

July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1914

## The Royal Navy Grows Wings



### Birth of the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS)

Development of aviation dedicated to the purpose of war was a hectic field of research in the years preceding the start of the Great War. Nine years after the Wright brothers' first flight, ownership of the sky promised unlimited advantage in a conflict of arms.

The British government had agreed that the army would take the lead in creating a flying expertise with the creation of the Royal Flying Corps.

But the Navy soon found that its own interests would be better served if it created a flying corps of its own.

From 1909, separate facilities were created to foster a naval adaptation of aviation techniques. In 1912, the Admiralty had its own Air Department where Captain Murray Sueter RN looked after his own Naval Air Service.

**On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1914**, the Royal Navy officially declared a separate service to be called the **Royal Naval Air Service**.

This decision turned out eventually to be detrimental to the progress of aviation. The traditional lack of cooperation between Army and Navy brought a revulsion to sharing information and resources.

— «**Apart from complicating strategic co-operation with the Army, this heralded four years of inter-service rivalry and fierce competition for manufacturing resources.**»<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> •Sweetman, Cavalry of the Clouds, 20-1.



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## July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1914

### Why Not War Now?

Alexander Graf von Hoyos



Chef de cabinet of the Imperial Foreign Minister

### Austria-Hungary Looking for Reassurance from Berlin

A fateful conversation, later said to have been 'private', took place in Vienna in the first days of July 1914 between **Count Alexander Graf von Hoyos**, the permanent head of the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry and Victor Naumann, a 'publicist' with access as a 'confident' to the German Foreign Ministry.

These two discussed the situation in view of the recent events in Sarajevo and the mood prevailing in Berlin. Naumann, was in fact sent on a special mission that was not given to the German Ambassador, to relate a view shared in Berlin.

His message was plain, showing that the Germans were not opposed to a war against Serbia now.

The following points were raised, which were of great interest to the Austrian leadership:

- ✓The Triple Alliance was seen as not strong now.
- ✓The Anglo-German settlement in Africa would restrain Britain from entering the conflict.
- ✓The Foreign Ministry of Germany would not oppose a move.
- ✓The Kaiser was all in agreement.

— Little thought was given to a possible intervention by Russia.

•Fischer, 52-3.



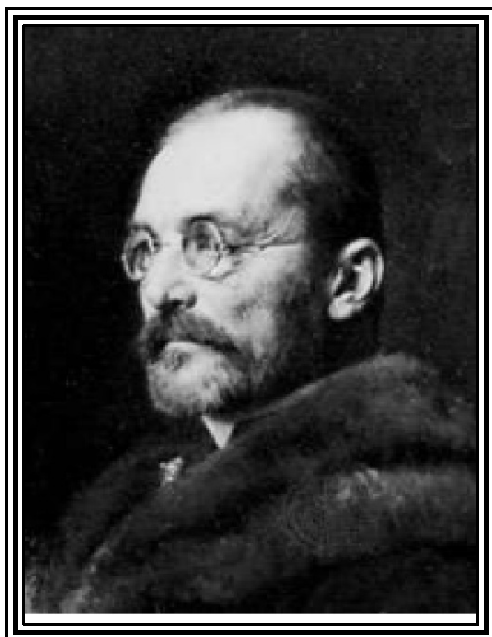
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July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1914

Not quite unanimous yet



### Prime Minister Tisza of Hungary Smells a Rat

In early July 1914, few Austrian members of the Austrian-Hungarian Cabinet are against the idea of organizing a punitive expedition against Serbia in retaliation for the murder of the Archduke Franz-Ferdinand, and annexing the Slav state to the Habsburg Empire once and for all.

