The question of German responsibility for the First World War

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THE QUESTION OF GERMAN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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PREFACE

The question of German responsibility for the first world war is one that still produces considerable debate among historians. Although it appears that many present day scholars place the war guilt at Germany's door, some have produced cogent arguments designed to relieve Germany of this accusation.

This paper does not propose to present a definitive answer to the intricate question of German responsibility. Rather an attempt will be made to examine the historic role of Germany prior to and during World War I. It is believed that such an analysis will be a valuable study, inasmuch as it will point out, in a capsule form, some of the issues involved in the debate on German responsibility.

In approaching this question, a brief examination will be made of several selected factors influencing Germany's conduct on the eve of the war. This will include such potent factors as resurgent nationalism, entangling alliances, increasing militarism, intense commercial rivalry, and repeated involvement in international disputes. These factors seem to be necessary essentials for a clear understanding of motivations that prompted German behavior in the face of war.

Also Austro-German diplomatic relations will be examined, with especial emphasis being placed on the aftermath of the Sarajevo incident. Since this is the period that most firmly supports the proponents of
German war guilt, it will receive considerable attention. The outbreak of
the hostility and German's reaction will be briefly discussed.

While this short paper cannot be expected to answer such an
intricate question, the writer feels that a presentation of pros and cons
in this debate will point up many issues which should be of value to novice
historians. Herein lies the real worth and purpose of this research.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

FACTORS INVOLVING GERMANY'S CONDUCT ON THE EVE OF THE WAR

Did Germany cause World War I? This crucial question, studied and analyzed by dozens of scholars, is still a burning issue after fifty-three years. Many of the scholars in the United States and Europe at the time of the war passionately believed that Germany was the cause of the First World War because of her militaristic outlook.¹ The Allies were under this opinion also, and as a result imposed a harsh and Carthaginian peace on Germany. The Germans were forced to accept Article 231 of the Treaty of Versailles on pain of occupation, which stipulated:

The Allied and Associated Governments affirm, and Germany accepts, the responsibility of herself and her allies, for causing all the loss and damage to which the Allied and Associated Governments and their nationals have been subjected as a consequence of the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies.²

Although feelings of retribution had earlier run high, by the latter 1920's a number of historians were clamoring for the annulment of the war guilt clause. Such historians as Count Max Montgelas, Erich Brandenburg, Harry Elmer Barnes, George Peabody Gooch, and Sidney Bradshaw Fay

²Ibid., p. 34.
introduced revisionist literature ameliorating Germany of guilt. According to Sidney Fay, "it is a dictum exacted by victors from vanquished under the influence of the blindness, ignorance, hatred, and the propagandist misconceptions to which the war had given rise. It was based on evidence which was incomplete and not always sound."  

But is this true? Many say yes. Germany's role in the world conflagration of 1914 began with the unification of Germany under Otto von Bismarck's chancellorship. Bismarck, within a single generation made Prussia the leading country on the Continent, defeated her rivals, achieved unification of Germany, and made Prussia the center of the new state. Under his tutelage Germany underwent almost unparalleled growth in industry, commerce, and agriculture.

The Germans were exuberant over their successes in 1870 and the subsequent marvelous development of the united German Empire. Their successes led to an exaggerated nationalism that began to express itself during Bismarck's chancellorship. From 1890, Germany advanced to a world power and strove to become the greatest power in the world. Turner contends that, "The outlook of German leaders became wider, their ambition

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5 Barnes, op. cit., p. 51.
vaster and grander; they played for great stakes higher and more boldly, until in the end, as it seemed to one of them, they sought World Dominion or Downfall.\footnote{Turner, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 191.} Bismarck sought to maintain Germany's hegemony peacefully. On the other hand, when William II in 1890 took control, the foreign policy was altered. Unlike Bismarck, he allowed his nationalistic desires to antagonize England and drive France toward Russia. William II allowed Germany to succumb to exaggerated nationalism which was to sink her into a world war.

When Germany became unified the arrangement of Europe was shattered. After the defeat of France in 1871, the balance of power was shifted from France to Germany. This led one historian to remark, "where European politics had for centuries been based upon the principle of a weak German center and strong French, Austrian, and Russian extremities, the table had now been turned."\footnote{William L. Langer, \textit{European Alliances and Alignments 1871-1890} (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), p. 15.} France was destroyed militarily and stripped of the Alsace and Lorraine regions. On the other hand, Germany stood basking in her new found leadership and military victory. The scene provoked one diplomat to remark, "that Europe has lost a mistress and gained a master."\footnote{Ibid.}

After the defeat of France and the unification of Germany, Bismarck set out to maintain the status quo. He was not bent on a role of imperialism, but wanted to consolidate his gains. In the meantime he had to concern himself with France and Russia. He was aware that France was searching for the opportune moment to regain her position in the balance of power and
Alsace and Lorraine. In her attempt to accomplish her objectives, he feared the possibility of Russia joining forces with her. Bismarck dreaded the idea of encirclement which would cause Germany to fight on more than one front at a time. He saw possible defeat for Germany in fighting on more than one front since "she was surrounded on land and sea by powerful enemies . . . ."¹

In an attempt to rid himself of the fear of encirclement, Bismarck thought it necessary to form several alliances. As seen by Barnes, "ostensible planned in the interests of defense and peace, they actually produced suspicion, fear, and aggression."² In 1878, Bismarck negotiated a secret treaty with the Dual Monarchy. It was known as the Dual Alliance and provided the cornerstone for Bismarck future alliances. The Dual Alliance provided that if either Germany or Austria-Hungary were attacked by Russia or a party backed by Russia the other would aid their distressed ally. If either of the signatories were attacked by any power except Russia, the others would maintain benevolent neutrality.³

By the conclusion of the Dual Alliance, Bismarck was able to guarantee Austria's neutrality in case of a war with France and at the same time guarantee the Peace of Frankfort. According to Seymour, "the position that Germany had won by the Peace of Frankfort was thus stamped with the character of stability and permanence."⁴

¹Barnes, op. cit., p. 231.  
²Ibid., p. 67.  
³Langer, op. cit., p. 183.  
⁴Seymour, op. cit., p. 31.
In 1882, Italy joined this group and the name was changed to the Triple Alliance. It provided that Germany and Italy were to aid each other in case of aggression by France, and if any of the partners were attacked by two or more great powers, all three were pledged to assist one another. It also provided that if one of the signatories felt its security to be in danger and had to go to war, the other two had to follow a policy of benevolent neutrality. The extension of the Dual Alliance, although defensive promoted Germany to a position to be feared. As Turner has pointed out:

The Triple Alliance was to be a considerable extent defensive, but by means of it Bismarck had none the less raised the German Empire to be the controlling power in Europe and to a marvelous pitch of greatness.¹

Bismarck formed other alliances to supplement the alliance with Italy and the Dual Monarchy. In 1883, he associated Rumania with the Triple Alliance having negotiated a treaty which was aimed at mutual protection against a Russian attack.² Another treaty, the Re-insurance Treaty was signed with Russia in 1887. This treaty was negotiated behind the back of Austria-Hungary. It provided for the recognition of Russia's position in the Balkan and neutrality if one of the powers went to war.³

The rival Triple Entente was of a more recent date than the Triple Alliance, having originated in a series of agreements between France, Russia, and England which came to completion in 1907. The first agreement

¹ Turner, op. cit., p. 182.
³ Fay, op. cit., I, 78.
Within a few years, Great Britain moved toward closer relations with France and Russia. Long an advocate of splendid isolation, Great Britain had become impressed with the dangers of isolation by the hostility shown her as a result of the Boer War, the rise of German naval power, and the costly competition with France in Africa and Russia in Central Asia. Britain's position had been exposed during the Boer War when Europe expressed sympathy for the Boers. Germany showed her hostility toward the English actions by sending a congratulatory telegram to President Kruger on the capture of the Jameson Raiders and lauding:

...his success in conquering the disturbers of the peace by his own efforts, and in defending the independence of his country against attacks from outside without appealing for the help of friendly Powers.

This act produced a great deal of hostility in England toward Germany. The English saw it as, "an unwarrantable interference in the internal affairs of the British Empire."  

This hostility probably would have dissipated if it had not been for the German naval laws, which threw British public opinion into an uproar. This act on the part of Germany was regarded by the British as a challenge to their position as mistress of the sea. It also clearly revealed their need for a change in policy. Having failed on several occasions to reach an understanding with Germany, Great Britain now turned to France and negotiated an alliance in 1904 providing for a friendly settlement of their differences in Egypt and Morocco. In the Entente Cordiale

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2 Ibid., p. 85.
they promised to give each other a free hand in Egypt, whereas France was to have a free hand in Morocco.\(^1\) In 1907 a similar agreement was made between England and Russia. The Grey-Izvolsky Agreement provided for a division of spheres of influence in Persia. Persia was carved into three zones, the British received the south, the Russians received the north, and the Shah of Persia was allowed to keep the middle. Fay quoting from a certain cartoon in Punch said:

\[\ldots\] the British lion and the Russian bear are seen mauling between them an unhappy Persian cat; the lion is saying to the bear, "Look here! You can play with his head, and I can play with his tail, and we can both stroke the small of his back; "while the poor cat moans, "I don't remember having been consulted about this."\(^2\)

The agreement also provided for the recognition of Afghanistan, and a joint promise to respect the integrity of Tibet.

