Sazonov advised them that "upon my asking whether [German mobilization] was equivalent to war the Ambassador answered that such was not the case, but that we should be extraordinarily near to war." (42) Yet in this context it must be pointed out, as Albertini and others have remarked, that in his memoirs Sazonov describes his state of information as different and far more complete, his having been "for several days prepared for this step on the part of the Berlin Cabinet,"¹¹ I clearly realized that the cause of peace upon we had spent endless efforts was lost irretrievably, and that in a few hours the ultimatum would be followed by the last and final step." (43)

Given the temptations of self-service that many of the memoirs reflecting on these days, the authors of which had the utmost interest to absolve themselves from any responsibility for the subsequent catastrophe, we cannot state with complete certainty which of Sazonov's statements are correct, but we know that the Russian army was far from surprised by the eventual German declaration of war -- the miraculous quickness of Pavel Rennenkampf's 1st Army showing up in East Prussia on August 15, weeks earlier than anticipated, indicates that the Russian military well used the time provided by Sazonov's diplomatic prevarications.

Meanwhile in Paris, around noon of July 31, the French government remained in official ignorance of the Russian general mobilization decided on the day before -- we recall that Ambassador Paléologue had veiled the most important news in the entirely harmless cloak of the Russian government having "decided to proceed secretly to the first measures of general mobilization." Given that Paléologue had lunched with Sazonov only six days earlier - on July 24, the day following the conclusion of the Russo-French summit of July 20-23 - one may assume that Poincaré in Paris was informed of the true situation either by the use of the code-word "general" or independently, through the French military intelligence service. (44)

¹⁰ Christopher Clark reports that from July 28 on the German War Minister General von Falkenhayn was able to order a few preparative measures that could be kept secret: purchases of wheat, the setting up of extra guards on railways and the clandestine assembly of additional troops in the garrison towns. (45)

¹¹ i.e., the simultaneous proclamation of general mobilization and declaration of war on Russia.

Yet while the president was able to project statesmanlike calm, Joffre, the French Chief of Staff, pushed the alarm buttons. Pursuant to his information or imagination, he warned the government in a note he handed to Massimy, the Minister of War, at 3:30 pm on July 31st - seemingly unaware of the Russian general mobilization - that:

"If the Germans, under cover of diplomatic conversations, continue to take the various steps comprised in their plan for mobilization - though without pronouncing that word - it is absolutely necessary for the Government to understand that, starting with this evening, any delay of twenty-four hours in calling up our reservists and issuing orders prescribing covering operations, will have as a result the withdrawal of our concentration points by from ten to twelve miles for each day of delay; in other words, the initial abandonment of just that much of our territory. The Commander-in-Chief [i.e. Joffre himself] must decline to accept this responsibility." (46)

The French government consequently authorized *couverture*¹² around 5:15 pm, July 31, although it would appear that the cabinet was left entirely unaware of the Russian general mobilization proclaimed twenty-four hours earlier - although it had already been referenced in a telegram from Jules Cambon in Berlin, arriving at 4:25 pm in Paris, and various cables from newspaper correspondents and wire agencies. It was not before 8:30 pm, July 31, 10:30 pm in St. Petersburg, that the French government was officially informed of the Russian measure by Paléologue through the following, laconic telegram: "An order has been issued for the general mobilization of the Russian army." (47) No comment. Nothing else.

The newspapers proved full compliance with their patriotic duties and informed the citizens of all aspects of the German menace, and hundreds of German spies were discovered and arrested who had been so efficiently pursuing their evil work that no suspicion whatsoever had been hedged that they could be anything but simple folk. Then Joffre's military spies - just as effectively - brought dire warnings of increased German military activity, and thus arose the rare situation that Paris had to inform Paul Cambon, her ambassador in Berlin, of German mobilization instead of the other way around, as one would assume to be the normal case. In a telegram sent to Cambon at 12:30 pm on July 31, Prime Minister Viviani alerted his envoy that "tens of thousands" of German reservists had been mobilized by individual notification (!) - while this momentous news lacked any basis in reality, it still suited Joffre's purposes. (48)

The last hours of the day raised even more important issues. The German Ambassador Schön called at the Quai d'Orsay around 7 pm and dutifully informed Viviani of the German eighteen-hour ultimatum. He also asked for his passport - a clear indication that a negative French reaction was expected and, by his leaving, the ambassador would break off diplomatic relations between the countries. Viviani asked him, however, to wait until the expiry of the ultimatum, i.e. tomorrow, August 1, twelve noon, at which point he was to present the answer of the French government.¹³

In this hour Poincaré and Viviani seem to have realized that the Russian general mobilization, whose existence was now official, changed the game, forced them to readjust their perceptions - it even narrowed their public options. Not only declared Article II of the Franco-Russian Military Convention explicit French consent to be obtained before Russia was to proclaim general mobilization against Austria mobilizing alone - i.e. without Germany - an unprovoked Russian mobilization against Austria (even if it subsequently brought in Germany) would not per se constitute a *casus foederis* for France and in particular not a defensive one - had there not been the Balkan inception scenario, which, alas, had to be hidden from Britannia.

If Russia assumed the role of the attacker instead of suffering attack by Austria, the situation could get seriously out of hand - England might remain neutral and Italy join the Central Powers. In "Das Plaidoyer Poincaré", the German historian Max Count Montgelas described the quandary that resulted:

¹² i.e., pre-mobilization measures, the French version of the German SIDW or the Russian "Period Preparatory for War"

¹³ There arose a discussion after the war (detailed at length at Albertini, III/pp.73-80), whether or not Schön had explicitly informed Viviani that - due to her having to wage a two-front war - German mobilization would invariably mean war. The post-war declarations of Poincaré, Viviani and Paléologue held that they had not been aware of this proviso - had they been cognizant of this fact, they would have, naturally, chosen a different path.

As a result of the unpardonable silence on Russian war preparations, of its unpardonable advice [to Ignatiev] ¹⁴ on the evening of 30 July, the French Government had put itself in a disastrous position. The Russian decision [for general mobilization] forced it to choose between peace and war. A decision for peace would have necessitated a condemnation of the Russian measures and would thus probably have led to the collapse of the Franco-Russian alliance, on which French policy had been based for twenty-four years. A decision for war involved deceiving the French people, the Allies, and, as far as possible, the neutral nations, in regard to the true facts. (49)

Many a government obliged to choose between two unattractive scenarios has chosen the one that allowed it to advance on its path without admitting error, and thus Poincaré and Viviani decided to proceed. A solution had to be found - for Poincaré played the blame game just as Bethmann Hollweg did - that (1) allowed France to save face at not being informed by Russia of her general mobilization, (2) would assure the participation of Great Britain in the war, (3) keep Italy out of it, and (4) could be sold to the world press. In fact, Albertini writes, the "only course left open to the French Government was to feign ignorance ... in short, tacitly to accept the fact of Russian mobilization without saying so." (50)

The bourgeois newspapers of Paris sought to improve the national mood by continuous patriotic reportage - too patriotic, perhaps, when a few minutes before 10 pm on the evening of this July 31 the prominent French socialist Jean Jaures was assassinated with two bullets fired by a complete stranger, one Raoul Villain, while the former was having a late dinner in a Paris café. It did not help matters that the assassin was acquitted at a subsequent trial, although the crime had been witnessed by all the restaurant's patronage as well as numerous passers-by - the offense only heightened the chauvinistic fever the newspapers had been busy to inflame. (51)

The noncommunicative approach in the matter of the Russian mobilization had worked so far on the diplomatic front, although the cabinet postponed Joffre's demand for a French sequitur on the grounds that more information from Jules Cambon in Berlin should be awaited. But then the good news of the day came in. Opening an entirely different can of worms, the British Ambassador Bertie approached Viviani with a message from Sir Grey, who asked "whether the French government is prepared to engage to respect neutrality of Belgium so long as no other Power violates it. A similar request is being addressed to [the] German Government. It is important to have an early answer." (52) Only minutes later, a message from Rome came in, advising Viviani confidentially that "the Italian Government was inclined to regard the Austrian attack on Serbia as an act of aggression of a nature to absolve it from action in favour of Austria." (53) This did not truly come as a surprise, but, as the adage holds, every little bit helps.

In the question of respecting Belgium's neutrality Sir Grey had found the key to unblock noninterventionist resistance from the liberals' benches. Already on July 29, "the cabinet had agreed to Churchill's request as First [Sea] Lord for a precautionary mobilization of the fleet," and on the next day Churchill ordered the Royal Navy to deploy on war stations - without the authorization of Prime Minister Asquith. (54) The Conservative Party - in parliamentary opposition - as well as THE TIMES and the rest of the Tory press marshalled the cause for a continental engagement, while Sir Henry Wilson, Director of Military Operations and "a staunch supporter of intervention who was seen often these days darting between the French embassy and the Foreign Office, alerted the Conservative leadership that Britain was in danger of abandoning France." (55) He had been the architect of the Franco-British military talks and was prepared as can be to see the British Expeditionary Force take on the Germans in north-eastern France - as close as possible to the Belgian frontier, in the triangle formed by the towns Maubeuge, Le Cateau and Hirson, where, according to the pre-war staff talks, the BEF would be deployed. (56)

The military situation, or, rather, the state of various mobilizations on this evening of July 31 presented the following picture: (1) Russia had partially mobilized against Austria since the 25th and extended general mobilization against Germany on the 30th; (2) Austria had ordered partial mobilization against Serbia on the evening of the 25th -

¹⁴ Bruno Margerie, the Political Director at the Quai d'Orsay, and War Minister Adolphe Messimy advised Izvolsky, the Russian Ambassador, and Ignatiev, the Russian Military Attaché at Paris, on July 30, to make sure that the Russian mobilization "should be of as little overt and provocative a character as possible," which in turn would allow France to determine her "military measures and even speeding them up, as long as we refrain, as far as possible, from mass transport of troops." (57) Given that these discussions occurred on July 30, one may reflect on the implied admission that French mobilization was already proceeding.

although no operations were to be expected until August 12 or so - and, following the news from St. Petersburg, proclaimed general mobilization against Russia at noon, July 31; (3) Serbia had begun general mobilization around 3 pm, July 25, a few hours before her reply to the Austrian ultimatum; (4) France, we may infer from the words of Messimy and Margerie, seems to have been secretly mobilizing since the 29th, parallel, perhaps to the original Russian general mobilization order of July 29 which the Tsar later rescinded, and (5) Germany had not mobilized at all, except for the preliminaries Falkenhayn had been able to order on his own. From these facts some observers have drawn the conclusion that Germany was behind all of it, and the order to put the Royal Navy on war stations on July 30 allows speculation as to whether it was perhaps a reaction to German non-mobilization.