But some opposition comes from the Hungarian side, notably from their influential first minister, **Count István Tisza**. Tisza argues from the point of view of Budapest in the debate:

**«Austria-Hungary did not have enough evidence against Serbia, he wrote to the Emperor on July 1, to persuade the world that the smaller state was guilty. Moreover, the dual Monarchy's international position was already weak: Rumania, despite its secret treaty, was unlikely to stand by it and the possible support of Bulgaria was not sufficient compensation. Tisza's advice was that Austria-Hungary should continue to work for a peaceful settlement with Serbia.»<sup>1</sup>**

However, in the following weeks, Tisza will give in to the tremendous pressures that will be put on him to agree to the invasion. He will eventually pay with his life for this failure to prevent the aggression.

— Count Tisza will be assassinated on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1918 for having caused the suffering to his people in the War.

•MacMillan, Road to 1914, p. 556; Strachan, The First World War, Vol. I: To Arms, p. 76-7.



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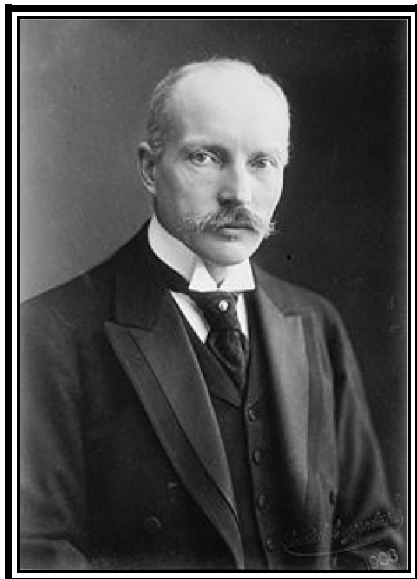
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## July 4, 1914

### «Through Thick and Thin»

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### Germany Vouches Support for Austria

In addition to the informal message that Victor Naumann has already conveyed to Count Hoyos two days ago, the German Ambassador in Vienna, **Heinrich Leonhard von Tschirschky und Bögendorff** sends a verbal note to the Austrian Foreign Ministry through an Embassy *homme de confiance*, on **4 July 1914**, which contains the following statement:

**«‘Germany would support the Monarchy through thick and thin, whatever action it decided to take against Serbia. The sooner Austria-Hungary struck, the better.’»**

This statement is exactly what the Austrian-Hungarian Imperial government was hoping for. It means that Germany will help Austria-Hungary face the diplomatic opposition that will undoubtedly come from other European powers against the invasion of Serbia.

These informal messages pave the way for more official statements of policy that Austria-Hungary is now confident it can endeavour to ask from the German government.

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●Fischer, p. 53.



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July 5, 1914

## The Pivot must be eliminated

### Emperor Franz-Joseph's message to the Kaiser

**Habsburg Emperor Franz Joseph I** has been the Monarch of Austria for 66 years. For 47 years he has been the Emperor of the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, with the title of King of Austria, King of Bohemia and Head of a number of smaller principalities which are part of his empire.

Franz Joseph has always been tormented by the multifarious movements of nationalism that have sprung at various times within his Empire. He was there in the 1848 Liberal Revolution in Vienna, and in the German-Austrian War of 1866. He is the one who negotiated the Austrian-Hungarian alliance in 1867 and made it work despite the odds. Most believe that nobody else could have held the multiethnic empire together for all those years. But turning 84 in little more than a month, he is now challenged with the prospect of Serbian nationalism leading the way for more Balkan uprisings.

The Emperor has now seen his 'poor nephew' who was to replace him, assassinated with his wife in public. The outrage and panic in Vienna is palpable. The old emperor must regain the stability of the Dual Monarchy before it is

handed over. For this he needs help.

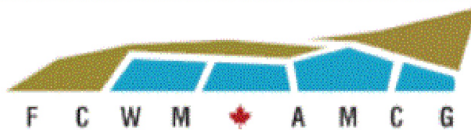
**On July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1914**, strengthened by the recent informal affirmation of German solidarity, Franz Joseph writes to the Kaiser of Germany to confirm that indeed Germany will stand behind Austria-Hungary in the difficult decisions ahead. His pleading contains the following exhortation to Wilhelm II:

**«The pivot of the Pan-Slav policy must be eliminated as a political factor in the Balkans.»<sup>1</sup>**

— The old Emperor's legacy hinges on that pivot. This is his last will and he knows it.