These alliances, defensive or offensive, created a tense and warlike atmosphere in Europe. Their presence created a great deal of turmoil and animosity among the countries. As a result of these alliances, many states became embroiled in political and diplomatic clashes. Each state refused to back down or make concessions during a clash, because she felt that she had the support of her allies. Therefore, each diplomatic or political clash became a potential danger to the peace and security of Europe and the World.

This diplomatic activity was accompanied by vigorous military preparation on the part of the powers. This preparation was not carried

\(^1\) Fay, op. cit., I, 162-3.

\(^2\) Ibid., pp. 220-1.
out by Germany and Austria-Hungary only, but by England, Italy, Russia, France, and Serbia as well. As pointed out by Hubatsch:

... on the eve of the First World War, even little states were seized by an armament-fever: they wished to be able to protect themselves as well as possible in the coming conflict which they considered unavoidable. The threat of war persuaded the European powers to enforce their alliance groupings and above all to increase their own military preparations.¹

Each tried to improve the number and quality of their troops and armaments. The countries tried to increase the number of men in the army by enacting new army laws. These laws called for an increase in the number of recruits for military service.

In 1913, Germany passed an army bill which was to add 300,000 men to its peacetime army in two years. This bill failed in its objectives, it did not increase the number of army corps nor did it provide for the number of recruitments the government desired. Austria, in accordance with her ally, proceeded to raise the number of her recruits to 200,000. France and Russia had more success with their recruiting than the major members of the Triple Alliance. France lowered the age for recruits and raised the liability of service, and introduced the three-year service program. Russia as far back as 1905 started to build up her army. By 1913 her strength had rose to 580,000 men in arms.²


The following table represents the peace strength of the great powers in 1899, 1907, and 1914.¹

**TABLE 1**

PEACE STRENGTH OF THE GREAT POWERS IN 1899, 1907, AND 1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1899</th>
<th>1907</th>
<th>1914</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>604,000</td>
<td>629,000</td>
<td>806,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>346,000</td>
<td>382,000</td>
<td>370,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>258,000</td>
<td>284,000</td>
<td>305,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>574,000</td>
<td>559,000</td>
<td>818,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>896,000</td>
<td>1,254,000</td>
<td>1,284,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the countries tried to increase the strength of their armies, their military expenditures increased proportionately. Each country spent more money on its army during the early 1900's than ever before. In terms of total expenditures for defense from 1905-1914, Russia and Germany had the largest budgets, and were followed in order by France and Austria.

The following table shows the expenditures for arms on the part of the major powers from 1905-1914.²

**TABLE 2**

ARMAMENT EXPENDITURES IN THE DECADE FROM 1905-1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>495,144,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>347,348,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>448,025,543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>234,668,407</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

²Ibid., p. 56.
Back of the German-English antagonism, which had increased steadily in the first decade of this century lay naval rivalry. The German navy came into existence as a result of the naval laws of 1898 and 1900.\(^1\) It was to be carried to completion in 1917. The British public and admiralty was not slow to react to this gesture which they saw as a challenge. The German plans as stated by Fay:

\[
\ldots\text{ created an atmosphere of suspicion and antagonism which was altogether unfavorable for friendly diplomatic agreements concerning the Bagdad Railway and other matters. Every increase in the German navy, instead of frightening the British into making concessions, tended to stiffen their opposition and their determination to maintain the wide margin of British naval superiority deemed vital to the safety and very existence of the British Empire.}\textit{\footnote{Fay, op. cit., I, 234.}}
\]

As early as 1904, the British fleet was reorganized so as to retain an overwhelming strong force in the North Sea.\(^3\) The next two years saw the British revolutionizing naval warfare by launching the dreadnought, a floating fortress which was faster and carried heavier armaments.\(^4\) These ships gave the British naval superiority over anything afloat.

In 1906 and 1908, Germany enacted additional navy laws, not with the intention of building a fleet equal to Britains, but rather:

\[
\ldots\text{ to give expression to the greatness of the new Germany by creating a fleet which should be comparable to her growing commerce and colonial interests and afford them protection.}\textit{\footnote{Brandenburg, op. cit., p. 271.}}
\]

\(^{1}\) Fay, op. cit., I, 234.

\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 235.

\(^{3}\) Ibid.

\(^{4}\) Ibid.
They desired preservation from the danger of being blockaded from food and raw materials in case of war. But above all, they wanted to have a naval force which could be used to back up German diplomatic arguments in the struggle for colonial and commercial advantages.¹

The German navy often termed the "risky navy" was strong enough to make the British hesitate and strong enough to lend support to her colonial demands.

The British were interested in slowing down the German military program in order to lessen the tension between Germany and England and lighten their military budget. In Germany, after Bethmann-Hollweg became chancellor in 1909, there was a real desire to improve relations with Britain. The Germans, because of adverse English feeling, thought about retarding the rate of construction and defending the coast by submarines, mines, and fortification rather than by dreadnoughts.² As early as 1908, according to Gooch:

Admiral Galster argued that Germany's defensive needs would be better served by light cruisers, submarines and coast-defences than by the construction of battleships which, however unaggressive in intention were bound to arouse the suspicions of England.³

As a result of German and British efforts, negotiations were carried on in an attempt to come to some sort of an understanding on naval matters. These negotiations proceeded at a slow pace until after the Balkan crisis

¹Fay, op. cit., I, 234.
²Montgelas, op. cit., p. 109.
when the urgency for a naval agreement seemed more pressing than ever. 
In 1912, a mission to discuss the naval situation headed by Viscount Haldane went to Berlin.

The British had as their major objective to put an end to the naval rivalry that had prevailed for the last fifteen years. They wanted to retard the building program of the new German navy law of 1912. The Germans in exchange wanted the British to agree to a mutual declaration of neutrality in case either went to war. The two powers were unable to come to any sort of agreement, and so the Haldane Mission like other such attempts ended in failure. This particular mission failed as pointed out by Bloch because:

William II and his advisers sought to tie England's hands and made any understanding between England and Germany conditional upon a promise of British neutrality in the event of a Franco-German war.

The failure of the Haldane Mission drove the English in September, 1912, to negotiate an Anglo-French Naval Convention. In this Convention, England promised to support France against Germany. Grey in summing up this position said, "that England was in honour bound to protect the French coast in case of a war with Germany." By this time the naval race was on hotter than ever. Each country increased its naval expenditures several times over. In the ten years prior to the outbreak of the war, the joint expenditures of Russia and France were greater than those

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2 Ibid.
3 Hammann, op. cit., p. 254.
of Germany and the Dual Monarchy. England's expenditures doubled those of her other two allies combined. The following chart attests to this fact. It indicates the comparative naval expenditures from 1904 to 1914.

**TABLE 3**

THE COMPARATIVE NAVAL EXPENDITURES FROM 1904 TO 1914

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>$161,721,387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>144,246,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$305,967,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>$185,205,164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria-Hungary</td>
<td>50,692,814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$235,897,978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excess of France and Russia for 10 years</td>
<td>$ 70,069,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During the same period the British naval expenditure was</td>
<td>$351,916,576</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of Germany's army and naval plans, many have been led to charge her with preparing for the war. The facts, however, show just the opposite picture. Germany, a country with twice as many people as France, dragged behind Russia and France in trained manpower. From this one may deduce that France existed in a state of heavy preparedness. Germany did not spend as much on defense as Russia. In comparing the military preparedness of the continental powers, Barnes said, "... it is well known that the French and Russians made much more progress in military preparations between 1911 and 1914 than did the Germans."  

1Barnes, op. cit., p. 59.

2Ibid., p. 58.
Although Germany's navy was a risky one, no will for war can be reduced from it. Montgelas contends that:

... a naval power with thirty-five battleships, and a total tonnage of 1.02 million could not be a menace to Britannia, who ruled the seas with her sixty battleships, and a tonnage of 2.17 million.¹

The British blew the question of German naval building program out of proportion. The program was geared toward defensive aims and not offensive ones. As a result of the British alarm, the rivalry between Germany and England became a reality that was to haunt them and hang over Europe. This rivalry along with Europe being an armed camp had the effect of drawing the world closer to a general war with every conflict.