Yet the situation - critical enough - was given a renewed and altogether perilous impetus by Sir Grey's bringing up the question of Belgian neutrality, which quickly focused the centre of diplomatic attention upon the British foreign minister. While possessing a great passion for nature, a keen bird-watcher and well-versed angler, yet of unremarkable intellectual achievement, Edward Grey was still a British foreign secretary who subscribed to the traditions of Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, and Henry John Temple, Lord Palmerston, who had steered Great Britain through her "transition from its ad hoc imperialism of the first half of the 19th century to the formal, steam-driven empire built on science and trade of the second half." (58) In the words of Robert Massie, Grey "based policy exclusively on what he perceived to be the interests of England." (59)

After Castlereagh's success over Napoleon had removed the imminent continental threat, England was able to return to divide et impera, her fleet preserving the balance of power that guaranteed that her economic pre-eminence remained unchallenged - until the emergence of Wilhelmine Germany and the post-civil-war United States. Maritime dominance, nay, invincibility in the English Channel was the sine-qua-non of British national security, for "since the sixteenth century, England had been unwilling to see the Low Countries in the hands of a great power," which was why she "had fought Philip II of Spain, Louis XIV, and the Emperor Napoleon." (60) Just as Napoleon's sovereignty over the Belgian and Dutch coast, especially the Schelde estuary and Antwerp, was beyond British tolerance in the early nineteenth century, neither could their possession be granted to Wilhelmine Germany. And since it was not Germany that threatened English interests in Asia - Persia, Mesopotamia, India and China - and thus had to be mollified but Russia, it followed that good relations with the latter were more important than with the former. This coincided neatly with the French belief that "the preservation of the Entente was a more important objective in French foreign policy than the avoidance of war." (61)

The question of Belgium's neutrality - guaranteed by an international treaty concluded in 1839 by Great Britain, France, Russia, Austria and Prussia - was itself a relic of the Napoleonic wars. Before the Russo-French Entente, no one contemplated the case that Belgium's neutrality could be breached from the east, i.e. by Germany - the intention of the treaty was to impede a renewed forced alliance or outright conquest of the Low Countries by another Napoleon. Naturally, European generals had realized that the plains of Flanders would allow a far easier transit of armies from France to Germany or vice versa than the heights of the Vosges or hilly Lorraine, and the French general staff realized that "success against the Germans would thus depend upon two things: the presence of a British expeditionary force on the Allied western front, and a rapid offensive through Belgium that would enable the French forces to circumvent the heavily fortified terrain of Alsace and Lorraine." (62)¹⁵

The suitability of the Belgian issue resulted from the fact that Germany really had no choice - if she vowed to respect Belgian neutrality now, she could not well invade later, but if she declined to affirm her obligations, she would only play into the hands of Grey and the interventionists. That Belgian neutrality would be breached sooner or later was a virtual certainty, but Grey's bringing it up now was his contribution to the blame game; it would be of paramount importance that Germany breached it first, so that her ruthless aggression could be properly bewailed and in their subsequent violation of the same Belgian neutrality the Entente could argue military necessity.

The tactical implications of Germany's strategic situation were as simple as could be explained to a child - as one commentator observed - and the basics of the German war plan à la Schlieffen were known to every general staff officer in

¹⁵ The Germans had erected fortified positions around Metz and along the Moselle River to Diedenhofen (Thionville) in Lorraine, and at Strasbourg and Mulhouse in Alsace, which mirrored the French belt of the forts Verdun, Toul, Epinal and Belfort.

the world. Germany was facing a quasi-simultaneous onslaught on two fronts,¹⁶ and a march through the Low Countries was the only way to outflank the French defensive position.

About 11 am on August 1, the German Ambassador Schön showed up in the Quai d'Orsay one hour early, to receive Viviani's reply to the German ultimatum, which he summarized in a subsequent telegram to Berlin as follows:

*"In reply to a definite and repeated question whether France would remain neutral in a Russo-German war, [the] Prime Minister replied **hesitatingly**: France would do what her interests dictated. He motivated the vagueness of this statement by the fact that he regards [the] situation as changed since yesterday.*

*An official communication has been received here that **Sir Ed. Grey's proposal for a cessation of military preparations on the part of all concerned has been accepted by Russia in principle** and that Austria-Hungary has announced that she will not infringe Serbian integrity and sovereignty." [Emphases 1, 2 in original, 3 added] (63)*

The proposals Viviani communicated to Schön did not exist: Russia was far from willing to accept a halt of her mobilization - in principle or otherwise - and there were no fresh declarations from Vienna. Notwithstanding this minor problem, Viviani asserted these imaginary propositions in a circular to French ambassadors worldwide:

"I put him [Schön] in possession of the facts as to the pourparlers which have been carried on since yesterday:

(1) An English compromise, proposing, besides other suggestions, suspension of military preparations on the part of Russia, on condition that the other Powers should act in the same way; adherence of Russia to this proposal.

(2) Communications from the Austrian Government declaring that they did not desire any aggrandizement in Serbia, nor even to advance into the Sanjak, and stating that they were ready to discuss even the basis of the Austro-Serbian question at London with the other Powers.

*I drew attention to the attitude of Germany, who, abandoning all pourparlers, presented an ultimatum to Russia **at the very moment when this Power had just accepted the British formula (which implies the cessation of military preparations by all the countries which have mobilized)**¹⁷ and regarded a diplomatic rupture with France as imminent. ...*

*It would not do to exaggerate the possibilities which may result from my conversation with the German Ambassador, for, on its side, **the Imperial Government continues the most dangerous preparations on our frontier. However,** we must not neglect the possibilities, and we should not cease to work towards an agreement. **On her side France is taking all military measures required for protection against too great an advance in German military preparations.** She considers that her attempts at [a] solution will only have a chance of success so far as it is felt that she will be ready and resolute if the conflict is forced on her." [Emphases added] (64)*

In addition to nonexistent Russian agreements to stop mobilization and Austrian declarations of territorial désintéressement, Viviani claims the necessity of France mobilizing in response to equally absent German preparations. We do not know whether Viviani was aware or not, and deceived or not, by another of Ambassador Paléologue's canards from St. Petersburg: this time a telegram, sent at 4:25 am in the night of July 31 to August 1, which acquainted Viviani and Poincaré with the sensational yet fictitious news that "the German Ambassador has just declared to the Russian Government that the general mobilization of the German army will be ordered tomorrow morning, 1 August." (65)

¹⁶ Indeed, as discussed below, both France and Russia executed immediate attacks into Germany: the French Plan XVII started what became known as the Battle of the Frontiers, while the Russian Plan 19 G permitted attacks by First and Second Army into East Prussia beginning on August 15.

¹⁷ Some observers have noted that the problem for Viviani could have been worse had these proposals in fact existed - for in adopting them, France would have to counsel Russian demobilization without being able to demand the same of Germany, which had not yet mobilized.

The importance of this telegram for post-war French mythology is illustrated by the fact that Poincaré's memoirs claim more than once that the German decision for mobilization "was taken at Berlin as early as yesterday [i.e. July 31], whereas we ourselves on the contrary had delayed ours." (66) Albertini pointed out that France had caught herself in a trap of her own making, for "Viviani's falsehoods can only be explained by (1) his embarrassment at having to admit that Russia had mobilized and was not demobilizing, and that France had not requested her to do so or thought she ought to do so and was, on the contrary, on the point of ordering mobilization herself; [and] (2) the intent to make it appear that not only had Russia and France the most pacific intentions but that even Austria had the same, so that it was Germany alone who desired to bring about a war." (67)¹⁸

After Schön had left the Quai d'Orsay, Viviani returned to the Palace Élysée, where - around noon - he obtained from President Poincaré and the cabinet the order for general mobilization (unanimously, Albertini notes) which was eventually promulgated at 4 pm afternoon, August 1. Viviani's motivations the reader may judge by contemplating the following memorandum he drew up during the cabinet meeting and had subsequently signed by everybody present:

"For some days the state of Europe has been considerably deteriorating, and despite the efforts of diplomacy the horizon has grown dark. At the present moment most of the countries have mobilized their forces. Countries whose constitutional and military legislation do not resemble our own have, without a previous decree of mobilization, begun and continued preparations equivalent to actual mobilization and in fact effecting it in advance. France ... has now taken the first essential measures for safeguarding her territory. ... Mobilization is not war. In the present circumstances it appears, on the contrary, the best means of assuring peace with honour." (68)

Some observers have noted that Viviani's rationalization of France's proclaiming mobilization exuded an air more of an "uneasy conscience" (69) than of confidence.¹⁹ When Viviani returned to the Quai d'Orsay to meet Schön again, the German showed him the aforementioned instruction from Hollweg on the demand for the French forts Toul and Verdun that he had received in the meantime. It seems that the ridiculous demand was not discussed for long, but that Viviani informed the perplexed Schön (who was partout unable to receive confirmation from Berlin of the purported Russian agreement to demobilize) of the French mobilization order, presumably exercised, as Izvolsky wired to Sazonov from Paris, "in answer to German mobilization," (70) although, as Viviani assured Schön, it presaged "no aggressive intentions" toward Germany. (71) This expression of pacifism, however, did not exactly correspond to the following wire sent by Ignatiev, the Russian Military Attaché at Paris, to Sazonov in St. Petersburg, informing him that "the War Minister [Massimy] expressed a wish (1) for influence to be used with Serbia to induce her to take the offensive more speedily, (2) for daily reports on the German army corps deployed against us, [and] (3) for an announcement of the date of the opening of our offensive against Germany. The preferred direction of our offensive still is Warsaw-Posen." (72)

After the assertion of peaceful intentions, the Entente proceeded with the important task of making the Austrian mobilization appear to precede that of Russia, a timing that should be favourably reflected in the international press and in the judgement of posterity. We have seen that such considerations induced Viviani to invent the fib that Russia had declared her compliance with an English proposal to stop mobilization, so that Germany, which mobilized secretly and did not submit to the British proposition, could easily be identified as the true purveyor of war. But there remained a chance of history learning that no secret German mobilization had existed save for Falkenhayn's extracurricular activities - yet, it was pondered in the Palace Élysée, if Austrian mobilization could be shown to have preceded Russia's, which then simply had reacted to an obvious provocation, the responsibility for the war was to remain with Germany for her failure to rein in Austria.

¹⁸ Hew Strachan commented on France's attitude that "preservation of the Entente was a more important objective ... than the avoidance of war," that "the principal problem confronting Poincaré was how to achieve the former without appearing so uncaring about the latter that France prejudiced either its international credibility or its domestic unity. The memory of France's entry to the war of 1870, when it had forfeited both, loomed large in his calculations." (73)

¹⁹ Albertini discusses Viviani's vexations in detail (III, pp. 105 — 108).

In his thorough style, Luigi Albertini dedicates a whole chapter of no less than fifty-three pages to "The Legend that the Austrian General Mobilization Preceded that of Russia" (Vol. III, Ch. 3, pp. 112-165), and details much editing, replacing and outright falsifying of documents officially published after the war by the French government, all of which reflect Germany's resolve on war. This is not to say that such thoughts were absent from the thinking of some German decision-makers, but a valid claim requires not the adding of falsifications.

One example may suffice here to describe the workings of French editors on official documents. Ambassador Paléologue's abovementioned brief - and more than twenty-four hours late - telegram, which officially informed the French government of the Russian general mobilization and was received in Paris at 8.30 pm on July 31 simply stated "An order has been issued for the general mobilization of the Russian army," yet mutated in the *LIVRE JAUNE FRANCAIS: DOCUMENTS DIPLOMATIQUES 1914* to the following text, to make the case for the necessity of Russia's mobilization:

"As a result of the general mobilization of Austria ... the order for the general mobilization of the Russian army has been given ... Really she [Russia] is only taking military measures corresponding to those taken by Germany." (74)²⁰

Thus Paléologue's words suddenly acquired a much greater degree of entelechy. Berlin, meanwhile, was waiting for the French and Russian responses to the ultimata. Bethmann Hollweg appeared at a forenoon session of the Bundesrat, the upper German chamber, composed of representatives of the thirty-two states, to acquaint the deputies with the events of the last days. His summary of the preceding day was:

"Yesterday [the 31st] was to be the day on which Vienna made the decision to address Russia either on the lines of our proposal or that of England. In either case Austria-Hungary at our request had resumed the direct negotiations with Russia which had been broken off. Yesterday, therefore, Vienna was in negotiation for an understanding. At that moment Russia mobilized her total land and sea forces." (75)

Obviously, it was the time for Uncle Theobald's fairy tale hour, and we may point out two major inaccuracies in the chancellor's remarks: one, Vienna's purported decision to address Russia (on whichever proposal, English or German) simply reflected Hollweg's wishful thinking, for Berchtold had no intention to do so, and two, there were no negotiations to "resume", for neither Sazonov nor Berchtold had truly begun any. Vienna had acquired the German "blank cheque" on July 5, and when Hollweg wanted to cancel it, Berchtold remained silent - this line temporarily out of service.