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Cowles, *The Kaiser*, p. 313.



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## July 6, 1914

### The Blank Check



### Emperor Wilhelm's Good-to-Go Signature

The Government of Germany has a Parliament in the Reichstag where the political parties and elected officials can debate issues and use the power of taxation to influence Crown policy. However, the Prime Minister (Chancellor) and Cabinet ministers are not selected by the parties in Parliament but nominated by the Head of State with or without consideration of popularity.

The Constitution of Germany thus gives immense powers to the Head of State in regard to the dismissal of ministers, foreign policy, war, and control of military services. The *Immediatvortrag* gives immediate access to the Kaiser to the heads of the armed services, Army and Navy, to present their views on issues of defence policy. War policy can thus be decided with little consideration of the Parliament's or Chancellor's recommendations.

When **Kaiser Wilhelm II** receives the letter from Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria-Hungary, on **July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1914**, asking for his help in addressing the nationalist uprising in Serbia and committing to supporting an armed invasion of Serbia, the Constitution of Germany allows Wilhelm to determine policy on

his own will.

Kaiser Wilhelm is of a character that makes him volatile, ambitious, aristocratic, and imperious. He sees the relationship between dynastic monarchs as still an important factor in European politics. His answer to Franz Joseph on the same day is reported to Vienna by the Austrian Ambassador in Berlin:

«[Wilhelm II] **'would regret it if we (Austria-Hungary) let the present chance, which was so favourable for us, go by without utilising it.'**»

— This impulsive answer was famously known as the « **Blank Check** » to Franz Joseph.

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•Fischer, p. 54.



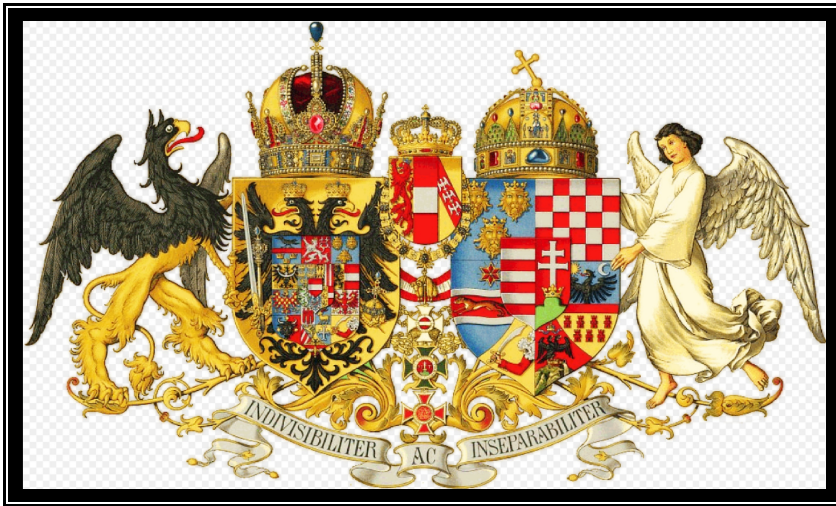
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July 7, 1914

«Indivisibiliter ac Inseparabiliter»



## Le Conseil Impérial d'Autriche-Hongrie

Maintenant que le gouvernement d'Autriche-Hongrie a reçu le message du Kaiser à l'effet que l'Allemagne impériale se porterait garante des décisions de l'Empereur Franz Joseph, quelles qu'elles soient, le **Conseil impérial d'Autriche-Hongrie** peut maintenant considérer toutes les options ouvertes dans sa politique envers la Serbie.