Commercial rivalry played its role in preparing the world for a war. During the late 1800's and early 1900's, the powers were involved in commercial and trade rivalry. The powers, after becoming highly industrialized began to search for colonies as places for investments, raw materials, food supplies, and markets for surplus goods. Consequently, there was a movement among the powers of the world to acquire possession of the unclaimed regions. According to Fay, "the Great Powers began to partition Africa among themselves, to secure territory or exclusive spheres of influence in China and to build railroads in Turkey and elsewhere."²

Prior to 1914, many of the countries had not fulfilled their imperialistic plans. The unclaimed land gave out before they could acquire additional territory or realize their set goals. However, they continued to push forward their plans of expansion. In the opinion of Benns:

¹Montgelas, op. cit., p. 110.
²Fay, op. cit., I, 45.
Austria-Hungary still sought to push her way into the Balkans in order to check the propaganda emanating from Serbia. Germany was inclined to support Austria-Hungary's Balkan program. For she herself planned to exploit the rich resources of Asia Minor and for the latter purpose needed a railway route through friendly territory in the Balkans as well as predominance in Constantinople. Obviously the German and Austrian plans for a Drang Nach Osten conflicted with Russia's desire to accomplish her "historic mission" of acquiring Constantinople and the Straits, together with domination in the Balkans. The ambitions of the Two Teutonic empires militated, also, against the realization of Italy's hopes for territorial expansion, for the latter—in addition to her ambitions in Africa and Asia Minor—desired to control the eastern coast of the Adriatic in order that she might transform that sea into an Italian lake. And Great Britain and France, despite the fact that they possessed the first and second largest overseas empires respectively—or because of that fact—were disturbed lest some power might seek to obtain a "place in the sun" at their expense.

This continuous drive toward expansion on the part of the powers created suspicion and friction. It set the stage for many of the crises that were to break out in the Near East and the Balkan.

In these areas, each of the great powers, Russia, France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary claimed special interest. France and Germany almost went to war over Morocco between 1905-1912. During this period, France had hopes of assuming a protectorate over Morocco and took steps to accomplish her aim. In 1905, Germany under the instigation of Bulow insisted on a conference of the signatories of the Madrid Agreement 1880. In this regard Bulow said, "If France wished to seize economic or political power in Morocco, the remaining signatories of that Madrid Conference of 1880 must be asked for their permission."² The French finally

¹Benns, op. cit., p. 8.

agreed to the settlement of the differences through a congress of the signatories. The outcome of the conference was an economic understanding between Germany and France. This settlement, however, did not end French attempts to establish a protectorate over Morocco. As late as 1911, France was still trying to create in Morocco a vassal state. Under the pretense of putting down a revolt at Fez, France tried to occupy Morocco.¹ The Germans reacted to this move by sending the gunboat Panther to the port of Agadir. War probably would have occured, but neither party wanted it.

Bosnia-Herzegovina proved to be another tense spot for the European countries in 1908. In this year, Austria Hungary formally annexed the two provinces. Russia agreed to assume a friendly attitude towards the annexation if her warships were allowed to pass through the Straits at Constantinople.² After the agreement became known, a storm of protest followed. Russia was not able to get her plan to open the Straits approved and had to abandon it. She then joined the other powers in insisting that an international conference be held to settle the issue. When Austria-Hungary would not agree to this war seemed impending. Its development was retarded by the fact that Russia and France were too weak to stand up to the Dual Monarchy. This was especially true since Germany backed the Dual Monarchy in this conflict. Russia backed down and Serbia was forced to recognize the annexation and declare that it was not detrimental to her interests.³

³Benns, op. cit., p. 16.
Although Russia was forced to abandon Serbia in her moment of distress because of military unpreparedness, she promised never to do it again. While informing Serbia of her inability to save Bosnia-Herzegovina:

... the assurance was given that in two or three years' time Russia would be so well armed that she would be able to conduct a war of offense even with some prospect of success. Serbia must await that time with patience, and continue her work with expedition for the completion of her military preparations.¹

There existed no area in the world that was as tense as the Balkan and Near East. The great powers, Russia, France, England, Austria-Hungary, and Germany all claimed special interests in these areas. England kept a close eye on this area because of its close proximity to Egypt and India. In the meantime, Russia was searching for an outlet to the sea and trying to open the Straits to her warships. Austria-Hungary and Germany busied themselves with acquiring railroad rights in these areas. Any developments in the areas would effect the great powers in one way or another. This tenseness gave way to the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. The Balkan countries were fighting for more territory, first from Turkey and then from each other.

These international disputes, not precipitated by Germany, had unfortunate results for her and the Dual Monarchy. They drew the French and English closer together into an alliance that was to engage in military conversations. These disputed also, caused Russia, France, and Serbia to prepare for the day when they could repay Austria-Hungary and Germany for the humiliation they had suffered at their hands.

¹M. Bogitshevich, Causes of the War: An Examination into the Causes of the European War with Special Reference to Russia and Serbia (Amsterdam: C. L. Langerhuysen, 1919), p. 23.
CHAPTER II

AUSTRO-GERMAN RELATIONSHIPS AND THE REJECTION OF PEACE PROPOSALS

The actual occasion for war presented itself in the form of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife. The act in itself was very insignificant, but became significant when the powers used it to achieve certain aims. Serbia used the crime to achieve her desire to push for a Greater Serbia. At the same time, Austria was using this as an excuse to deal Serbian nationalistic desires a blow. She looked upon this as an opportune time to stop the unfavorable agitation emanating from Serbia.

The Sarajevo crime occurred while the Archduke and his wife were visiting Bosnia-Herzegovina to attend military maneuvers. The Archduke was Inspector-in-Chief of the army, who represented Francis Joseph. This was not a purely military trip, although it was made for the purpose of reviewing the military maneuvers. The trip had political overtones. High officials in the government felt that the trip would strengthen Serbia's loyalty to the Crown and offset the revolutionary elements present. 1

The assassination was planned by the Black Hand, a secret organization in Serbia. Three individuals, Nedeslko Chabrinovitch, 1

Gavrilo Princip and Tryfon Grabez were chosen by the organization to assassinate the Archduke and his wife.\textsuperscript{1} The murderers were to carry out their duty while the Royal party was touring the chief city of Bosnia. In this connection, the first attempt on the Archduke and his wife's life was made by Nedselko Chabrinovitch. Chabrinovitch flung a bomb at Ferdinand's car, but it missed and exploded behind his car wounding one official and several bystanders.

The Royal party continued to the Town Hall where a formal welcome was to be made. The proceeding at the Town Hall went ahead as planned. On the return trip, a new route was followed. The chauffeur of the Archduke's car was not clear on the new route, and turned up the wrong street. As he stopped to turn around, another Bosnian by the name of Gavrilo Princip leaped out and drew a revolver and fatally wounded the Archduke and his wife.

The news of the assassination aroused shock and heartfelt sympathy at the capitals of Europe. This is, with the exception of Serbia. Hart said that:

\begin{quote}
... the Serbian press made little effort to conceal its pleasure, and the Serbian public still less, while the government which, exhausted by the Balkan Wars, had every incentive for peace in order to consolidate its gains, was foolishly remiss in making or offering an investigation into the complicity of its subjects.\textsuperscript{2}
\end{quote}

It was felt by the European powers that Austria-Hungary would take some type of action against Serbia, just what no one knew. In the opinion of

\begin{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}
Montgelas, "the whole world expects that Austria-Hungary would deal severely with Serbia." ¹

Austria-Hungary took the position that the assassination was a threat to the Empire. Since she was a polygot nation, she had to fear revolts from minority groups being swept by the currents of Pan-Slavism. Barnes contends that:

... any serious and successful revolt of one of those subject nationalities would have been a signal for similar efforts on the part of the others, with the resulting disintegration of the whole political structure of the Dual Monarchy. ²

The Dual Monarchy looked upon this as the time to put a stop to the unfavorable propaganda and the political unrest emanating from Serbia. The time had come to suppress Serbia's national aims.

Berlin was especially touched by the news of the assassination. She was an ally of Austria-Hungary and as such would feel the repercussions of the acts. The effects of the assassination on the Dual Monarchy would be felt by Germany. The assassination was also hard felt in Berlin because the Kaiser was a close friend of the Archduke and his wife. The Kaiser was shocked and appalled by this incident. This act so completely shocked the Kaiser, that his attitude toward Serbia was drastically changed. Before the assassination, he had maintained a friendly attitude toward Serbia. On two occasions, between 1912 and 1913, he restrained Austria from crushing Serbia. His fondness for Serbia existed as late as July 1, 1914. ³

¹ Montgelas, op. cit., p. 115.
² Barnes, op. cit., p. 175.
³ Ibid., p. 247.
The assassination frightened the Kaiser for several reasons. He saw it as a danger to himself since he was royalty, for he was possessed by the idea that he might be next. To further compound his fear of being next, news circulated that the twelve assassins were on their way to assassinate him. The act further frightened the Kaiser, because he saw it as a blow to Austria-Hungary's hegemony. The Kaiser assumed that if the assassination was allowed to succeed it would weaken Austria-Hungary and she too would become the second sick man of Europe. He was also of the assumption, that if it was allowed to succeed the other nationals in the Dual Monarchy would revolt and Germany would be left with a weak ally. That is an ally that is no longer an asset, but a liability.