Just as the chancellor's report to the representatives of the nation had only a fleeting relationship with reality and veracity, so the governments of every country by and large succeeded in filtering the news to their advantage; the citizens

²⁰ To recapitulate: Russia had ordered general mobilization on July 30, mid-afternoon, which Austria followed some twenty hours later, on July 31, around noon, and Germany another thirty hours later, at 5 pm, August 1. The problem here is not to assign blame - the preceding and this chapter should have made clear that there is blame enough for everyone - but that by long repetition in the relevant books these fibs have beclouded, and still becloud, the most simple issues of the origins of the war - as far as French is the language in which they are expressed. Albertini included a long footnote on the French unwillingness to part with cherished, say, improvements of historical veracity, in which he pointed out:

"In a school text-book of 1922 [historian] Jules Isaac had accepted the incorrect version of the order in which the two mobilizations were decreed [i.e. Austria before Russia], but he rectified the statement in the next edition. His example, however, found no imitators. In *UN DEBAT HISTORIQUE*, 1914, he comments that, although for a good many years the point had been settled beyond doubt, eminent French writers were still stating that Russia ordered general mobilization because Austria had done so.

This is true of J. Bainville in *HISTOIRE DE FRANCE* (Paris, 1930); M. Muret in *GUILLAUME II D'APRES LES PLUS RECENTS TEMOIGNAGES*; Marshall Foch in his *MEMOIRS*; V. Giraud in *HISTOIRE DE LA GRANDE GUERRE*, and several others. The historian Emile Bourgeois, in the *MANUEL HISTORIQUE DE POLITIQUE ÉTRANGÈRE*, wrote in 1926 that the Tsar yielded to the requests of his General Staff in consequence of the announcement of German general mobilization made in the special issue of the *BERLINER LOKAL-ANZEIGER* (IV, p. 627), which was not true.

Moreover, French works in general assert that the proclamation of the *KRIEGSGEFAHRZUSTAND* [SIDW] in Germany was the equivalent of the proclamation of general mobilization, 'when the contrary is plain from the message telegraphed to Paris by Jules Cambon on 31 July' and from the German plan of mobilization which the French General Staff had got hold of in May 1914.' (*LES ARMÉES FRANCAISES DANS LA GRANDE GUERRE* (Paris, 1922), I, p. 39; (1936), I, pp. 62-4)." (76)

There are no doubts, Albertini observed, that "the German *WHITE BOOK* and the Austrian *RED BOOK* were incomplete, but they did not contain manipulated documents. The British *BLUE BOOK* had lacunae but no falsifications. Of all the diplomatic books published after the outbreak of the war, it [the French *YELLOW BOOK*] is without doubt the one which least mirrors the truth." (77)

invariably became victims of selective perception - convinced that their own administrations had done all they could to preserve the peace threatened by the neighbour's aggression. Then Hollweg proceeded to inform the deputies that:

"Russia tries to make out that her mobilization is not to be regarded as an act of hostility towards us. If we were to accept this view, we should commit a crime against the safety of our fatherland. We should be in danger of losing the advantage of our greater speed of mobilization. Therefore we have felt ourselves obliged to send an ultimatum to Russia in reply to the mobilization. Her answer is due at 12 noon today. I do not yet know what form it will take. ... The French reply is due at 1 pm. ... If the Russian reply is unsatisfactory and there is no absolutely unambiguous declaration of neutrality from France, the Kaiser will have the Russian Government informed that he must regard himself as in a state of war with Russia brought on by Russia herself and that, as France does not guarantee her neutrality, we must assume that we are also in a state of war with France." (78)

A resolution was then passed by the unanimous vote of the delegates that "in the event of satisfactory declarations not being made by Russia and France, H.M. the Kaiser should cause both of these states to be informed that they had brought about a state of war with the German Empire." (79) We must remark here that this was not a resolution of the Reichstag, i.e. the parliament, as it is often negligently asserted, it was passed by the Bundesrat, in which sat worthies delegated by the princes to act in their stead, not to represent the German people. In fulfilment of what he seemed to perceive was his patriotic duty, Hollweg sent a cable to Pourtales in St. Petersburg, instructing him to present the following note to Sazonov should Russia not indicate her willingness to demobilize:

"The Imperial Government has endeavoured since the beginning of the crisis to bring it to a peaceful solution. Acceding to a wish which had been expressed to him by H.M. the Tsar of Russia, H.M. the Emperor of Germany, in agreement with England, had sought to fulfill a mediatory role between the Cabinets of Vienna and St. Petersburg, when Russia, without awaiting its outcome, proceeded to the mobilization of the totality of her land and sea forces.

In consequence of this threatening measure, not motivated by any military preparations on the part of Germany, the German Empire found itself faced with grave and imminent danger. If the Imperial Government had failed to take measures against this danger, it would have jeopardized the security and the very existence of Germany. In consequence the German Government found itself obliged to address itself to the Government of H.M. the Tsar of all the Russians insisting on the cessation of the said military acts. Russia having refused to accede to this demand and having shown by not having thought it necessary to reply this refusal/attitude that her action was directed against Germany, I have the honour, attitude on the order of my Government, to inform Your Excellency as follows:

'H.M. the Emperor, my august Sovereign, in the name of the Empire, accepts the challenge and considers himself in a state of war with Russia.'" (80)

On the afternoon of August 1, Bethmann Hollweg, Falkenhayn, Moltke, Tirpitz and General Lyncker, the Chief of the Military Cabinet, joined Wilhelm for a Crown Council at the Schloss Palace. On the power of the Bundesrat resolution and his own and the Kaiser's signatures Bethmann Hollweg validated the declaration of war on Russia and the order for general mobilization prepared by Falkenhayn. It was just after 5 pm when Jagow suddenly arrived with news of an important message received from London, which was brought in ten minutes after the generals had departed, eager to promulgate the mobilization order. Lichnowsky had cabled that:

"Sir E. Grey has just sent word to me by [his private secretary] Sir W. Tyrrell that he hopes that he will be able this afternoon, as a result of a council of ministers that is just taking place²¹ to make a statement to me which may prove helpful in preventing the great catastrophe. To judge by a remark of Sir W. Tyrrell's this seems to mean that in the event of our not attacking France, England, too, would remain neutral and would guarantee France's passivity. I shall learn the details this afternoon. Sir E. Grey has just called me upon the telephone

²¹ Lichnowsky sent the wire at 11:14 am London time, i.e. 12:14 pm Berlin local time.

and asked whether I thought I could give an assurance that in the event of France remaining neutral in a war between Russia and Germany we should not attack the French. I assured him that I could take the responsibility for such a guarantee and he will use this assurance at today's Cabinet meeting.

Supplementary: Sir W. Tyrrell urgently begged me to use my influence to prevent our troops from violating the French frontier. Everything depended upon that. He said that in one case where German troops had already crossed the frontier, the French troops had withdrawn." (81)²²

The considerable relief felt in Berlin over this cable - in itself only an announcement of a proposal eventually to follow - induced the assorted honoraries at the palace to draft hurried replies, and their eagerness was only increased by another message which seemed to justify the greatest of expectations. At around 8 pm the following telegram arrived from Lichnowsky:

"As follow-up to [my previous telegram], Sir W. Tyrrell has just been to see me and told me that Sir Edward Grey wants this afternoon to make proposals for England's neutrality, even in the event of our being at war with France as well as with Russia. I shall be seeing Sir Edward Grey at 3.30 and shall report at once." (82)

That sounded even better and the Kaiser ordered champagne. But - what about the mobilization order that had just gone out? Could it be revoked, if necessary, or at least, if French and British neutrality could be achieved, the army redirected, all to the Russian frontier? Wilhelm asked Moltke, who, as he wrote in his memoirs, replied:

"I assured His Majesty that this was not possible. The deployment of an army of a million men was not a matter of improvisation. It was the product of a whole heavy year's work and, once worked out, could not be changed. If His Majesty insisted on leading the whole army eastwards, he would not have an army ready to strike; he would have a confused mass of disorderly armed men without commissariat. The Kaiser insisted on his demand and grew very angry, saying to me, amongst other things: 'Your uncle would have given me a different answer!' which hurt me very much. I have never claimed to be the equal of the Field-Marshal.

Nobody seemed to reflect that it would bring disaster upon us if we were to invade Russia with our entire army, leaving a mobilized France in our rear. How, even with the best will, could England have prevented France from attacking us in the rear! In vain did I object that France was already mobilizing and that a mobilized Germany and a mobilized France could not possibly come to an agreement to leave each other alone. The atmosphere grew more and more excited and I stood in a minority of one.

I finally managed to persuade His Majesty that our concentration of strong forces against France and light defensive forces against Russia must be carried out as planned unless the most unholy muddle was to be created. I told the Kaiser that, once the concentration had been carried out, it would be possible to transfer forces at will to the eastern front, but that the concentration itself must proceed unchanged, or else I could not be responsible for things." (83)

The diaries of the witnesses report much loudness and commotion but Moltke could not be brought to yield; he assented to a temporary halt of some preparations but then "stomped off in a huff, telling his wife that he was perfectly prepared to fight with the enemy, but not with 'a Kaiser like this one.'" (84) The remainder of the council toasted Lichnowsky's messages and themselves with champagne, while Hollweg and Jagow resumed their draft of a reply to London. The Kaiser beat everybody to the clock with a congratulatory telegram to his cousin, the English King George V:

"I just received the communication from your Government offering French neutrality under guarantee of Great Britain. Added to this offer was the inquiry whether under these conditions Germany would refrain from attacking France. On technical grounds my mobilization which had already been proclaimed this

²² This was a fabrication of the French Deuxième Bureau. No German troops were (yet) at the border - the mobilization order had not even been signed at that time.

afternoon must proceed against two fronts east and west as prepared. This cannot be countermanded because, I am sorry, your telegram²³ came so late.

But 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 telephon [sic] from crossing into France." (85)²⁴

Then Jagow telegraphed Lichnowsky, informing him, en clair, as it would seem, that a "detailed report goes off in cipher at the same time as this and requires to be dealt with immediately," and subsequently advised Schön in Paris to "keep the French quiet for the time being." (86) Meanwhile a happy Wilhelm had retired for the night after a late audience with the Austrian Ambassador Szoegyen and a depressed Moltke had returned to his Berlin office - "in a state of despondency," as he admitted in his memoirs. (87) Around 11 pm he was abruptly summoned back to the Schloss to meet a monarch whose elation had given way to sudden ire. The following reply from King George V had just been received:

"In answer to your telegram just received I think there must be some misunderstanding as to a suggestion that passed in friendly conversation between Prince Lichnowsky and Sir Edward Grey this afternoon when they were discussing how actual fighting between German and French armies might be avoided while there is still a chance of some agreement between Austria and Russia. Sir Edward Grey will arrange to see Prince Lichnowsky early tomorrow to ascertain whether there is a misunderstanding on his part." (88)

Thus, in the king's words, Sir Grey's proposal had contemplated a diplomatic understanding, nay, miracle, that might keep the French and German armies at the frontiers refraining from actual combat - a variation on "mobilization is not war", not actual neutrality, i.e. no renunciation of mobilization. William's ire was understandable - the bubble had burst with a loud pop - yet while the Kaiser did not know whence the obvious misunderstanding had come from, it was clear that no offer of French and/or British neutrality would be forthcoming. Hence Wilhelm advised Moltke, who had meanwhile arrived back at Potsdam, "Now you can do as you will." (89)

But how had the chimera come into being in the first place, and on whose error was it based - Grey's or Lichnowsky's? The exchange of telegrams had caused attention enough to merit a subsequent parliamentary discussion in the Commons on August 28, in which Sir Grey was asked about proposals having been made of Franco-British neutrality in a Russo-German war. Grey declared that the proposal was not his but Lichnowsky's and, in his understanding, it concerned an offer of German neutrality not only toward France but also Russia in the case of an Austro-Russian war. Such a proposal, however, could not but run afoul of both alliances, Grey had thought, even if England was not part of either, and thus he had not followed up on Lichnowsky's proposition.