Le Chef de l'État-Major général impérial, le général Conrad, recommande une invasion rapide pour laquelle il se dit

prêt militairement. Le ministre des affaires étrangères, Berchtold, ainsi que le premier ministre autrichien, Strügkh, vont même dire qu'une hésitation de la part du gouvernement pourrait réduire le statut de l'Autriche-Hongrie en tant qu'alliée de la grande Puissance qu'est l'Allemagne. Seul le premier ministre de Hongrie, Tisza, hésite encore, puisqu'il aimerait que plus de diplomatie soit utilisée et qu'une sommation soit émise avant une invasion, pour donner aux Serbes le loisir de prouver leur innocence ou de se rétracter.

Le Conseil Impérial d'Autriche-Hongrie est une entité multiculturelle supposément «Indivisible et Inséparable».

Il faut toutefois un appât du gain clair pour l'amener à une unanimité, — ou des pressions politiques écrasantes.

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●Fischer, p. 57-61.



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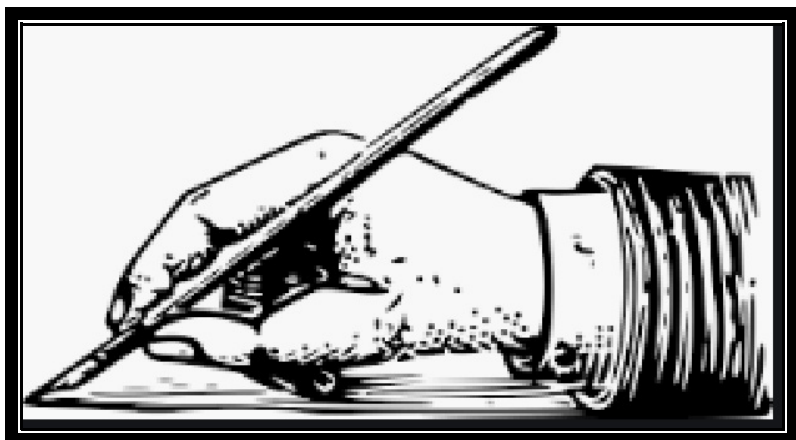
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**July 8, 1914**

**Arrêtez !!!**

## **Le Premier ministre Tisza écrit à l'Empereur**



Le premier ministre de la Hongrie, le Comte Tisza, est un membre important du Conseil impérial d'Autriche-Hongrie. La Double Monarchie fonctionne habituellement par consensus entre les deux nations sous les bannières siamoises de l'Empereur François-Joseph.

Le Conseil de Guerre qui se rassemble à Vienne doit décider de l'action à prendre envers la Serbie, que l'on accuse de protéger des groupes révolutionnaires qui ont préparé l'assassinat de l'archiduc François Ferdinand, à Sarajevo, le 28 juin.

Le Comte Tisza devient la voix de la mesure dans ce Conseil surexcité. Il incite, en fait, exhorte, les ministres à plus de prudence dans leur commentaires puisque très peu d'évidence existe pour prouver que le gouvernement de Belgrade a en fait caché les rapports qui le lient aux assassins du 28 juin.

**Le 8 juillet 1914**, le Comte Tisza écrit formellement une lettre à l'Empereur l'enjoignant de retenir une décision imminente qui pourrait mal tourner. Il fait part de ses craintes que les puissances d'Europe pourraient se retourner contre l'Empire Austro-Hongrois, et que les opérations militaires envisagées pourraient mal aboutir dans le contexte de la situation politique des Balkans.

Il s'agira là de la voix étouffée de la raison dans cette affaire de prestige et de fierté nationaux. — La vague de vengeance qui déferle sur Vienne, enflammée par l'appui allemand, fera peu cas d'une lettre écrite à contre-courant.

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●Max Schiavon, L'Autriche-Hongrie dans la première Guerre mondiale: Le Fin d'un Empire (SOTECA, 14-18 Éditions, 2011) Collection Les Nations dans la Grande Guerre, sous la direction de Frédéric Guelton, p. 77ff.