This change in the Kaiser's attitude can be seen on several occasions. One such occasion occurred when he received an account of the attitude of Sir Edward Grey. The Kaiser remarked:

Grey is committing the error of setting Serbia on the same plane with Austria and other Great Powers! That is unheard of! Serbia is nothing but a band of robbers that must be seized for its crimes!

Furthermore his attitude had changed so completely that he was enthusiastically hoping that Austria would move against Serbia severely and rapidly. In this regard he said, "Serbia must be dealt with, and as soon as possible." As far as he was concerned, the movement against Serbia could take the form of a localized war, although it did not have to take the form of a war to be successful. Although it could take the

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1 Ibid., p. 248.
2 Ibid., p. 250.
3 Bloch, op. cit., p. 48.
form of a war, he was definitely against it becoming a general European conflagration. He did not want Germany involved, but he felt that if Russia, England, or France was brought into the conflict Germany would have to live up to her agreement as an ally of Austria-Hungary. Rather than be faced with this possibility, he preferred Austria to deal with Serbia quickly in an effort to keep the war localized. The Kaiser was of the opinion that the sooner Austria acted, the less chance there was for the war to become anything other than a localized one.  

The Kaiser was hasty in forming his opinions, however, the other high officials at Berlin were not. They continuously tried to restrain Austria-Hungary in her action. The German Ambassador Tschirschky was using every opportunity to warn Austria not to be hasty in her decisions concerning what was to be done with the Serbians. He wanted Austria-Hungary to be sure of her actions and the consequences that would result from them. He made efforts to keep the Dual Monarchy from taking any steps that would be detrimental to her allies and Europe as a whole. The German Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Zimmermann also aided Tschirschky in persuading Austria-Hungary to be cautious. A telegram was sent by the Austrian Ambassador in Berlin which personified Zimmermann's words of restraint and caution. He telegraphed:

Zimmermann

Germany Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs assured me that he would consider decisive action on the part of Austria, with whom the whole civilized world today was in sympathy, quite comprehensible, but still he

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1Barnes, op. cit., p. 251.
2Fay, op. cit., II, 199.
would recommend the greatest caution, and advise that no humiliating demands be made upon Serbia.¹

Berchtold, the Austrian Minister, after hearing this restraining advice set out to convince him that Germany should support Austria-Hungary. He began by informing Tschirschky of the Greater Serbia propaganda and pointing out the rumor that the twelve assassins were on their way to assassinate the Kaiser. He informed Tschirschky that this Belgrade plot was as much a concern of Germany as of Austria-Hungary. Tschirschky agreed with Berchtold that if the plot encompassed the Kaiser in any way, it was a grave concern of the German government. However, he refused to give Berlin's support in favor of a war against Serbia.

In view of the attitude of many high officials in Germany, Berchtold felt that an immediate attack on Serbia might leave her without an ally. As a result of this, he deemed it necessary to first acquire the backing of Germany before attempting to deal with Serbia. With this end in view, he sent Count Alexander Hoyos as a special emissary to Berlin to inform William II officially of the assassination. He carried with him an autographed letter from Francis Joseph and a long document. This document discussed at length why Austria-Hungary should make an alliance with Bulgaria. It also advocated immediate military action against Serbia. Francis Joseph's personal letter reaffirmed the document. Bloch writes that the letter:

... repeated the assertions of the memorandum underlined them and insisted upon the condition essential to the carrying out of a programme designed to secure the isolation and

¹Ibid., p. 199.
belittle ment of Serbia through the formation of a new Balkan Alliance under the auspices of the Triple Alliance. . . . 1

The document and letter were presented to the Kaiser on July 5, at Potsdam by Austrian Ambassador Szogyeny. The Kaiser read the documents and noted the graveness of the action that Austria intended to take against Serbia. It was made clear that the Dual Monarchy planned to declare war on Serbia at the opportune moment. In this action he foresaw that a serious European complication might result, but he had no idea that Austria would trigger a European war. He outlined the possible consequences of a possible Austro-Serbian conflict as follows:

The attitude of Russia would be hostile in every respect, but he had been expecting that for years, and even if war should occur between Austria-Hungary and Russia, we might be assured that Germany would side with us, with her traditional loyalty to the alliance. Besides, in the present condition of affairs, Russia would be totally unprepared for war, and would certainly think twice before issuing a call to arms. But she would be sure to stir up the other Powers of the Triple Entente against us, and to fan the flame in the Balkans. 2

Although possessed by apprehension, he agreed to the proposals mentioned in the document. He refused, however, to issue an official statement to this effect until he had discussed it with his chancellor.

Feeling that everything was under control and that Europe was free from a world conflagration, the Kaiser proceeded to prepare for his vacation. Before leaving, however, he held a conference with

1 Bloch, op. cit., p. 47.
representatives of the army and navy to inform them of his meeting with
the Austrian Ambassador. At this meeting, he made it clear that no mili-
tary preparations were to be made. A day later on July 6, he met with
the Prussian Minister of War, Falkenhayn, concerning the same meeting.
They discussed the Austro-Serbian conflict, but did not discuss warlike
issues. The Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, was summoned on the same day
as Falkenhayn. He discussed with the Kaiser the general situation and
the official statement to be issued. The statement read as follows:

As far as concerns Serbia, His Majesty, of course cannot
interfere in the dispute now going on between Austria-
Hungary and that country, as it is a matter not within his
competence. The Emperor Franz Joseph may, however, rest
assured that his Majesty will faithfully stand by Austria-
Hungary, as is by the obligations of his alliance and of
his ancient friendship.²

This statement was the famous blank check given to Austria-Hungary
by Germany. It caused the Austrians to feel that they had unconditional
German backing. Thus they felt they had a free hand to do what was neces-
sary to deal with the Serbs and still have the support of Germany. This
proved to be an irresponsible, foolish act on the part of Germany. It
put Austria out of the reach of Germany's control in the Serbian conflict.
No longer could Germany restrain Austria in her effort to punish Serbia.
Fay analyzed the German bungling as follows:

They gave Austria a free hand and made the grave mistake
of putting the situation outside of their control into the
hands of a man as reckless and unscrupulous as Berchtold.
They committed themselves to a leap in the dark. They soon

¹Fay, op. cit., II, 210-12.
²Barnes, op. cit., p. 185.
found themselves involved, as we shall see, in actions which they did not approve, and by decisions which were taken against their advice; but they could not seriously object and protest— at least until the eleventh hour when it proved too late—because they had pledged their support to Austria in advance, and any hesitation on their part would only weaken the Triple Alliance at a critical moment when it most needed to be strong. The Kaiser and his advisers on July 5 and 6 were not criminals plotting the World War; they were simpletons putting a noose about their necks and handing the other end of the rope to a stupid and clumsy adventurer who now felt free to go as far as he liked.¹

In connection with the Kaiser's receiving the Austrian Ambassador, Szogyeny, at Potsdam on July 5 and the receiving of representatives of the army and navy, Falkenhayn, and Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg, a legend has arose. The rumor was started by a waiter in the Kaiserhof Hotel in Berlin. He misinterpreted some gossip he overheard between some subordinate German officers and some members of the Austrian Embassy who were dining at the hotel. The legend really got out of hand in 1918 as a result of the Ambassador Morgenthau's Story by the American Ambassador to Turkey, Henry Morgenthau. Morgenthau insinuated that on July 5, 1914, a legendary Potsdam Crown Conference was held. The Kaiser was supposed to have met with the economic, political, and military leaders of Germany and Austria-Hungary and informed them of his plan for a general war. In this conference the Kaiser was supposed to have asked those present if the country was in readiness for the war. With the exception of the bankers, everyone answered in the affirmative. The Kaiser granted them two weeks to put their finance in readiness for the war, it has been alleged. During this time, he created a sense of false security in Europe by

¹Fay, op. cit., II, 223.
going on a two weeks vacation. The ultimatum, which was to be delivered to Serbia, was to be delayed for two weeks during the time of preparation.¹

Fay, the historian, proved that the Potsdam Conference did not exist. The persons who were alleged to have been at Potsdam were elsewhere and could not have been plotting a war on July 5. The ambassadors mentioned by Mr. Morgenthau were not present at this alleged conference. The heads of the army and navy were likewise absent from Potsdam on July 5. Similarly false, was the accusations about delay in his story. The Kaiser, it was alleged, allowed a delay in the sending of the ultimatum in order to give the bankers time to get the finances ready for a war. The Kaiser had nothing to do with the delay in the sending of the ultimatum to Serbia. The Austrians delayed sending the ultimatum to Serbia, because they had to secure the consent of Tisza, the Premier of Hungary, for war. It took two weeks for him to be convinced of the plausibility of war. Perhaps the most important reason for the delay was to make sure that Poincare and Viviani had left Petrograd and were inaccessible on the high seas at the time the ultimatum was delivered. Moreover, his assertions about the Germans selling stocks and securities in anticipation of war are equally false. The Stock Market showed no tremendous increase in the selling of stocks or a decline in the value of stocks during this period. The stocks mentioned by Mr. Morgenthau declined only slightly and this was due to American conditions and not to the Germans literally dumping stocks on the market. The Stock Market did not take a terrific dive until after the ultimatum had been delivered and the terms became known.²

²Fay, op. cit., II, 69-82.
The entire myth of the Potsdam Crown Conference has been proven to be false. With the falseness of this myth proven, a portion of the Entente case against Germany disappeared. It was so clearly rendered false that even Poincare, who after looking at all the evidence, had been compelled to admit that there was no Potsdam Crown Conference.