Yet there are reasons to believe, and Albertini details them as usual,²⁵ that Grey indeed came up with a proposal as described by Lichnowsky, even if the latter in a memorandum composed in 1916 politely circumscribes the issue as having arisen - accidentally - from Grey's inquiry whether Germany would ... "remain neutral if France did? I understood that we should then agree to spare France, but he [Sir Grey] had meant that we should remain altogether neutral - towards Russia also. That was the well-known 'misunderstanding.'" (90)

Whether Grey indeed raised the proposal as first described by Lichnowsky or not - and it has been pointed that that Sir Tyrrell also seems to have understood his master in the sense as represented by Lichnowsky's first telegram - the mutual alliances would not have allowed it and the idea proved stillborn. More interesting, and having occasioned quite a historical discussion since, was the quarrel between Wilhelm and Moltke over the question whether the Chief of Staff's arguments in regards to the German mobilization properly reflected the truth - if, say, an agreement along Grey's proposal would have been possible and would have been entered into - could the German armies have been redirected east to meet the Russians?

²³ i.e. Lichnowsky's telegram.

²⁴ The troops referenced by Wilhelm were those of the 16th Infantry Division, who were tasked with the immediate occupation of Luxembourg's important railway switches.

²⁵ III, pp. 380 - 386.

For a long time, historians of all schools - strangely enough - have accepted Moltke's arguments (and their subsequent justification in his memoirs) as obvious and correct while poking fun at the Kaiser's military ignorance. For orthodox historians it was until recently simply so much more water on the mill of German aggression, while a current military analysis on the basis of the recently discovered German documents remains to be written. Yet this finding of documents long believed lost and the subsequent revival of the Schlieffen Plan discussion (see Chapter XVIII) has shed light on some other plans the German General Staff had developed during the tenure of the younger Moltke 1906-1914. While this topic is properly addressed in Chapter XVIII, it may be revealed here that as recently as during the First Balkan War crisis of autumn 1912 an older plan of an OSTAUFMARSCH, an eastern deployment, was updated and - in a pinch - would have been available.²⁶ While we have to take cum grano salis Moltke's contention in his memoirs that he was "convinced that the Kaiser would never have signed the mobilization order if Prince Lichnowsky's dispatch had arrived half an hour earlier," (91) the mobilization of Russia alone would have been ample reason, contractual as well as psychological, for a German reaction - the casus foederis would have arisen in regard of Austria, which in respect would have triggered the same obligation for France in deference to Russia. The Balkan inception scenario had become reality.

The British Ambassador in Paris, Bertie, meanwhile received the following avis from Sir Grey at 5:25 pm, August 1:

"German Ambassador here seemed to think it not impossible, when I suggested it, that after mobilization on western frontier French and German armies should remain, neither crossing the frontier as long as the other did not so. I cannot say whether this would be consistent with French obligations under her alliance.

If it were so consistent, I suppose French Government would not object to our engaging to be neutral as long as German army remained on frontier on the defensive." (92)

In this missive Sir Grey evidenced little familiarity with military affairs. The idea was plainly impossible - for Germany's strategic situation facing an imminent two-front war did not allow her passivity. She had the advantage of the inner lines only as long as she managed to defeat the enemies in detail - France first, then Russia. European generals were familiar with the basics of the Schlieffen Plan - the French Deuxième Bureau had obtained a copy in early 1914, as apparently was Bertie, who cabled back to his boss the following what-the-heck-are-you-talking-about?

"Do you desire me to state to [the] French Government that after mobilization of French and German troops on Franco-German frontier we propose to remain neutral so long as German troops remain on the defensive and do not cross French frontier, and [the] French abstain from crossing German frontier? I cannot imagine that in the event of Russia being at war with Austria and being attacked by Germany it would be consistent with French obligations towards Russia for French to remain quiescent. If [the] French undertook to remain so, the Germans would first attack Russians and, if they defeated them, they would then turn round on the French. Am I to inquire precisely what are the obligations of the French under [the] Franco-Russian alliance?" (93)

Grey understood the rebuke and wired back "No action required now on my telegram No. 297 of 1 August." (94) Yet the whole ado over the impossible scenario cost time that might have been dedicated to other ideas - perhaps different ones than the Belgian neutrality issue to which the diplomatic discussion reverted as soon as the Lichnowsky telegrams were forgotten. In the Belgian question Grey had found the lever to collect eventually support enough for a conservative/liberal ad-hoc coalition to enter the war that the English and French general staffs had planned since 1904. Consequently, he and

²⁶ In the 1912-1913 season a scenario (Grosser Ostaufmarsch - Great Eastern Deployment) was developed that assumed initial French neutrality: four of seven German armies would deploy to East Prussia in an arc behind the Masurian Lakes from Königsberg to Allenstein, while, in the west, the divisions of Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Armies would initially remain at their mobilization points, not immediately be deployed to the French frontier. They would retain freedom of manoeuvre, so that in the case of a sudden French attack - designed to aid the Russian ally with a thrust from the west into Alsace and the Lorraine - the Westheer (Western force) could react to the French offensive as necessary, defend or counterattack. (95) In the 1913/1914 season, this scenario was renamed Aufmarsch II or Ostaufmarsch and prepared as a "study", an abbreviated plan. (96) The American author D.A. Butler mentions a study prepared after the outbreak of the war by General von Staab, head of the Railway Department in the German General Staff, which asserted - in contradiction to Moltke's advice - that a plan existed that could have brought four German armies to the east by August 15 provided that implementation had begun on August 1. It would appear that this plan was based on one of those described above. (97)

Asquith, the Prime Minister, directed the agenda of the British cabinet meeting of the morning of August 1 toward the replies to Grey's inquiry of the French and German government regarding their future observance of Belgian neutrality.

The cabinet expressed its satisfaction with the French response, which undertook to "respect the neutrality of Belgium" and asserted that it "would only be in the event of some other Power violating that neutrality that France might find herself under the necessity to act otherwise." (98) The reply of the German government - given by Foreign Minister Jagow to Sir Goschen, the British Ambassador in Berlin, on the same evening of July 31 on which Sir Grey's telegram raising the issue had been received - exuded hesitancy: Jagow "rather doubted whether they [i.e., the German government, ¶] could answer at all, as any reply they might give could not fail, in the event of war, to have the undesirable effect of disclosing to a certain extent part of their plan of campaign." (99) What Jagow meant was that even a positive reply - say, a reiterated German promise to respect Belgian neutrality - might give away the plan: observing Belgium's (and Luxembourg's) neutrality would mean that the attack would have to be directed at the actual Franco-German border running through Alsace and Lorraine - a thrust at Verdun, the hinge of France's left flank, for example.

But Jagow's response did not fool anyone, for it was generally assumed that Germany would outflank the French fortification belt through Belgium. Vice versa, by moving through Belgium, France could outflank the German fortifications in the Lorraine at Metz and Thionville, and along the Moselle River. On this assumption was based, for example, a report submitted January 9, 1912, to the French Supreme Council of National Defence, which laid out that to prepare against a German attack "it might from the military point of view be advisable to take the initiative in entering Belgium, but from the political point of view the move might carry with it the risk of modifying the attitude of England." (100)

England was the joker in Belgium's hand, her *Deus ex Machina*. Whether it was France or Germany that was threatening invasion, England could be relied on to come to Belgium's aid, yet, equally important, her troops would leave the country after the job was done. England's relatively small but professional army, volunteers all, no conscripts, was expected to deliver essential assistance in defeating the invader, but her relative smallness ensured that military aid would not end in subsequent military occupation. Mindful of the necessity to deny the control of the Channel ports to any and all eventual European hegemons, "exploratory and non-committal discussions" were begun in January 1906 between General Ducarne, the Belgian Chief of Staff, and Lieutenant-General Barnardiston, the British Military Attaché at Brussels. While the former made clear that "Belgium would take up arms against any Power violating her neutrality," it was agreed, for the sake of pragmatism, that "the English should only enter Belgium after the violation of her neutrality by Germany. Plans were drawn up for the landing in Belgium of a British Expeditionary Force of 100,000 men, later raised to 150,000." (101)

Yet this agreement could not constitute a hard and fast military alliance, for such arrangements - incompatible with neutrality - were forbidden by the 1839 treaty just as well. But the doves in the British cabinet, who were in the majority during the August 1 session, undertook a sort of qualitative analysis: if Belgian neutrality would be breached only as far as military necessity seemed to dictate, why therefore enter a great war? While Antwerp and the Schelde Estuary must not be allowed to fall into an enemy's hand, a German troop movement restricted to march through southern Belgium would not endanger these places at all. As Christopher Clark points out, already "on the basis of Anglo-French staff conversations in 1911, Henry Wilson had come to the conclusion that the Germans would choose to cross the Ardennes through southern Belgium, confining their troops to the area south of the rivers Sambre and Meuse; these findings were presented to the 114th meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence. *The same scenario was discussed by the cabinet on 29 July, when Lloyd George showed, using a nap, why it was likely that the Germans would cross 'only [...] the furthest southern corner' of Belgium.* Far from greeting this prospect with outrage, the ministers accepted it as strategically necessary (from Germany's point of view) and thus virtually inevitable. British strategic concerns were focused primarily on Antwerp and the mouth of the Schelde River, which had always been regarded as one of the keys to British security. 'I don't see,' Churchill commented, 'why we should come in if they go only a little way into Belgium.'" [Italics added] (102)

Yet that the merit England placed upon respecting Belgian neutrality was only of relative significance emerged when Lichnowsky asked Grey point-blank the decisive question "whether, if Germany gave a promise not to violate Belgian neutrality, [England] would engage to remain neutral." (103) The British answer was just as evasive as Jagow's reply to Goschen had been - "I replied," Sir Grey wrote, "that I could not say that; our hands were still free, and we were considering what our attitude would be." (104) The cabinet meeting hence remained indecisive, at best - a motion to

deploy the BEF immediately to the continent failed - much to the dismay of Paul Cambon, France's Ambassador at the Court of St. James.

But the fatal decisions of the day were taken in Berlin, and expedited in St. Petersburg and Paris. After the confusion of the Lichnowsky telegrams had settled and sobriety began to reassert its rights, the running out of the twelve hour limit for the ultimatum to Russia placed the German decision-makers under self-created decision-making stress. The last "Nicky" and "Willy" telegrams did not change anything, and Pourtales was dispatched to call upon Sazonov at Chorister's Bridge and deliver the declaration of war. It was around 6 pm local time, i.e. 5 pm Berlin time, August 1, 1914. "With a shaky hand," Sazonov wrote in his memoirs, "Pourtales handed me the Declaration of War." (105).