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July 9, 1914

## L'agent américain a le nez fin

### Le Colonel House porte un message du Président Wilson

Le Président des États-Unis, Woodrow Wilson, s'intéresse aux affaires européennes puisque toutes les crises politiques au delà de l'Atlantique se reflètent habituellement dans le commerce intercontinental. Le Président Theodore Roosevelt a intervenu lors des tensions du Maroc, en 1908, et a su susciter, en tant qu'arbitre extérieur au conflit, non seulement une influence pacifique, mais un regain de commerce dont l'Amérique a bénéficié.

Wilson se sert d'un gentleman qui n'a aucune fonction officielle, mais en qui il a confiance, pour porter la bonne parole aux chefs d'État européens. Il s'agit du **Colonel Edward M. House**, un homme qui n'a jamais été colonel, mais qui a toujours su se faire adopter comme conseiller personnel par des politiciens démocrates. Wilson lui confie des missions à l'insu du State Department, et House ramène des évaluations dont Wilson apprécie l'acuité.

Edward Mandell House, *An Onlooker in France 1917–1919* von William Orpen, 1921.

Le Colonel House a déjà rapporté, en mai dernier, que Wilhelm était de nature nerveuse, très susceptible, et enclin à des épisodes de pessimisme. Il a relaté des commentaires du César allemand qui montrent combien il est convaincu que l'encerclement de son pays est dangereux.

Cet agent discret, plein d'intuition, connaît le personnage assez bien, et croit qu'il serait important pour le Président de porter un message de paix au Chef d'État bouillant après les événements de Serbie. Wilson permet donc à House d'écrire une lettre au Kaiser pour lui relater quelques mots bien choisis du Président des États-Unis.

— L'Amérique est lointaine pour Wilhelm, et il sait bien que Wilson n'a qu'une chose en tête: assurer la croissance du commerce international où les États-Unis émergent comme nouvelle puissance économique.

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●Kirchberger, *An Eyewitness to History* (Oxford: 1992), 337-8; Cowles, *Kaiser*, 308.



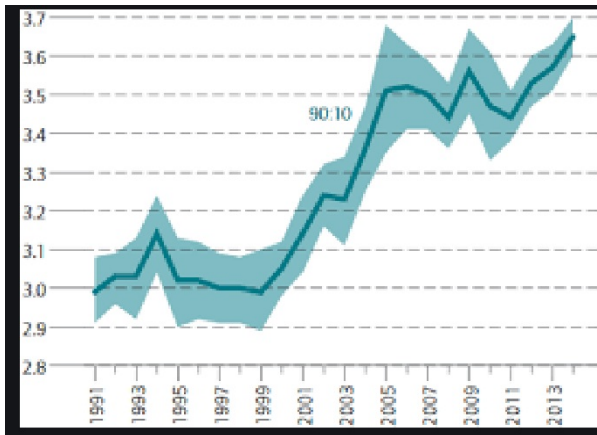
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July 10, 1914

Running scared in all directions



### German Lack of Policy: A Void Soon Filled

The position of Germany in Europe, in July 1914, is in fact a lot less dramatic than the Kaiser and some of the German leadership perceive it. But there is a tension inside Germany that makes it unbalanced and divided. This makes the German people nervous about the future and apprehensive of European affairs as they appear to evolve.

Historian A.J.P. Taylor claims that this tension was due to internal conflicts between industrialists, who were intent in pushing German science and production so as to become dominating in Europe. But their views on the

proper avenues of progress were not shared. The economic power of fast growing German industries was diffuse and uncontrolled by government.

This created a need for the German leadership to focus on external threats, in the absence of competent leaders to steer policy adroitly. Taylor thus says:

**The great capitalists were winning the mastery of Europe without war: the industries of southern Russia, the iron-fields of Lorraine and Normandy were already largely under their control. Each group in Germany had a single enemy and would have liked to make peace with the others. But Germany lacked a directing hand to insist on priorities. It was easier to acquiesce in all the aggressive impulses and to drift with events. Germany lay in the centre of Europe. She could use this position to play off her neighbours against each other, as Bismark had done and as Hitler was to do; or she could abuse her position to unite her neighbours against her, not from policy, but by having none. [...] German policy, or rather, lack of it, made the Triple Entente a reality. The feeble rulers of Germany, William II and Bethmann, preferred a ring of foreign enemies to trouble at home.»<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> •Taylor, A.J.P., The Struggle for Mastery in Europe: 1848-1918 (Oxford University Press, 1954), 519-20.