Having dispelled with the notion of the legendary Potsdam Crown Conference, those events taking place after Germany gave Austria-Hungary the blank check shall be discussed. Berchtold, after receiving the blank check, cautiously proceeded with his plans. He had yet to win over Tisza to the idea of war, but this was done by July 14. At this time he moved forward with the German blank check in one hand and his government's consent in the other to draft the ultimatum. By this time according to Fay, he refused to listen to the advice of Germany or keep her abreast of what was going on. Germany advised Austria to come to terms with Italy and to assemble the evidence surrounding the Greater Serbia agitation and put it before Europe shortly before the ultimatum was submitted to Serbia. The Austrians refused to heed this advice and after July 14, kept Germany in the dark as to what was going on.

The Germans repeatedly tried to get information concerning Austria's aims and the precise terms of the ultimatum. It was not until July 18 that they received a vague notion of what the ultimatum was to contain. They found out that Austria would ask Serbia to issue a proclamation stating that she would dissociate herself from the Greater Serbia movement, help carry on an investigation with the aid of one Austrian, and

1Barnes, op. cit., pp. 245-6.
2Fay, op. cit., II, 254-60.
punish the conspirators. The Germans also knew that Serbia would have forty-eight hours to accept or reject the demands and that they would be so framed until she could not accept them.\(^1\) After this date, Germany was not given any more information until the ultimatum was on its way to Serbia.

On July 22, Bethmann-Hollweg and Herr von Jagow were given copies of the ultimatum, after it was on its way to Serbia. Both after reading it thought the ultimatum too sharp and went too far in its demands. According to Bloch, "Jagow considered the note to be too harsh, in its form as well as in its contents."\(^2\) Each wanted the note toned down, but found this was impossible since at that very moment it was being delivered at Belgrade. There was nothing left for the Germans to do but support it, or give Austria's prestige a great blow for it was their blank check which put the ultimatum out of their reach. The Germans had agreed to leave the question of how to deal with Serbia to the Austrians and agreed to support her in whatever action she took. As a result of the blank check and the hand-off attitude, they allowed themselves to be kept in the dark about the exact demands, while upholding them.

The German Emperor was astonished at how far the Serbs had finally gone toward accepting the Austrian demands. He felt Serbia's reply to be very conciliatory, although it was composed of numerous reservations. However, there was only one point that was definitely refused, "the participation of Austrian officials in the judicial inquiry of the Sarajevo

\(^{1}\) Ibid., pp. 260-1.

\(^{2}\) Bloch, op. cit., p. 64.
The Kaiser felt that all reason for war had dissipated, after Serbia's reply was so conciliatory. He made the following marginal note to this effect:

A brilliant performance for a time limit of only forty-eight hours. This is more than one could have expected a great moral victory for Vienna; but with it every reason for war drops away, and Giesl (Austrian Minister to Serbia) might have remained quietly in Belgrade! On the strength of this I should never have ordered mobilization.²

The Kaiser along with the other diplomats, after July 23, spent their time proposing peace plans that would insure peace in a tense and explosive Europe. All of the great powers with the exception of Austria-Hungary wanted peace. The only drawback was their reluctance to make concessions to obtain it. Each alliance wanted the other to restrain its members. According to Simonds:

Germany insisted that the war could only be averted by action of Britain and France in restraining Russia from intervening in the quarrel between Serbia and Austria, while Britain insisted that Austria should be compelled, by her Germany ally, to submit her dispute with Serbia to a European conference and asked Germany to restrain Austria.³

A number of diplomatic conversations took place between July 26 and July 27 in an effort to keep a world conflagration from breaking out. Germany tried to keep the Austro-Serbian conflict localized. Sir Edward Grey of England tried to prevent a war, localized or international. In this direction he proposed on July 26, that the German, French,

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² Montgelas, op. cit., p. 123.

and Italian Ambassador meet with him in England in an attempt to find a satisfactory solution to the crisis. This proposal by Grey was not acceptable to Germany or Austria-Hungary. Russia and France were quite skeptical of this proposal also. The Germans turned the idea of the conference down by saying:

... that the conference suggested would practically amount to a court of arbitration and could not in his opinion be called together except at the request of Austria and Russia. He could not, therefore, fall in with it.¹

Although Germany did not agree to the first proposal, she was in accord with the proposal of mediation between Austria-Hungary and Russia. Germany readily accepted this proposal and worked actively to get Austria to accept it. This plan failed because it proved to be unacceptable to both Russia and France. President Poincare was of the opinion that:

... a conversation a deux between Austria and Russia would be very dangerous at the present moment, and seemed favorable to moderating counsels by France and England at Vienna.²

The failure of the second plan led Germany to suggest a plan for maintaining peace. This plan provided for direct conversation between Austria-Hungary and Russia. On this occasion Austria accepted the plan, but it proved unworkable because of Russia's attitude. Italy on July 27, made the most workable proposal. She proposed that a conference of England, France, Germany, and herself be held to solve the conflict. This conference would be committed to the complete acceptance by Serbia of the

² Fay, op. cit., II, 366.
Austrian ultimatum, not before Austria but before the conference. This proposal was shun by the great powers with the exception of Germany. Germany liked it and tried to persuade Austria not to reject the proposal. One last effort was made by Lord Grey to preserve the peace. His effort came in the form of a proposal for mediation between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. This proposal was accepted by Germany, but rejected by Austria. This plan was later, July 31, approved by Austria, but the approval came too late. The world was standing on the brink of a world war. Russia had mobilized and France was following suit.

The Germans seeing that the conflict could not be localized did not want Austria, after Serbia had been so conciliatory, to involve Europe in a major conflagration. Efforts were made to bring the rebellious Austria-Hungary, who had declared war so as to keep a peaceful solution from being achieved, under control. In an attempt to restrain Austria-Hungary, on July 27 the Kaiser introduced a plan whereby she was to occupy Belgrade. He felt that this plan would be satisfactory to Austria and Russia, and put it forth in a letter to von Jagow on July 28. The plan read as follows:

Nevertheless, the piece of paper (Serbian reply) like its contents, can be considered as of little value so long as it is not translated into deeds. The Serbs are orientals, therefore liars, tricksters, and masters of evasion. In order that these beautiful promises may be turned to truths and facts, a douce violence must be exercised. This should be so arranged that Austria would receive a hostage (Belgrade) as a guaranty for the enforcement and carrying out of the promises, and should occupy it until the petition had actually been complied with. This is also necessary in order to give the army, now unnecessarily mobilized for the

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1 Barnes, op. cit., p. 262.
third time, the external satisfaction d'honneur of an ostensible success in the eyes of the world, and to make it possible for it to feel that it had at least stood on foreign soil. Unless this were done, the abandonment of the campaign might be the cause of a wane of bad feeling against the Monarchy, which would be dangerous in the highest degree. In case Your Excellency shares my views, I propose that we say to Austria: Serbia has been forced to retreat in a very humiliating manner, and we offer our congratulations. Naturally, as a result, every cause for war has vanished. But a guaranty that the promises will be carried out is unquestionably necessary. That could be secured by means of the temporary military occupation of a portion of Serbia, similar to the way we kept troops stationed in France in 1871 until the billions were paid. On this basis, I am ready to mediate for peace with Austria. Any proposals or protests to the contrary by other nations I should refuse regardless, especially as all of them have made more or less open appeals to me to assist in maintaining peace. This I will do in my own way and as sparingly of Austria's nationalistic feeling, and of the honor of her arms as possible. For the latter has already been appealed to on the part of the highest war lord, and is about to respond to the appeal. Consequently it is absolutely necessary that it receive a visible satisfaction d'honneur; this is the prerequisite of my mediation.1

Germany, from the time the ultimatum became known, tried to avert a European war. From the outset she tried to localize the conflict between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Germany gave the Dual Monarchy a free hand in dealing with Serbia, but now she reversed herself. Seeing the impossibility of localizing the conflict, Germany engaged in a campaign to impress upon her ally the seriousness of a war and a few of the peace proposals. Zilliacus contends that:

... so long as she believed that Great Britain would stay out, Germany encouraged Austria to go ahead. Later, when she found Great Britain would fight, the German Government turned round and put pressure on Austria to be conciliatory.2