When the ambassador had left, the Foreign Minister proceeded to have dinner at the British Embassy, while Izvolsky in Paris sought and was granted an immediate audience at the Palace Élysée with President Poincaré, whom he implored for an instantaneous French reaction, i.e., a declaration of war on Germany. The president, alas, explained that he had to decline the request for the moment on account of constitutional procedures (a declaration of war necessitated the approval of parliament), to gain additional time for France's mobilization and for reasons of public opinion - it would make a much better impression if Germany declared war instead of France. "M. Izvolsky would have preferred an immediate and public pronouncement [of war]," Poincaré wrote, "but he ended by contenting himself with our reply and departed with a lugubrious air." (106)

It was clear that Germany's declaration of war put her in the bind of being the official aggressor, notwithstanding the details of the preceding Russian mobilization. Chancellor Hollweg was aware of it, although he confessed that he "did not think that we could have avoided this dilemma." (107) It must be said that the German navy had some reason to dread a surprise British attack in peacetime, as per the example of Lord Nelson's attack on the Danish Navy at Copenhagen during the Napoleonic wars - it was known that Lord Fisher had contemplated such a strike at Kiel in a discussion with King Edward VII in 1908. (108) Yet a naval strike - independent of the result - in and by itself could not win the war for England nor lose it for Germany, and the relatively meagre importance of naval matters in the greater military picture was evidenced also by the fact that Tirpitz himself learnt of the declaration of war to Russia only a posteriori, at the late night conference of August 1 mentioned below.

But in the eyes of the greater part of the international press - and thus of public opinion - which was unaware of Russia's mobilization having begun on July 26 already - Germany's declaration of war on St. Petersburg pointed the finger of blame straight at Hollweg, Moltke and Falkenhayn. This was of utmost importance in London, for without it, "Grey's opponents [in the British cabinet] could have pointed out that Russia and (by extension) France, not Germany, were forcing the pace; the British interventionists would have been deprived of one of their most effective arguments. Recognizing this, Admiral Tirpitz, a navalist who understood the importance of the British role, later posed the angry question: 'Why did we not wait?'" (109)

This question was the more relevant, for because Pourtales's telegram reporting the fulfilment of his mission had not been received, confusion reigned in Berlin and ample time for playing the game long would have existed: in the event, nothing constructive was achieved there until 2:30 am or so in the night of August 1-2, when Hollweg summoned Jagow, Zimmermann, Stumm and a few other senior Wilhelmstrasse officers plus the generals and Tirpitz to an impromptu conference that yielded an "agitated discussion about the declaration of war on Russia - whether we are to be regarded as in a state of war - and the declaration of war on France, which will, they [the generals] say, have to be issued today [i.e., the next day, August 2] because we intend to march through Belgium." (110) In a revealing passage of his memoirs, Tirpitz describes the non sequiturs that reigned over the conference:

"I said I had not quite understood why the declaration of war on Russia had been published before mobilization; I could see also no use in launching the declaration of war on France before we actually marched into France. March through Belgium, according to Ambassador's [Lichnowsky] reports, would immediately have war with England as a consequence. I was not in a position to judge whether army could make any modification on this point, i.e., postpone the march through Belgium."

War Minister arrived, was rather brusque with the Chancellor, saying that the war was there after all and the question of a declaration of war on France was of no account. Moltke arrived and also said it did not matter, the war was there, and that was that. The Chancellor replied that after all we must under international war have some confirmation. Rather violent scene between Chancellor and Moltke, followed by mutual apologies for loss of temper. Moltke said it was known that shots had been fired, first by Russians;²⁷ thereupon the Chancellor: 'Then, of course, the case is clear, that means the Russians have been the first to start and I shall have the declaration of war handed over the frontier by the nearest General.'²⁸

In the question of the march through Belgium Moltke's view was that there was no other way open, we must go through with it. This obviously the only possibility worked out in General Staff's plan; no possibility of interfering with transport mechanism. I said in that case we must at once reckon on war with England. Every day for mobilization so much gained, therefore declaration [of ultimatum] to Belgium as late as possible. It was agreed that this should be kept back until second day of mobilization.

General impression: political leadership has completely lost its head. The reins have slipped entirely out of the Imperial Chancellor's hands. Obviously he had no previous knowledge about the march through Belgium, tried to prevent it. [The Chief of the Legal Section at the Foreign Ministry] Kriege sharply snubbed by Moltke when he tried to make legal objections. General Staff obviously not clear about military, political, and economic significance of a war with England, at all events ruthlessly brushing this whole aspect aside and thinking of nothing but the army and of carrying on a land war.

It came to light that Austria had never even been asked whether she would take the field with us against Russia. It was agreed that this must speedily be remedied; instructions given to Tschirschky. Italy likewise has been given no information about our declaration of war on Russia. Political leadership patently in considerable confusion (derouté). As we left, Moltke, the War Minister, and I were horror-stricken at this confusion." (111)

While Tirpitz's description has to be taken with a pinch of salt - for he was a part of the same government the ineptitudes of which he decried -- it does allow "us to be spectators at a scene of the utmost historical interest." (112) The discussions of these first August days in Berlin prompt feelings of a helpless déjà vu: we never have the feeling that the German leadership is master of the situation. Their proposals are oddly hampered by their inability to bridge the respective political and military points of view - an orgy of non sequiturs - and a general lack of plausibility - unless one should think that fighting Russia, France and Great Britain combined while being shackled with an Austria-Hungary that is much more of a burden than a true confederate is a splendid idea. And Tirpitz's decisive question - why a declaration of war on Russia had been necessary if there were no plans to attack her - remained unanswered. Grey's telegram of the late July 31st on Belgian neutrality, however, told Berlin exactly what the stakes were: a French war through Belgium would bring Great Britain in. This was not truly news - Grey had indicated this to Lichnowsky as early as 1912 - but did Moltke have an answer? As it turned out, he had one - but it complicated matters even more.

Perhaps with the aid of Jagow, the Chief of Staff had concocted a diplomatic démarche to be presented to the Belgian government: Germany asked for free passage for her troops through Belgium while guaranteeing her possessions and independence and promising to pay for all damages caused by German troops. Since it is not often that one meets such proposals, it must first be said that - technically - it was in Belgium's power to grant it. The original treaty of 1839 and various later addenda gave Belgium considerable leeway. A violation of Belgium's status was per se only a violation if the country declared it so: the treaty signatories Great Britain, France, Prussia, Austria-Hungary and Russia had retained for themselves the right to demand free passage of their troops through Belgium - a demand which Brussels could grant or deny. The Belgian government had various options at its beck to apply to unwelcome intruders: they might be allowed to pass under diplomatic protest, they might face token resistance by Belgian soldiers lining the streets but not attacking, or

²⁷ There is no documentary evidence for these events.

²⁸ This reflected the uncertainty of the German government whether the absence of "confirmation", i.e. of Pourtales reporting back to Berlin the fulfilment of his mission, evidenced insubordination - for whatever reason - or whether Russia had received the declaration of war and the malfunction of the telegraph system was simply her first response to it.

they might be met with force. Still, the intervention of the other signatories against an invader depended on the Belgian government's explicit demand for their assistance.

The German demand, which Moltke appears to have drafted on July 26, (113) was redacted by Stumm and possibly Jagow with the result that various editions with minor differences exist. The one that follows is from Jagow to Below-Saleske, the German Ambassador at Brussels, sent around 2:30 pm, August 2:

"Reliable information has reached the Imperial Government of the intended deployment of French forces on the Givet-Namur stretch of the Meuse. It leaves no doubt as to the French intention to advance against Germany across Belgian territory. The Imperial Government cannot but fear that, in spite of the utmost good will, Belgium will be unable without assistance to repel a French invasion with sufficient prospect of success as to afford adequate guarantee against a threat to Germany.

It is a dictate of self-preservation for Germany to forestall the hostile attack. Therefore the German Government would feel the deepest regret were Belgium to regard it as an act of hostility against herself if the steps taken by the adversary oblige Germany in self-defence likewise to enter Belgian territory. To prevent all misunderstanding, the Imperial Government makes the following declaration:

*1. Germany purposes no acts of hostility against Belgium. If Belgium is willing to adopt benevolent neutrality towards Germany in the impending war, the German Government not only engages to guarantee in full measure the integrity and independence of the Kingdom at the conclusion of peace, **but is even prepared to meet in the friendliest spirit any of the Kingdom's demands for compensation at the expense of France.***

2. On the above conditions Germany engages to evacuate the territory of the Kingdom as soon as peace is concluded.

3. If Belgium maintains a friendly attitude, Germany is prepared, in cooperation with the Belgian authorities to purchase all the requirements of her troops by payment in cash and to make good all damage which might be caused by German troops.

Were Belgium to put up opposition to the German troops, in particular causing obstruction by resistance at the Meuse fortifications, the destruction of railways, roads, tunnels, or other key-points, Germany will with regret be obliged to regard the Kingdom as an enemy. In this event Germany would not be able to undertake any obligations toward the Kingdom but would have to leave the later settlement of the relations between the two States to the arbitrament of the sword.

The Imperial Government entertains the definite hope that this eventuality will not arise and that the Royal Belgian Government will know how to take the appropriate measures to ensure that incidents such as those mentioned above do not take place. In this case the friendly ties binding the two neighbour States will become stronger and more enduring.

[Remark by Jagow to Below-Saleske:] I beg your Excellency to communicate the above immediately in strict confidence to the Belgian Government, requesting them to return an unambiguous answer within twenty-four hours. Will Your Excellency inform me at once by telegram of the reception accorded to your communication and the definitive reply of the Royal Belgian Government?" [Emphasis added] (114)

French territory was the carrot, German enmity the stick. Yet was there any chance that Belgium would accept or was the ultimatum simply a ruse? The most recent troubles for Brabant and Flanders had originated in France - first in the guise of the Bourbons, then the Revolution and finally Napoleon. As mentioned above, the independence and neutrality of the Low Countries had been created at the Congress of Vienna with a second Napoleon in mind, not Germans. Louis Philippe had attempted to regain Belgium under the guise of a customs union, and in 1866 Napoleon III offered Bismarck France's permission for a union of the present North German Federation with the southern German kingdoms, i.e. German unification, for Prussia's consent to France's annexation of Belgium and Luxembourg. The war of 1870 nixed the idea. (115)

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, continuing French attempts drew Belgium's public opinion to the support of a cautious pro-German policy, and this change found its political expression in the extended governance of the Catholic Conservative Party, which represented the Flemish northeast - the francophone Liberal Party which dominated in Wallonia remained in opposition. This shift may have been precipitated by the realization that the original concept of the country's neutrality had been compromised by the development of the Franco-British Entente after 1904. The idea had been to preserve the continental status quo - essentially between France and Germany with neither dominating - and thus to preempt a new hegemony. But now England had become the partner of a new apparent hegemony, that is, France, and the nature of Belgian neutrality had been changed from a reciprocal obstacle for both sides to a possible weapon for one of them. As Sir Grey explained to Paul Cambon, the new functionality of the Belgian treaties impersonated "not more a Belgian than an English interest and that England is bound to see that it is respected." (116) Yet that was to benefit Britannia's security directly -- to preserve the equilibrium of power - divide et impera - and was not an issue of chivalry as it has been marketed ever since.

In other words, the original concept of Belgian neutrality had necessitated equal British neutrality - whether or not disguised as "Splendid Isolation" - for it made sense only as long as England refrained from entering continental alliances. But the creation of the Entente had invalidated the whole concept, but by retaining its allure England was able to sponsor Belgian neutrality as a means of thwarting Germany without appearing to do so and retain the beloved role of the defender of small nations.