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**July 11, 1914**

## **An Army that can swim the Channel**

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### **What Are the British Planning? – A BEF!**



The assassination in Sarajevo did not leave the impression, in Great Britain, that the event would spark a European War. The British Government is therefore not making special plans, in early July 1914, for something that might be imminently catastrophic. The analysis of this incident in London is that Germany will not support a move by Austria-Hungary against Serbia, knowing that the Russians have already stated that they would defend Slav countries against any foreign encroachment of their territory.

But the general mood of Europe for the last decade has been full of political tensions and premonitions of difficulties that have sprung from statements made by Germany to the effect that it needed a 'place under the sun.'

The efforts by Germany to acquire colonies in Africa, to use the Balkans to push the Baghdad railway so as to extend its influence deep into the Middle East, or to create a large Navy with warships that are obviously designed to challenge the British domination of the seas, have created a recurring ripple of apprehension.

The British Government has therefore increased its shipbuilding with a new generation of Dreadnoughts, strengthened its alliances with France and Russia, and changed its attitude toward America, previously seen as a pretentious upstart.

The British Government has also, recently, made plans for a **British Expeditionary Force (BEF)** consisting of a full field army capable of being transported to the continent.

This is quite new. Great Britain has not had other land-based services than its small home territorial army, and colonial, or imperial troops, organised to support local government in colonies (such as in the Boer War).

— A BEF is now a new piece on the chess table that shows a significantly increased level of preparedness.



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July 12, 1914

## Vienna watching the clock



### Monsieur Poincaré will give the Right Time in St.Petersburg

The President of France, Raymond Poincaré, is going on a mission to St.Petersburg to confer with Tsar Nicholas II on their alliance and various commercial ventures.

This trip is being watched in Vienna and Berlin. The Imperial Cabinet in Vienna has now agreed that an ultimatum would be presented to Serbia before an invasion. But this ultimatum is worded so that it will be impossible for Serbia to accept, because it robs the Serbian government of its authority in its own internal affairs. With a

prospect of establishing an Austrian-Hungarian police state in Belgrade, above the Serbian government, undermining its ability to determine its own national policy, the arrangement proposed is in fact a bloodless invasion and occupation.

Well aware of the trap that they are setting for the Serbians, the diplomats in Vienna come to the conclusion that this ultimatum should not be presented during the time that the French President and the Tsar will be meeting in St.Petersburg. It would be too easy for them to coordinate their actions, as allies, to counter the move in Serbia.

The President of France is known to be planning on leaving Russia on July 23<sup>rd</sup>. Plans are therefore made in Vienna to hand the ultimatum to Serbia on the 25<sup>th</sup>, with a very short time allowed for an answer. Austrian-Hungarian troops will be ready to intervene immediately and a *fait accompli* will be unlikely to be countered by Russia.

In Berlin, the plan is seen as a good one. The Germans are relishing the prospect that the incident will create a crack in the French-Russian alliance, and defuse the tension created by the fear of encirclement from having neighbours in close collusion.

— This is risky business. And the Kaiser in Berlin is impatient at seeing that it is now Président Poincaré who is giving the Right Time.

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●Macmillan, Road to 1914, 565; ●Fischer, 60-1; ●Cowles, Kaiser, 316-7.



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July 13, 1914

## No Evidence of Collusion



### Sarajevo youth do not give any clue

The Imperial Cabinet of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire has now decided on a drastic Ultimatum to Serbia. But it would be to its advantage if evidence could be found that the Serbian government was indeed involved by the back door in the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

Vienna sends its own investigators to Sarajevo and Belgrade to find clues as to some sort of collusion between the government of Serbia and some of the nationalist organizations to which the loose bands of Young Bosnian assassins belong.