1Barnes, op. cit., pp. 258-9.
Although the peace proposals failed, Germany efforts to avert a war did not end. She continued to send telegrams to Vienna urging mediation. As late as the night of July 30, Bethmann-Hollweg sent two urgent telegrams to Tschirschky. Each was an S. O. S. to get Austria to reconsider the proposal or face the fact that they would be fighting against four powers. Insofar as he was concerned, Rumania and Italy could not be counted on to give aid. In the second telegram he reaffirmed Germany's position as an ally, but he said:

We are ready to fulfill the obligations of our alliance, but must decline to allow ourselves to be drawn by Vienna light-heartedly and without attention to our proposals into a world conflagration.¹

CHAPTER III

THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITY AND THE BEGINNING
OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

Although the countries of Europe were discussing ways of settling
the Austro-Serbian conflict, the situation continued to deteriorate.
Serbia mobilized only to be followed by Austria-Hungary, who issued a
declaration of war against Serbia on July 28. Hereafter, Austria was not
to entertain any ideas or proposals concerning peace. She turned down the
proposal made by Russia to enter into a discussion of the terms of the
ultimatum and the Serbian's reply. Insofar as Austria-Hungary was concerned,
the time had passed for discussion and a condition of war existed.
She did, however, re-affirm her position on the question of land acquis-
tion. It was made clear that no Serbian land was to be annexed by the
Dual Monarchy if the conflict remained localized.

However, the conflict was not to be localized between Austria-
Hungary and Serbia. Russia was not in a position to allow Serbia to be
crushed. She would rather face total war than the possibility of Austria-
Hungary becoming the predominant power in the Balkan. This view was ex-
pressed by the Russian minister for foreign affairs, Sergei Sazonov, when
he said, "Russia cannot allow Austria to crush Servia and become
predominant power in Balkans, and secure of support of France, she will
face all the risks of war."¹ This decision on the part of Russia, forever put the conflict outside the realm of localization and into the arena of a general European war.

Russia began to make secret preparation for mobilization against Austria-Hungary as early as July 24.² Soldiers were called up for military duty, the reservists and militias were put on military alert, and the country as a whole was being put on a war footing. The Russians drew up plans for partial mobilization that were put into effect on July 29, after the bombardment of Belgrade. Russia justified partial mobilization by stating that, "since Austria-Hungary had mobilized eight corps, Russia found herself compelled to mobilize the military districts on the Austrian frontier."³ Although mobilized, Russia declared that she did not mean war. However, the majority of the great powers looked upon mobilization as a declaration of war. Benns contends that, "it was generally understood between the French and Russian experts that mobilization was equivalent to a declaration of war."⁴

Russia began as early as July 26, to mobilize secretly against Germany. After the Tsar agreed to total mobilization on July 29, the Kaiser became alarmed and sent a telegram to the Tsar asking him to press for peace. The telegram read as follows:

²Barnes, op. cit., p. 332.
³Schmitt, op. cit., p. 102.
⁴Benns, op. cit., p. 29.
I therefore suggest that it would be quite possible for Russia to remain a spectator of the Austro-Serbian conflict without involving Europe in the most horrible war she ever witnessed. I think a direct understanding between your Government and Vienna possible and desirable and as I have already telegraphed to you, my exertions to promote it. Of course military measures on the part of Russia would precipitate a calamity we both wish to avoid and jeopardize my position as mediator which I readily accepted on your appeal to my friendship and my help.

This telegram led the Tsar to stop general mobilization and revert to partial mobilization. However, the state of partial mobilization was to exist for only a short period of time. On July 30, Tsar Alexander again ordered general mobilization of the Russian army. He made this detrimental decision after discussing the situation with Sazonov, the military leaders, and after reading another one of the willy-nilly telegrams. The telegram read as follows:

My ambassador has instructions to direct the attention of your government to the dangers and serious consequences of mobilization. Austria-Hungary has mobilized only against Serbia and only a part of their army. If Russia mobilizes against Austria-Hungary the part of mediator with which you have entrusted me in such a friendly manner, and which I have accepted at your express desire, is threatened if not rendered impossible.

The entire weight of the decision now rests on your shoulders. You have to bear the responsibility of war or peace.2

The Tsar disregarded the telegram from the Kaiser and listened to the advice of Sazonov. Sazonov along with the military leaders convinced the Tsar of the feasibility of general mobilization and of the fact that Germany was not sincere in her peace efforts. They declared that Germany was only stalling for time.

1Schmitt, op. cit., p. 110.

Faced with Russia's mobilization, Germany proceeded to warn Russia of the graveness of this act. In this connection the following telegram was dispatched to the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg to be delivered to the proper person. The Germans telegraphed:

In spite of negotiations still pending and although we have up to this hour made no preparations for mobilization, Russia has mobilized her entire army and navy, hence also against us. On account of these Russian measures we have been forced for the safety of the country, to proclaim the threatening state of war, which does not yet imply mobilization. Mobilization, however, is bound to follow if Russia does not stop every measures of war against us and against Austria-Hungary within twelve hours and notifies us definitely to that effect. Please communicate this at once to M. Sazanoff and wire hour of communication.

This message was communicated to the Russian Foreign Minister, Sazanoff, at midnight on July 31. At 12:52 p.m. on August 1, 1914, no answer had been received in Berlin to the ultimatum.

Having received no answer within the allotted time, Bethmann-Hollweg dispatched another telegram to the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg. It read as follows:

In case the Russian Government gives no satisfactory answer to our demand, Your Excellency will please transmit at 5 o'clock this afternoon (Central European time) the following statement:

The Imperial Government has endeavored from the beginning of the crisis to bring it to a peaceful solution. In accordance with a wish expressed to him by His Majesty the Emperor of Russia, His Majesty the Emperor of Germany, in cooperation with England, took upon himself the role of mediation between the cabinets of Vienna and St. Petersburg; but Russia, without awaiting the outcome, proceeded to mobilize her entire land and naval forces.

As a consequence of this threatening measure, occasioned by no military preparation on the part of Germany, the German

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Empire found itself confronted by a serious and eminent peril. If the Imperial Government had failed to meet this peril, it would have jeopardized the safety and even the existence of Germany. Consequently the German Government was obliged to address the Government of the Emperor of all the Russians and insisted upon cessation of all these military measures. Russia not having thought it should reply to this demand, and having manifested by this attitude that her acts were directed against Germany, I have the honor by order of my Government to make known to Your Excellency the following communication:

His Majesty the Emperor, my august sovereign, in the name of the Empire takes up the defiance and considers himself in a state of war against Russia.

I urgently ask you to wire the hour according to Russian time, of arrival of these instructions, and of their carrying out.

Kindly ask for your passports and hand over the protection of German interests to the American Embassy.

After the Russians did not answer within the allotted time, Germany entered the phase of mobilization. She had promised Austria-Hungary that she would keep Russia out of the conflict, this she had tried to do by threat of mobilization. Russia, however, was determined not to back down in the face of a Teutonic threat on this occasion. She refused to suffer again the humiliation or loss of prestige in the Balkan that she had suffered in 1908, when Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina. This time she refused to desert Serbia in her time of need. Instead she preferred to stand up to Austria-Hungary and Germany if necessary. Receiving no answer from Russia, Germany began to mobilize at 5 p.m. on August 1. An hour later, she declared war on Russia.

From the declaration of war against Russia, Germany's attitude, like that of the other continental powers, was determined by military considerations. She was concerned with getting the war underway and as a result made many diplomatic blunders. Finding herself entangled in a

1 Ibid., p. 560.
war, she tried to secure the neutrality of France and Britain. The French being allies of Russia were asked for a promise of neutrality in a Russo-German war. To this inquiry the French answered that, "France will have regard to her own interests."¹ The Germans took this evasive and ambiguous answer as support for Russia and precipitated events by issuing a declaration of war against France on August 3.

Fearing the possibility of being attacked from two sides, Germany acted under the doctrine that, "when war has become necessary it is essential to carry it on in such a way as to place all the chances in one's favour."² Following the Schlieffen Plan, the Germans planned to swing through Belgium and defeat France within six weeks, after which they would turn their strength against Russia.

In an attempt to defeat France in a hurry so that she could turn her attention to Russia, Germany made a big blunder. The only way that she could knock France out quickly was to march through Belgium, a neutral country. Germany requested that her troops be permitted to march through Belgium. The Belgians refused this request, but the Germans pleading military necessity proceeded to march through Belgium. This was in direct opposition to the international treaty of 1839, which established Belgium as a neutral state.³ The German Chancellor admitted that to march through Belgium was a violation of her neutrality, but he promised that her sovereignty would be guaranteed and she would be compensated for the damages she received after the war. In this same

³Oxford Faculty, op. cit., p. 18.
connection, Germany committed another diplomatic blunder when one of her diplomats referred to the treaty guaranteeing Belgium's neutrality as a scrap of paper.\(^1\) The Belgians in defense of their neutrality resisted the Germans valiantly and threw the German military time table off. Belgium appealed to England and France for help against Germany.