It helped that relations between Germany and Belgium were irritated by the Kaiser's personal effort. At the occasion of a state visit by King Leopold II of Belgium at Berlin in January 1904, Wilhelm committed the truly awesome blunder of telling him:

"For years and years I have sought in every way to bring about a rapprochement with France and each time I have held out the hand of friendship she has rejected my advances with disdain. ... Now I have enough of it. ... The French want war. Well they shall have it. As for your country, I advise you to prepare. Your army is inadequate; its strength bears no relation to the population figures..... In the tremendous struggle which is about to begin, Germany is certain of victory, but this time you will be forced to choose. If you are with us I will give you back the Flemish provinces which France took away in defiance of all law. I will recreate the Duchy of Burgundy for you. You will become sovereign of a powerful kingdom. Think over my offer and what may be in store for you." (117)²⁹

Once again, diplomacy à la Wilhelm created results opposite of those intended. At 11 am on August 3, Below-Saleske received the Belgian reply, which informed Berlin that the Belgian government rejected the German demands and was "firmly resolved to repel every infringement of its rights by all means in its power." (118) Yet for the moment, despite some reports to the contrary, the German attack had not materialized and the country hoped she might - miraculously - be spared. And as long as no German troops had crossed the frontier, Belgium could not well ask for French and English assistance, although, one suspects, the Entente powers would have readily obliged. For the next thirty-six hours, a strange odium of transience lay over the country - birds did not chirp, it seemed, and the trees cast darker shadows.

Meanwhile in Berlin, Moltke had taken over the reins of governance - if not in nomen then in res - from a hesitant Bethmann Hollweg and urged concentration on the matters at hand - war, that is. He pressed to forgo a German declaration of war on France, for he thought it a useless formality that might only get in the way of the deployment plan's smooth procession. Somewhat belatedly he remembered to inform Rome about the state of affairs and expressed hope for Italian aid - "even if it is only a single cavalry division, that will satisfy me," for this at least would mean that Italy did not defect to the enemy outright. (119)

With both France and Germany now officially mobilizing, fantastical reports of reciprocal border violations were created by foreign ministries, army commands and wire services. Germany accused France of about sixty frontier

²⁹ Bülow reported in his memoirs that it may have been worse. Wilhelm told him he had informed Leopold that "Whoever, in the case of a European war, is not for me, is against me," and when Bülow pointed out that, as King in Prussia, Wilhelm was bound to the 1839 treaty, the Kaiser answered that "if that is how you think, I shall in case of war have to look around for another Chancellor." (120)

violations, reported aerial bombings of Karlsruhe, Koblenz and Nuremberg and decried the wicked attempt of eighty French officers in Prussian uniforms to infiltrate the border at Walbeck. Most reprehensible news was allegedly received from the Lorraine, where a "French doctor with the help of two disguised officers attempted to infect the wells of the Metz suburb of Montsigny with cholera bacilli. He was court-martialed and shot." (121)

France listed twenty-nine border violations by German patrols, nine by aircraft and one by aerial bombardment. Her embassy in London participated in the patriotic duty by informing the British Foreign Office on August 2, in the hope of provoking diplomatic umbrage, that "20,000 German troops have invaded France near Nancy." The recipient was the well-known anti-German senior clerk and pamphleteer Sir Eyre Crowe, who passed the fabricated report on to the cabinet. (122) Yet there is no need to go into the details of the mutual denunciations, for in a rare consensus of the participants' memoirs and historiography, small violations which unquestionably did occur happened "not only contrary to orders but [were] deplored by both General Staffs." (123)

The late evening of August 2 witnessed a continuation of the discussions between the Kaiser, Bethmann Hollweg, Moltke and Tirpitz over the necessity or burden of a declaration of war on France, on which the chancellor insisted - correctly, as per Article I of the Hague Convention of 1907³⁰ - but the military, in particular Moltke deemed superfluous, for her Military Convention with Russia would oblige France to declare war on Germany sooner or later - but this had to happen before the German vanguard crossed the Belgian border, which they would do on the morning of August 4. This was the deadline. The conference brought no decision, and when the chancellor left, the generals continued to work on the Kaiser. While they succeeded - *viribus unitis* - in thoroughly muddling the issue, they failed to convince the monarch. More accusations flew between Berlin and Paris on the next day, August 3, yet the allegations did not improve in significance or veracity. In his memoirs, Schön did not hide his misgivings:

"However desirable it may have seemed for military reasons to turn the moment and account and accuse the French of having started hostilities, the step [of declaring war on France] was too momentous to be taken without careful inquiry into the justification of it.

Even if the alleged hostile acts had actually taken place, it would have been just as rash to attach the importance of a military offensive to them as it would have been unjustifiable in respect of the indiscretions of a few Hotspurs on our side. The French, as a rule so impulsive, were wise enough not to look on these isolated occurrences as a reason for declaring war, and to leave the odium of taking the offensive to us." (124)

But Schön had to follow his orders, and around 6:30 pm on this August 3, made his way to the Quai d'Orsay to deliver Viviani the message that "in the presence of these [French] acts of aggression the German Empire considers itself in a state of war with France in consequence of the acts of this latter Power." (125)

Now it was official - the remaining issues were how England and Italy would react. Unsurprisingly, Italy declared her neutrality, based on the belief that Austria was bringing on the war by her own aggression and Rome could hence not recognize the *casus foederis*; Moltke did not get his cavalry division, and nine months later Italy actually declared war on (her former ally) Austria.

By the late afternoon of August 2, the commotion created in London and Berlin over the Lichnowsky-Grey misunderstanding had abated, and Grey's inquiry on Belgian neutrality and Jagow's response to it moved to the centre of attention. Jagow's evasiveness was not a matter of surprise for Whitehall -- the basic design of the German war plan was known and a march through Belgium expected. The question remained, as mentioned above, whether this move would violate Belgian neutrality to a degree that England could not but take official notice - and whether in this case the interventionist wing of the Liberal Party could form an ad-hoc understanding with opposition interventionists across the aisles and render the violation of Belgian territory a convincing *casus belli*.

³⁰ It states: "The Contracting Parties recognize that hostilities among them should not begin without a previous unequivocal notification, which must have either the form of a declaration of war provided with reasons or that of an ultimatum with a conditional declaration of war." (126)

For despite all talk of preserving the continental balance of power and preventing a German hegemony, there existed "another and arguably even more important reason why Britain went to war at 11 pm on 4 August 1914. Throughout the days of 31 July - 3 August one thing above all maintained Cabinet unity: the fear of letting in the Conservative and Unionist opposition." (127) The reintroduction of Irish Home Rule legislation by the Liberal Party in particular had precipitated stormy discussions and even accusations of treason in the Commons - some Unionists thought the Liberals the true enemy of the realm rather than some Germans. Not only continued the Liberals to pursue the reform, or, rather, the diminution of the powers of the House of Lords, the bastion of conservative establishment, the Irish question also raised the spectre of a Catholic renaissance in Great Britain. It had been the Conservative Party, no doubt, which had made a habit of warning of dark German designs, but this was more of a public relations issue than an expression of serious concern - even at the height of Tirpitz's Navy Bills British spending had exceeded German expenditures by over 100%, and in 1914 the tonnage of the respective navies was 2,714,000 tons of British vs. 1,305,000 tons of German war ships. (128)

The problem with Grey's wielding the topic of Belgian neutrality was that it had all the characteristics of a ruse, for he was unable to promise corresponding English neutrality for the case that Germany gave Belgium the required assurances - Great Britain might join the war nonetheless. In fact, despite Lichnowsky's inquiries whether Grey could "formulate conditions on which [England] could remain neutral," and regardless of the ambassador's suggestion "that the integrity of France and her colonies might be guaranteed" by Germany, the Foreign Minister merely reiterated that "we must keep our hands free." (129)

This intransigence makes it a bit tedious to properly evaluate the legend of continuing British attempts to effect peace or neutrality, their own or that of others, while insisting on keeping her hands free. On Saturday, August 1, Churchill put the Third Fleet on war stations, following First and Second, and on Sunday, August 2, the cabinet decided to assist France by ordering the Royal Navy to protect the French Channel coast - which, the doves pointed out, came darn close to joining the war without saying so. Prime Minister Asquith advised Lichnowsky "that we had no desire to intervene, and that it rested largely with Germany to make intervention impossible if she would (i) not invade Belgium and (ii) not send her fleet into the Channel to attack the unprotected north coast of France." (130)

This was unquestionably an ultimatum - without expiration date, and was so understood by Lichnowsky but not by Hollweg and Jagow in Berlin. It had been issued, it seemed, on the authority of the Prime Minister alone, for in the preceding cabinet session of August 1 Lord Morley and John Burns had loudly criticized that British protection of the French Channel coast amounted not only to "a declaration of war on land," but would also constitute a "symbol of an alliance with France with whom no such understanding had hitherto existed." (131) But the far-reaching letters of support the Prime Minister and Grey received on the same day from the leadership of the Conservative and Unionist parties allowed Asquith to ignore the subsequent resignations of Morley and Burns. At around 6 pm on August 2, Grey officially informed Paul Cambon of the British decision to protect the French coast. Cambon then inquired, Albertini writes, whether "England would send to France the Expeditionary Force"³¹ which had been the subject of discussions between the two

³¹ Gerhard Ritter remarked in this context that Moltke was clearly aware of the relation between Belgian and British neutrality and their strategic interdependency:

"As far as I know there exists no operational plan by the younger Moltke, but in 1943 I saw a memorandum of 1913 signed by him: 'Germany's conduct in a Triple Alliance war.' It was probably for the Chief of the Military Cabinet (entry in the Chief of the General Staff's secret journal of January 20, 1913). I reproduce the following (from my notes) for comparison with Schlieffen's plans:

Moltke turns against Schlieffen's idea, expressed in his memorandum of 1912, of leaving the Eastern Front completely unoccupied. All the successes in the West will be unavailing if the Russians arrive in Berlin. Without Germany's help Austria will remain purely on the defensive. She will only become active if a German army holds down the Russian Narew-Army [in the Battle of Tannenberg in August 1914, this was Samsonov's 2nd Army, ¶]. In the West an envelopment of the French fortress front [by outflanking them through Belgium] is unavoidable, but it is beset with great difficulties.

'It is not pleasant to open a campaign by violating the territory of a neutral neighbor.' We must try to come to an agreement with Belgium. Perhaps we could promise her territorial acquisitions if she becomes our ally or at least remains passive. In any case, we must guarantee her full sovereignty and only regard the country as an area for marching through. Our war aim must exclude annexation. But in fact Moltke considers the possibility of an agreement as hopeless. Therefore we shall have to fight a new enemy of 150,000 men [i.e. the Belgian Army, ¶]. Then England will and must join our enemies. It is vital for the English to prevent Germany occupying the Channel coast. That she has no intention of doing so, London will never believe. A German occupation on the Channel would permanently tie down British naval forces there and thus make it impossible for England to keep her world position.

Should we give up the march through Belgium if England guarantees her neutrality? This would be very dangerous, because it is quite uncertain whether England would keep her promise; at the same time we would abandon our only chance of the quick and resounding

General Staffs," for he was aware that it "would have not only great moral but also great practical effect" - making England's entry in the war a matter of fact. (132) But Cambon had to acknowledge temporary defeat -- he cabled to Viviani in Paris that the British cabinet had declined the measure - for the time being. The ambassador's anxiety was somewhat relieved when Whitehall decided later this evening that, as Lord Crewe, the Colonial Secretary, subsequently reported to the King on the Prime Minister's behalf, "a substantial violation of [Belgium] would place us in the situation contemplated as possible by Mr. Gladstone in 1870, when interference with Belgian independence was held to compel us to take action." (133) The Belgian government had meanwhile informed the Foreign Ministry that the country had resolved to defend her neutrality by force of arms and, in consequence, her army had received the mobilization order. Of this she had informed Germany already earlier (11 am, August 3) and now notified the other treaty signatories. After German troops crossed the border, around 8 am, August 4, Belgium officially communicated the following note to the British, French and Russian embassies in Brussels:

"The Belgian Governments regrets to have to announce to Your Excellency that this morning the armed forces of Germany entered Belgian territory in violation of treaty engagements. The Belgian Government is firmly resolved to resist by all means in its power. Belgium appeals to England, France and Russia to co-operate as guaranteeing Powers in the defence of her territory. There should be concerted and joint action to oppose the forcible measures employed by Germany against Belgium, and, at the same time, to guarantee the future maintenance of the independence and integrity of Belgium, Belgium is happy to declare that she will assume the defence of her fortified places." (134)

Meanwhile, at 12:30 pm on August 2, England cut off Germany's oceanic telegraph cables, which prompted Tirpitz to ask Jagow whether a state of war [yet?] existed between the two nations. (135) When Lichnowsky put very much the same question to Grey around noon of the next day, the Foreign Minister invited him to visit the House of Commons, where, at 3 pm, he was to give a speech on the crisis including "a statement of conditions" - more he could not say. (136) In the hours between noon and the parliament session, the cabinet met again - with more success than Asquith had dared to hope for after yesterday's proceedings, in which a break-up of the government had not seemed out of the question.