England came to the defense of Belgium and the sanctity of treaties, by declaring war against Germany at midnight on August 4. Earlier, August 2, she had assured France that she would protect her coastline in case of an attack by Germany. Although a state of war existed between Germany and England, as late as August 5, Grey let it be known that he would always be ready to mediate. At the same time to Ambassador Lichnowsky he said, "We don't want to crush Germany."\(^2\)

Zilliacus insinuated that England did not go to war for the sakes of Belgium's neutrality, but for reasons of self interest. Britain aided France and Russia, because she could not allow them to be defeated. If they were defeated, Germany would be the preponderant power on the Continent and strong enough to challenge England's position and perhaps absorb her of her colonies. Zilliacus further believed economic motives led England to declare war against Germany. The question of Belgium's neutrality served as a moral issue to rally the citizens of England and the World behind the country's efforts.\(^3\)

Eventually other nations were to align with the Allied of the Central Powers. Montenegro and Japan were to array themselves with the

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\(^1\)Albertini, op. cit., p. 496.


\(^3\)Zilliacus, op. cit., pp. 134-139.
Allied forces within the first month of the outbreak of hostilities. Montenegro issued a declaration of war against the Central Powers on August 10. A few days later, August 23, Japan followed suit and issued a declaration of war. Italy, Rumania, and the United States were all to take up the Allied cause as the war progressed. Italy and Rumania entered the war in 1915, after being offered certain territorial enticements after the war. Both former allies of the Central Powers, declared their neutrality at the start of the conflict. They argued that they had signed defensive pacts with Germany and Austria-Hungary, whereas the two were fighting an offensive war. The United States entered the war in 1917, as a result of Germany's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare.

The Central Powers gained strength also, as the war progressed. In keeping with a secret treaty, which provided that Turkey would enter the war on the side of the Central Powers in case Russia intervened in the conflict, Turkey joined the Central Powers in November, 1915. Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in 1915.

These were the two alliances that faced each other on the Eastern and Western front from 1914 to 1918.
CHAPTER IV

PROS AND CONS ON THE WAR GUILT OF GERMANY DURING THE AFTERMATH OF THE WAR

Article 231 of the Versailles Treaty resulted in a passionately argued issue in both domestic and international politics. The debates, however, did not end in the political arenas. They were to extend from newspapers and popular magazines, through the office of propagandists and politicians, to the studies of scholarly historians.

Many countries, in answer to Germany's refutation of war guilt, published huge collections of documents from their foreign office archives covering the period from 1871 to 1914. As a result of this move on the part of the powers, the historians had a great deal of primary information at their disposal with which to work. Faced with their opinions concerning the role of economic, political, intellectual, and social factors in the formulation of national policies, certain information was selected for use while other was rejected. This process of selection and rejection of material played an important role in determining what interpretation the historians would put upon the wording of these documents. Using almost the identical documents, some historians supported Germany's guilt while others put forth other theories as to who was guilty of starting the world conflagration.
Several schools of thought on Germany's guilt have evolved over the years. The oldest school contends that the verdict of the Commission on War Guilt was just in its accusation that Germany along with her allies deliberately planned the war. This group consisted of two representatives from each of the Big Five countries, United States, England, Japan, Italy, and France, and one each from Belgium, Poland, Serbia, and Greece. The Commission concluded that the Triple Alliance did certain things which made a war inevitable. The Commission cites the refusal on the part of Germany and Austria-Hungary to accept mediation as an example of their deliberately planning war. To the Commission this was proof enough that they did not want to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, but wanted war.  

Camille Block is in accord with the Versailles verdict. He stipulated that Germany and Austria-Hungary took advantage of the Sarajevo crime to deal with the Serbs. He inferred that Germany pushed Austria-Hungary to take military action against Serbia, although it might end in a general European war. It was not Russia's mobilization which led Germany to declare war, for she had decided on war twelve hours before the Tsar gave the orders for general mobilization. Germany's mobilization was in keeping with a military time table which had been drawn up earlier.  

A. J. P. Taylor, an Oxford scholar, reasserts German responsibility for the first World War. Taylor concludes that the Triple Entente did not want a war, but the Triple Alliance needed a war in order to achieve

certain territorial gains. Nevertheless, he feels that Germany did not expect a war in August, 1914, but welcomed it when it occurred. She thought that she was in a position to win the war in 1914, but doubted her ability to do so in a few years because Austria-Hungary was growing progressively weaker and France and Russia were gaining in strength and nerves.¹

Bernadotte E. Schmitt, in *The Origins of the First World War*, theorizes that the war occurred because Germany and Austria-Hungary sought a military solution to the Austro-Serbian conflict. The Triple Alliance chose war rather than mediation in an attempt to upset the balance of power. It had hopes of exerting its ascendancy in Europe War was the only way that this aim could be accomplished, so the members of the Triple Alliance chose war.²

Pierre Renouvin in, *The Immediate Origins of the War*, charges Germany and Austria with desiring a war. He contends that they deliberately set out to start a war and would not accept any peace proposal which might jeopardize this aim. Their refusal to accept a peaceful solution to the Serbian conflict and their thirst for war against Serbia threw Europe into a general war.³

A school known as the revisionist was to evolve to challenge the traditionalist viewpoint of who started World War I. Many eminent historians have associated with this school and its call for a just and


³Renouvin, op. cit., p. 354.
fair appraisal of who and what caused the war. The revisionist movement was pioneered by Count Max Montgelas in 1919, when he assisted in editing the Kautsky Documents. This work represented the first attempt to present a complete story of Germany's pre-war diplomacy. Count Montgelas did further work in discrediting the Versailles verdict through the writing of articles and books.

In The Case for the Central Powers, he draws seventeen conclusions as to war guilt. Count Montgelas believes that Germany sought no gains in Europe or elsewhere which could only be acquired through war. This was not true in the case of either France or Russia. France needed a war in order to recover Alsace and Lorraine, whereas Russia needed a war to acquire the Straits and Constantinople. In his assault on the Versailles verdict he disproved several myths. Insofar as armaments were concerned, Germany was not as well prepared as France and Russia. He admits, however, that it was a mistake for Germany to build a fleet but no will for war can be reduced from it. He refutated the argument that Germany deliberately planned the war at Potsdam on July 5 and that she turned down all attempts at mediation. Germany, it was shown, accepted a majority of the peace proposal and introduced on her own initiative two methods of negotiation. Count Montgelas contends that Russia's mobilization led Germany to declare war.¹

Erich Brandenburg, a German historian, set out to determine Germany's role in starting the world war. After looking at a great deal of documents, he theorizes that it was not Germany but France and Russia who caused the war. He contends that Germany's policy after the dropping

¹Montgelas, op. cit., pp. 200-3.
of Bismarck can be criticized. This criticism can be based on short
sightedness and recklessness, but not on planning a war. At no time did
Germany want or seek a war. Germany's policy was at no time warlike, if
anything it was too peaceloving. On the other hand, France and Russia
sought a war to achieve certain objectives. Poincare pushed for a war to
achieve revanche and Isvolski sought a war in an effort to achieve control
of the Balkans and the Straits. The immediate cause of the War, Russian
mobilization, was the work of Isvolski and Poincare in search of their
objectives.1

Harry Elmer Barnes, feeling that a grave injustice had been done
the German people sought to popularize the revisionist position in the
United States. Barnes repudiated the entire notion of the war guilt
thesis. He charges Serbia, France, and Russia with starting the war.
The three countries looked upon the Sarajevo crime as the appropriate
episode to bring about the desired conflict with the Triple Alliance.
They hurriedly prepared for mobilization, knowing that mobilization meant
a general war. Barnes charges Austria-Hungary with war guilt after Serbia,
France, and Russia. Lastly, he places the blame on Germany and England
equally. Although he places the blame on them equally, he contends that
the Kaiser worked harder to preserve the peace than did Sir Edward Grey.2

Sidney Bradshaw Fay, an American, also supports the revisionist
position. Fay stipulates that none of the European Powers wanted war,
but when it seemed inevitable each tried to achieve various advantages.
Fay blames each of the countries, in varying degrees for starting the war.

1Brandenburg, op. cit., pp. 518-23.
2Barnes, op. cit.
Each country's statesmen did certain things or refused to do certain things which led to mobilizations and declarations of war. Serbia's guilt for the war lies in her refusal to give Vienna any foreknowledge of the Belgrade plot. There exist the possibility that had Austria known measures could have been taken to avert the fatal crime. Nevertheless, this was not reason enough for Austria to drag Europe into a war. Austria, he charges with primary guilt in the conflagration. Rather than abandon her desire for a war, if she could not have a localized one, she preferred to deliberately cause a general war. It is unfortunate that Germany felt obligated to support her ally. She definitely did not plot a war or want one, and made genuine efforts to avert one. However, she was the victim of her alliance and as such must assume a share in the responsibility for causing the war. Russia's guilt for the war is based on two facts. First, the encouragement of Serbia to push her nationalistic desires against Austria and secondly, for her hasty mobilization which led Germany to declare war. Russia's mobilization rendered a European war inevitable. England's position complicated the diplomatic scene and as such she is charged with starting the war. England's guilt lies in her refusal to come out strong on the side of the Entente early in the crisis or declare her neutrality. Had she declared her intentions of supporting France and Russia, it is doubtful if Germany would have allowed Austria to involve Europe in a war. On the other hand, if England had declared her neutrality France would have exerted a restraining influence on Russia and kept her from mobilizing and starting a world war.¹

¹ Fay, op. cit., II, pp. 547-58.
A few historians writing, on the causes of the war, have not placed the responsibility for the war on any one country. They have taken the position that certain conditions existed in 1914 which made the war inevitable. No one country created these conditions, but all of them aided in the development of these warlike conditions. The historians supporting this school are found in the persons of Raymond Aron and K. Ziliacus.

Aron contends that the war was not caused by the diplomats, but by the European situation. Europe existed at the time of the Sarajevo incident in a state of hostility and military preparedness. Every past incident had aggravated the situation until the conflict in the East caused it to come to a head. Faced with this new conflict, each alliance willed peace, but a conditional peace. The European situation would not allow a country to retreat is the possibility of localization to become a reality. Each country was trying to maintain its power and prestige at the expense of another country. Under these circumstances, the Serbian problem could only lead to total war. ¹

In his book, Mirror of the Past, K. Ziliacus puts forth the thesis that the war was caused by international anarchy, imperialism, and militarism. Finance capitalism worked on these causes to aggravate the European scene and made war inevitable. Each country went to war in defense of its imperialistic interest which were in a sense finance capital. ²

¹Lee, op. cit., pp. 67-72.
²Ziliacus, op. cit., p. 37.
Did Germany cause World War I? After collecting data and making several observations, the question is no nearer to being answered than before. It is difficult to place the responsibility for the cause of the war on this or that statesman, country, or on a chain of events. It would be easy to say that Germany caused the war, but it is equally as easy to say that she is not guilty of the crime. Likewise, it would be just as easy to make the same statement concerning Austria-Hungary, France, Serbia, and England. There is so much evidence for and against each country that the decision as to primary responsibility seems to be largely a matter of arranging the evidence according to the already existing bias of each investigator.

Of the many countries involved in the crisis, Germany has been accused of plotting the war. She has been accused on the grounds of an endless number of ifs such as: if Germany had not built a navy equal to England's; if Germany had not lived up to her role as an ally; and if Germany had supported the peace proposals more vigorously and forced Austria to accept one of them. Such speculation is, of course, futile.

For as many "ifs" raised by the believers of Germany's guilt there are as many incidences to refute them. The evidence shows that no desire for war can be assumed from Germany's naval building program. The program
was not extensive enough to challenge Britain's supremacy on the sea. At completion, the program would have given Germany only a naval tonnage of 1.02 million as compared to Britain's 2.17 million. Her naval program was a part of a general program to improve her means of protection in an ever increasing militaristic world. Every country during this period was increasing its armaments, with Russia and France leading.

The evidence again disproves the myth that Germany supported Austria in her desire to start a general war. The evidence shows that Germany supported Austria in a localized conflict with Serbia. It was made perfectly clear that Germany and Austria from the beginning of the conflict anticipated a localized conflict. Russia's position, however, made localization impossible. Austria, after not being able to localize the conflict resorted to a world war to achieve her aim of military action against Serbia. It has been said that Germany should not have supported Austria. The truth, however, shows that Germany was obligated to do so if the Dual Monarchy was going to continue as a power to contend with. Had Germany refused to support Austria as their treaty stipulated and Austria was dealt a diplomatic defeat, the other nationals in the Empire would have followed Serbia's lead and Austria would have become the second sick man of Europe. This Germany was not in a position to allow. With the increase in armaments, nationalism, and imperialism, Germany needed an ally to balance her leading enemies, France and Russia. She could not abandon her only reliable ally and become isolated between two hostile camps. Self preservation dictated that Germany support Austria-Hungary.

In judging Germany, it must not be forgotten that Poincare gave Russia the
same blank check that Germany gave Austria. Poincaré encouraged Russia with promises of support to stand staunchly behind Serbia and her nationalistic aims even if it meant a world conflagration.

The evidence refutes the accusation that Germany did not support the peace proposals vigorously enough. The Kaiser posed as the champion of peace from the beginning of the Austro-Serbian conflict. It is true that he urged Austria-Hungary to take immediate steps against Serbia, but Europe as a whole knew that Austria was going to take some steps against Serbia for the assassination of the Archduke. Austria decided to push for a punitive war against the Serbs. The Kaiser felt that a war was not necessary to punish Serbia and he felt that the Serbian reply to the Austrian ultimatum was very conciliatory, thus banishing all reasons for war. From this point he tried to impress upon Austria the importance of accepting one of the peace proposals put forth by Sir Edward Grey and himself.

In this effort to find a peaceful solution to the Austro-Serbian conflict, Germany accepted all of Lord Grey's proposals save the first one which provided for a conference of ambassadors from England, France, Italy, and Germany. Hereafter, she accepted all of the proposals and tried to impress them upon her ally. Austria, however, an independent and sovereign nation had the prerogative to accept or reject the proposals put before her. This prerogative she exercised in rejecting the proposals. She was, however, not the only power to reject a majority of the proposals for France and Russia did likewise.

Germany continued to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict, after the fighting had begun between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Her
attempts were brought to an abortive end by Russia's mobilization which made war inevitable. Germany asked Russia to cease mobilization, but the plead was answered by general mobilization being ordered by the Tsar on July 29.

The evidence shows that Germany did not plot a war and did not want one. Everything was progressing favorably for her under peaceful conditions. She was thriving industrially and constantly increasing her percentage of the world's trade. Likewise, her imperialistic aims were being realized through the Berlin to Bagdad railway and her diplomatic triumphs at Constantinople. Although making great strides toward becoming the leading continental power, she was enjoying a healthy relationship with England. A majority of the leaders of Germany recognized their good fortune and the fact that they had more to gain through peace. War would only jeopardize everything they had carefully built up.

After reviewing the literature in the case, the author takes the position that the Versailles verdict is unjust and inaccurate. The war of 1914 cannot be accounted for by any one error of statesmanship or will for war. The causes of the war were created to some extent by all of the nations concerned. Europe prior to the outbreak of the war existed in a state of anarchy. Each state, under the influence of increasing militarism, imperialism, and nationalism, felt itself to be a sovereign nation recognizing no higher authority higher than its own. Each nation felt itself to be the court of last resort for any question concerning its interest and welfare, and would leave its fate to an arbiter only when it concerned national honor or territorial integrity. Under these conditions there existed always the possibility of war.
Each country in trying to unite people of the same race, who spoke the same language, possessed similar customs and traditions, and inhabited contiguous areas, into one independent country, was making war even more likely to occur. The Germans, Italians, Greeks, Belgians, Serbians, and Rumanians were all trying to realize their goal of becoming empires. They were realizing these goals by clashing with each other. This clashing and bitterness created a distrust and warlike atmosphere among the nations of Europe. With conditions as they were, the least thing, such as an overly ambitious state which felt locked in and was not able to fulfill its needs or desires could precipitate a world war.

Each international conflict in the Balkans and Near East led Europe closer to a European war. These conflicts would have led to a war earlier, but none of the powers felt strong enough to win a war. However, 1914 was different. France and Russia felt that they were strong enough to contend with Austria and Germany. At the same time, Austria and Germany felt themselves strong enough to challenge the Triple Entente. This readiness and the inability of the alliances to back down led Europe straight into a world war.

Germany did not create these warlike conditions which were waiting for a spark to ignite into a general war along. All of the countries shared in their development and as such all of them must share in the war guilt. True, the Austrian desire to punish Serbia after the Sarajevo incident signal the beginning of the war. However, the world had been preparing the way for war ever since the unification of Germany and Italy. The Sarajevo crime proved to have been the needed spark to set off a chain reaction which was to end in war.
It was not Germany who made war inevitable, after the Sarajevo crime but France and Russia. The possibility exists that the war could have been localized had not Russia professed to ascertain certain gains by mobilizing in protection of Serbia. It was known in Russia that general mobilization meant a general war, since the alliance system would come into play.

Present data has shown the unrealistic position of the Versailles verdict to be untenable. It is inaccurate in charging Germany with the crime. She did not strive for nor did she start a European war. It was forced on her by circumstances and like the other countries she accepted the challenge and mobilized. Unlike the others, she was defeated and at the mercy of the victors. As the vanquished, she was charged with the crime, a crime of which she was not guilty.
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