The Welsh firebrand and Chancellor of the Exchequer David Lloyd George informed the Prime Minister that he and Lord Runciman - after deep contemplation - had decided to support the interventionists, and two of yesterday's loudest pacifists, the Earl of Beauchamp, Lord President of the Council, and Sir John Simon indicated that they had also reversed their opinions, would remain in the cabinet, and support the cause of intervention. The continuance of the Liberal government had thus been achieved, except for Lord Morley and John Burns, who had resigned their posts. (137) The cabinet then adjourned and moved to the Commons, where Sir Grey took the podium.

The Secretary of State began by informing the House of the Franco-British military consultations that had been established in 1904 - to the surprise of many delegates. As a result of these talks, Grey continued, the French fleet was now stationed in the Mediterranean Sea and unable to defend the Channel coast. Therefore, the minister reported, he had presented

"... the French Ambassador the following statement: 'I am authorized to give an assurance that if the German Fleet comes into the Channel or through the North Sea to undertake hostile operations against the French

success we need so badly. The renunciation of the march through Belgium would only be possible if England went along with us. But this is out of the question, because England considers Germany stronger than France, is afraid of German hegemony and wants to preserve the balance in Europe. England and France are already tied to each other, count on a German advance through Belgium and are going to oppose it together.

The British expeditionary force will probably land at Dunkirk. A landing in Antwerp seems to have been abandoned, probably from fear of the German Navy. So British troops will appear in Belgium, too. Therefore we must make our right wing very strong, and it is impossible to attack the whole of the French eastern front as well. But with English and Belgian help the French intend to bring the right wing of our army to a standstill and to break through the German front in strength from the direction of Verdun. We must count on this. It is not possible to plan beyond the basic ideas of the operation and the preparation of the deployment. But our aim must be to envelop the enemy's left wing if possible and to rest our own left wing on Metz. On no account must we violate the Dutch province of Limburg. In the event of war, we need neutral Holland as a 'windpipe'. But it is of paramount importance to overcome the obstacle of Liège as quickly as possible." [Emphasis in original] (138)

coasts or shipping, the British Fleet will give all the protection in its power.'... I understand that the German Government would be prepared, if we would pledge ourselves to neutrality, to agree that its fleet would not attack the northern coast of France. But this is far too narrow an engagement for us. There is the more serious consideration - becoming more serious every hour - there is the question of the neutrality of Belgium." (139)

Instead of revealing on whose authority exactly he had extended this promise to the French government, he conjured up the spectre of German continental hegemony, urging the country to quell it ere it was too late - by pre-emptive war, essentially.

*"If [Belgian] independence goes, the independence of Holland will follow. I ask the House, from **the point of view of British interests**, to consider what may be at stake. If France is beaten in a struggle of life and death, beaten to her knees, loses her position as a great Power, becomes subordinate to the will and power of one greater than herself -- consequences which I do not anticipate, because I am sure that France has the power to defend herself with all the energy and ability and patriotism which she has shown so often -- still, if that were to happen, and if Belgium fell under the same dominating influence, and then Holland, and then Denmark, then would not Mr. Gladstone's words come true, that just opposite to us here there would be a common interest against unmeasured aggrandizement of any Power?*

*It may be said, I suppose, that we might stand aside, husband our strength, and then, whatever happened in the course of this war, at the end of it **intervene with effect to put things right, and to adjust them to our own point of view** I do not believe, for a moment, that at the end of this war, even if we stood aside and remained aside, we should be in a position, a material position, to use our force decisively to undo what had happened in the course of the war, to prevent the whole of the West of Europe opposite to us - if that had been the result of the war - **falling under the dominion of a single Power**, and I am sure that our moral position would be such as to have lost us all respect."* [Emphases added] (140)

How this respect would be upheld or perhaps increased would be a decision properly put before the House - noting the government had not committed the country to any specific course yet.

"I think it is due to the House to say that we have taken no engagement yet with regard to sending an expeditionary armed force out of the country. Mobilization of the Fleet has taken place; mobilization of the Army is taking place; but we have as yet taken no engagement, because I do feel that, in the case of a European conflagration, such as this is, unprecedented, with our enormous responsibilities in India and other parts of the Empire, or in countries in British occupation, with all the unknown factors, we must take very carefully into consideration the use which we make of sending an Expeditionary Force out of the country until we know how we stand." (141)

Thus - as Sir Grey believed - he had let it be understood that England should declare war on Germany were the latter to violate Belgian soil - but it is not clear whether everybody in the House understood the same. Indeed, a beclouding of the issue may have been a reason behind the minister's continuing triviality of expression - Lichnowsky, for one, seems to have understood Grey's speech as indicating that "the English Government for the time being does not contemplate intervening in the conflict and abandoning its neutrality," (142) while the First Sea Lord felt it necessary to inquire, hours later, what the Foreign Minister envisioned to be the next step. "Now," Sir Grey said, as Churchill reports in his memoirs, "we shall send them an ultimatum to stop the invasion of Belgium within twenty-four hours." (143) It would seem that no formal or binding resolutions were ever enacted by parliament or cabinet - Churchill suggested a more solitary decision-making process:

"Before the Cabinet separated on Monday morning, Sir Edward Grey had procured a predominant assent to the principal points and general tone of his statement to Parliament this afternoon. Formal sanction had been given to the already completed mobilization of the Fleet and to the immediate mobilization of the Army. No decision had been taken to send an ultimatum to Germany or to declare war on Germany, still less to send an

army to France. These supreme decisions were never taken at any Cabinet. They were compelled by the force of events, and rest on the authority of the Prime Minister." (144)

The First Sea Lord's observations explain, to a degree, the confusion that was to befall the British ultimatum. First, Grey's telegram of 9:30 am, August 4, to Sir Goschen, the British Ambassador at Berlin, evidenced a strange serenity -- at least for an ultimatum, for it informed the envoy in even terms of the German ultimatum to Belgium and instructed him to tell Berlin that:

"His Majesty's Government are bound to protest against this violation of a treaty to which Germany is a party in common with themselves, and must request an assurance that the demand made upon Belgium [for free passage] will not be proceeded with, and that her neutrality will be respected by Germany. You should ask for an immediate reply." (145)

As Albertini correctly remarked, not only did the missive contain "No hint of a threat of war!" it should have been sent after the Cabinet session, i.e. 7:30 pm, August 3, not fourteen hours later, at 9:30 am, August 4. (146) Perhaps Grey himself arrived at the conclusion that his ultimatum lacked clear diction, and consequently at 2 pm, August 4, i.e., 42 hours later, he sent a second note to Sir Goschen:

"We hear that Germany has addressed [a] note to [the] Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs stating that [the] German Government will be compelled to carry out, if necessary by force of arms, the measures considered indispensable. We are also informed that Belgian territory has been violated at Gemmenich.

In these circumstances, and in view of the fact that Germany declined to give the same assurance respecting Belgium as France gave last week in reply to our request made simultaneously at Berlin and Paris, we must repeat that request, and ask that a satisfactory reply to it and to my telegram of this morning (that of 9:30 am) be received here by 12 o'clock tonight. If not, you are instructed to ask for your 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." (147)

The problem was that Grey's telegram of 2 pm did not reach Hollweg or Jagow before the early evening. They had attended the Reichstag, where the chancellor had presented the official declaration of the German government on the state of war. It was only in the very late afternoon that Sir Goschen managed to meet the Foreign Minister. About this audience he subsequently reported to London:

"Herr von Jagow at once replied [to my question on Belgian neutrality] 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. Herr von Jagow again went into the reasons why the Imperial Government had been obliged to take this step...

During the afternoon I received your telegram and ... informed the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that unless the Imperial Government could give the assurance by 12 o'clock that night that they would proceed no further with their violation of the Belgian frontier ... I had been instructed to demand my passports. ...

Herr von Jagow replied that to his great regret he could give no other answer I gave His Excellency a paraphrase of your telegram ... and asked him whether it were not possible even at the last moment that their answer should be reconsidered. He replied that if the time given were even twenty-four hours, his answer must be the same. I said that in that case I should have to demand my passports. This interview would have taken place at about 7 o'clock.

At about 9:30 pm Herr von Zimmermann, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, came to see me. He asked me casually whether a demand for passports was equivalent to a declaration of war. I said that there were many cases where diplomatic relations had been broken off and nevertheless war had not ensued, but that in this case he would have seen from my instructions that His Majesty's Government expected an answer to a definite question by 12 o'clock that night, and that in default of a satisfactory answer they would

be forced to take such steps as their engagements required. Herr Zimmermann said that that was in fact a declaration of war." (148)

It did not matter, as Jagow admitted, whether the British ultimatum had provided a twenty-four hour deadline instead of only five hours - Germany felt unable to give the required answer. Consequently at midnight August 5, the First Sea Lord telegraphed to the ships and bases of the Royal Navy worldwide the order "Commence hostilities against Germany." (149) The Great War of 1914 had begun.

What must we keep in mind, in recapitulation, about the peculiarities of its gestation? We may remind ourselves that neither politicians nor generals realized the sheer dimension of the disaster they unleashed. They understood that it was to be a huge war, but they still thought essentially in the dimensions of 1812 and 1870, big wars, to be sure, especially that of 1812, and destined to become even bigger by conscription, but that Napoleon's Grande Armée of 1812 would easily be outsized by a factor of ten or fifteen and that ten million fatalities would eventually be counted nobody dared to suggest in 1914.

It was exactly because of the enormity of the conflagration that an intensive discussion was to ensue over the responsibility for its outbreak, the issue of "war guilt". This topic remains intensively argued to this day, but in 1919, as we will see, it was quickly institutionalized by way of individual peace treaties, which tended to reflect the noble motives of the victors that so favourably contrasted to the evil schemes of the losers. As it was to be expected, the victors liked the results very much, the losers much less.

It took not much political savvy to doubt the usefulness of the blame game and the reparation demands which resulted - and would be so catastrophically exploited by Hitler's propaganda - Marshal Foch himself famously called the Treaty of Versailles not peace but a "twenty year armistice", and was not far off: twenty years, nine months and nineteen days after the First World War had ended, the Second broke out. In retrospect, the motivations were simple - territorial demands, economic interests, and underlying psychological malaises, and in each case the result - the decision for war - was a mixture of at least two of these elements.

France sought to regain Alsace-Lorraine - the defeat of 1871 had literally stunned the nation, and, perhaps even more urgently, she sought to renew the national unity that had been torn asunder by the Dreyfus affair. The Great War would provide the illusion of such unity for the time being - *l'union sacrée*, proclaimed by Poincaré in parliament on August 4 - yet that France could not truly regain this indivisibility proved itself for the worse in 1940, when the French Right opted rather to suffer German occupation than to allow a Second Commune. But since the country had succeeded since 1904 "to convince leading members of the Liberal government in London that France's security was a British national interest," (150) she was assured not only of the assistance of the greatest land power, Russia, in the impending war, but could also count on the support of the biggest sea power. A repeat of 1871 seemed to be out of the question.

Great Britain's policy remained - obviously - the perpetuation of divide et impera, the prolongation of the concert-of-powers system that prevented the rise of a continental hegemony. It was lucky happenstance, perhaps, that this coincided with a certain interest in the weakening of Germany's industry as a competitor in global trade. England had no stated territorial interests, although *she* would be suspiciously quick in accepting, after the war, as "mandates" from the League of Nations the former German colonies of Namibia and Tanzania. A discussion remains whether Grey's three principal moves that ended in England joining the war, of whose acuity he seemed to have been well aware, were results of his bumbling or cunning. In his memoirs, Grey wrote: "I remember saying more than once, to colleagues inside or outside the Cabinet that it did not matter whether the decision was to go to war or to demand conditions from Germany. Conditions meant war just as surely as a declaration of war. Respect for the neutrality of Belgium must be one of the conditions, and this Germany would not respect." (151)³² This argument can be made, of course, only in hindsight.

³² Albertini remarks to n. 1301: "This shows that Grey knew beforehand what would be the outcome of his three moves. The first was that of 31 July when though the situation was beyond repair [sic] he asked Paris and Berlin to 'engage to respect neutrality of Belgium so long as no other power violates it'. The second was on 1 August, when with Cabinet consent he warned Germany that 'if there were a violation of neutrality of Belgium by one combatant while the other respected it, it would be extremely difficult to restrain public feeling in this country.'

Austria-Hungary's motivations were almost entirely psychological - the Danube Monarchy dreaded Slavic nationalism as well as Hungarian separatism, had no concept for the integration of the numerous ethnic minorities, and was in shocking internal disorder - parliament had to be dissolved in 1907, and she essentially became a military dictatorship during the war. Only a great victory promised hope for the future - provided that it was possible at all to preserve "Kaiser Franz Joseph's unique but anachronistic inheritance" - the breaking apart of which the European equilibrium could not - and did not - survive. (152)

Russia was in a similar political situation - the attempted revolution of 1905 was in no way forgotten - as the future was to tell - and any influx of patriotism the war was to bring figured hugely in her political computations, but her leadership had a true strategic and territorial vision. To gain control of the Straits and hence access to the Aegean, Adriatic and the rest of the Mediterranean Seas would not only multiply her economical opportunities but also extend the influence of her navy - the budget of which since 1913 exceeded that of Germany - to the coasts of the Balkan and Asia Minor -- the resurrection of an [Orthodox] Christian Byzantine Empire would impending and the progress of Islam into Europe reversed.

It was not entirely clear how this "country of extreme economic backwardness," (153) which was also hampered by a conceptually outdated, quasi-medieval absolutist monarchy could hope to make the successful transition into a modern industrial society - a change that in every other country had lead to constitutional monarchism, or outright republicanism. Paul Kennedy reflected on pre-war Russia:

The methods of governmental decision-making at the higher levels were enough to give "Byzantinism" a bad name: irresponsible grand dukes, the emotionally unbalanced empress, reactionary generals, and corrupt speculators, outweighing by far the number of diligent and intelligent ministers whom the regime could recruit and who, only occasionally, could reach the Czar's ear.

The lack of consultation and understanding between, say, the foreign ministry and the military was at times frightening. The court's attitude to the assembly (the Duma) was one of unconcealed contempt. Achieving radical reforms in this atmosphere was impossible, when the aristocracy cared only for its privileges and the Czar cared only for his peace of mind.

Here was an elite in constant fear of workers' and peasants' unrest, and yet, although government spending was by far the largest in the world in absolute terms, it kept direct taxes on the rich to a minimum (6 percent of the state's revenue) and placed massive burdens upon foodstuffs and vodka (about 40 percent). ...

Partly because of the traditions of heavy-handed autocracy, partly because of the inordinately flawed class system, and partly because of the low levels of education and pay, Russia lacked those cadres of competent civil servants who made, for example, the German, British, and Japanese administrative systems work. (154)

This was, of course, Russia's problem in the first place - her governmental system did not work - but to assume it would improve during a great war was a long shot.

This leaves us with Germany, whose actions and omissions, before but in particular during the crisis of July 1914, remain somewhat mysterious despite the scholarship of generations of historians. Fritz Fischer and his disciples have famously ascribed the politics of the chancellors Bülow and Bethmann Hollweg, Kaiser Wilhelm II, General Moltke and Admiral Tirpitz plus the important yet less visible captains of German industry to an evil scheme that attempted the GRIFF NACH DER WELTMACHT (which translates as "To Seize Global Power", although the English edition bears the more mundane if less sexy title of "Germany's Aims in the First World War", London 1967). But Germany had no territorial interests - her colonies had always remained unprofitable, hence it is difficult to see how the acquisition of more underperforming

The third was on 2 August when he secured Cabinet consent for a statement in the House that the violation of Belgian neutrality would constitute a casus belli.' By this piecemeal procedure and, between its second and third stages, a promise to France to give her the full protection of the British navy against any German naval attack, Grey overcame the opposition of the majority of the Cabinet and brought them all, except the two who resigned, round to the view that war was unavoidable." (155)

colonies would aid her economy - she did not claim any territory on her Russian, French or Austrian borders - her industry, then as now, thrived on efficiency and adaptability, not simply on size - and the theoretical economic advantages that might be realized after a successful outcome of the war were dwarfed by the costs and write-offs the conflict necessarily entailed - a German conquest of the world was an unprofitable proposition. War was not a smart investment.

Yet this lack of direct incentives only deepens the mystery. The second argument of the Fischer school was that the German government sponsored the war "as a deliberate step to resolve an impending domestic crisis," (156) i.e., a socialist revolution. This contention, alas, suffers from the problem that there simply was no such crisis on the horizon - while it is true that the socialists of the SPD had come out of the 1912 federal elections as the biggest party, this did not matter much under the German constitution, for the government was not responsible to the Reichstag. And even when German socialists struck or demonstrated, they did so in a generally peaceful way.

The apparent inexplicability of the government's policy in the July crisis seems to pertain rather to a lack of checks and balances at the interface between diplomacy and generalship. The political theory of the time held that the alliance systems, created by diplomats, prevented war by keeping the military leadership out of the decision-making process: it was the application of Clausewitz's primacy of politics over the military. "Generals ...," Hew Strachan summarized, "were not on the whole involved in politics per se. In Germany, Schlieffen might advise whether or not the opportunity was right for war in 1905, but he did not see it as his task to direct foreign policy by actively and vociferously advocating preventive war; in 1914 Moltke had no role at all in the management of the bulk of the July crisis." (157)

But the concept of deterrence on which the alliance systems were based, was interpreted differently by politicians and generals. "Poincaré and Sazonov both argued that, if Grey had been able to pledge British support earlier, the threat of a united Entente would have forced Germany to climb down," Hew Strachan adds - just as the prospect of fighting Germany should have effected the same in France and Russia, if the theory was correct. (158) Was it? Hew Strachan writes:

The accusation levelled against the alliance system before 1914 is, however, more serious than that it failed to prevent war; it is that it actually provoked war. Kurt Riezler, writing before the outbreak of the war, reckoned that one ally would restrain another; a vital interest for one would not be a vital interest for another. The military context was in part responsible for transforming a system of great-power management that was designed to be defensive into one of offence. The emphasis on speed of mobilization, the interaction of war plans, and Germany's central geographical position meant that a chain reaction became possible. (159)

The correct performance of these alliances depended on the interplay of three communicative processes: first, the level of mutual information and cooperation that existed between the civil authorities and the military of each signatory state, second, the quality of communication between the civil governments of the respective signatories, and third, upon the ability and opportunity of their general staffs to talk to each other. The Anglo-French Entente, for example, was weak in the second respect - as Grey more than once pointed out, the French had no written British guarantees, but their military consultations were regular and far-reaching, so intensive in fact that it was decided to forego informing parliament or the public of their existence. The situation was different in the Dual Alliance. Not only did the Austrian and German governments not truly share a common policy - as was evidenced in particular when Berchtold all but ignored Wilhelm's and Hollweg's proposal of HALT IN BELGRADE, which, in retrospect, would have constituted a basis on which everybody could have agreed on - their respective general staffs never met and except for a rather trivial correspondence between Moltke and Conrad, no contacts were maintained.

As a result, the German military attaché at Vienna felt compelled to point out, as late as August 1, 1914, that "It is high time that the two general staffs consult now with absolute frankness with respect to mobilization, jump-off times, areas of assembly, and precise troop strength." (160) High time, indeed - and we must remember that it thus were the bad guys who had seemingly forgotten the military preparation of their conquest of the world - it were the presumed victims England, France and Russia which had maintained detailed military consultations for decades.

Two factors - the lack of internal coordination and paucity of external consultations - were responsible for the dilettantish way by which German political and military decision-makers arrived at such cross-purposes as would frequently neutralize each other's efforts.

The lack of either continuity or clarity in German policy was in itself a reflection of the absence of a guiding authority. Supreme command was in name vested in the Kaiser, but by 1914 Wilhelm no longer commanded the respect which his titles demanded: the monarchy was venerated as an institution rather than in the personality of its incumbent...

Technically, the reconciliation of the views of the chancellor and of the chief of the general staff in late July was Wilhelm's responsibility. In practice, the management of the crisis reflected the dominance of first one personality, Bethmann Hollweg, and then another, Moltke. Bethmann had guided events up until 28 July by acting in isolation: he had encouraged the Kaiser to put to sea and Moltke to continue his cure...

When the Kaiser returned, the belligerence he had expressed to Hoyos on 5 July had softened. Wilhelm, however, was caught by his own self-image, that of the steely warrior, and thus his reluctance to fight was compromised by his relationship with his military entourage and, above all, with Moltke. Wilhelm saw himself as the victim of an Entente conspiracy, initiated by his despised English uncle Edward VII, and the latter's Francophile ways. His capacity to reduce the crisis of late July 1914 to the level of his own personal animosities cut across any possibility of drawing out the full implications of each step which Germany took...

The most striking illustration of the consequent absence of any German grand design was the confusion between German diplomacy, which aimed to limit war as far as possible, and German war plans, which rested on a worst-case analysis, that of a two-front war against France and Russia simultaneously. Indeed, what remains striking about those hot July weeks is the role, not of collective forces nor of long-range factors, but of the individual. (161)

Now that the horse had bolted, the barn door was securely locked and treaty obligations carefully inspected. The end result was that, at the stroke of midnight, August 4 to 5, 1914, Great Britain, France and Russia were at war with Germany, but not [yet] with Austria.

Austria had declared war on Serbia on July 28, but it took her another eight days, until August 5, to declare war on Russia, on account of her obligations to Germany under the Dual Alliance treaty. But she could not get her act together: in a case of truly exceptional schlamperei, she forgot to declare war on Great Britain and France. After waiting until August 12, these two countries took it upon themselves to correct the Austrian oversight and declared war on Vienna, via telegram to her ambassador in Switzerland.

Italy, still a member of the Triple Alliance - which had been renewed in 1912 - felt unsuited to fulfill her duties and declared her neutrality on August 2.

The era of the post-Napoleonic European equilibrium of power - created during the BALLI IN MASCHERA, the masked dances at the Congress of Vienna in 1815/16, amended by Bismarck in 1866 and 1871, and renewed at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, had come to its end. When costumes and masks came off, armoured knights emerged.