The «Unification or Death», a secret revolutionary union of Serb nationalists better known as the Black Hand, is well known to have had a part in many incidents that were condoned by politicians not happy with the curtailing of ambitions and the state of dependence that Serbia has had to face since it was able to relax the ties with the Ottoman empire in the First Balkan War (1912).

Serbs do not want to become subjugated to another empire after having rid themselves of the Ottomans, after more than half a millenium of dependence. Nationalist operators are indeed not pursued vigorously by the Serb government.

The truth is that the revolutionaries have penetrated the Serb public service and the army, and

an army colonel under the codename of Apis, has provided weapons for the young men in the streets.

— But the Austrian-Hungarian investigators cannot produce evidence. The prisoners will not talk.

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Kirchberger, Joe H., An Eyewitness to History, p. 40; Strachan, The First World War, Vol. 1, p. 66.



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July 14, 1914  
A Friend Indeed



## High Commissioner Perley at the Imperial Council

The Prime Minister of Britain, Herbert Asquith, has called for an Imperial Council in London to discuss the situation of Serbia and the general attitude of the Imperial Government in regard to what is happening in Europe.

The Imperial Council is somewhat different because the Canadian representative in London has been called in. **Canadian High Commissioner to Great Britain George H. Perley** did not take part in Imperial Council in the past, and the invitation is inhumane.

In 1914, Canada's foreign policy is decided in London. The Canadian High Commissioner in London and the Governor General of Canada in Ottawa are the links between the British and

Canadian governments. The Prime Minister of Canada can certainly express recommendations on Imperial policy, especially Imperial policy that deals with Canadian affairs, but the Dominion Secretary spells out policy on behalf of the Imperial Cabinet.

Perley is in fact not normally called in to the Council, but he is an invited member of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID). This is where he can inform the Imperial government when information is needed. Information is in fact not needed very often.

— But a friend in need is a friend indeed. In the present circumstances, Canada may very well have a friend indeed.

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● Hankey, Supreme Command, I, p. 134-5; Morton, A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War, p. 24-42.



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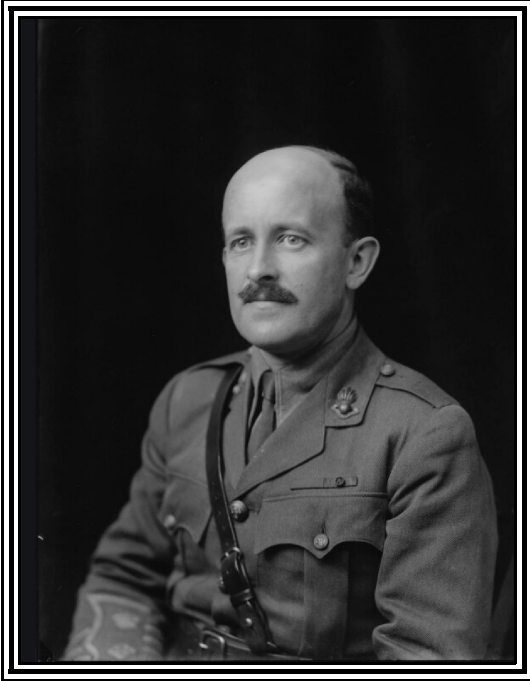
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July 15, 1914

By the Book!

## The Famous War Book: Colonel Hankey impresses Cabinet



Colonel of the Royal Navy's Marine Corp, **Maurice Hankey**, is secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) in London since 1912.

In the last years he has brought organisation to this very important committee of the Imperial Cabinet, where members invite experts to study aspects of Imperial defence. The Prime Minister and ministers can thus be informed directly though their presence at the committee, or by its numerous reports to Cabinet.

Hankey has all the talents to be an outstanding secretary to the committee. He has a mind like a steel trap that never lets go of a piece of information, and his sense of clerical organisation is above anything that has been seen in government before him.

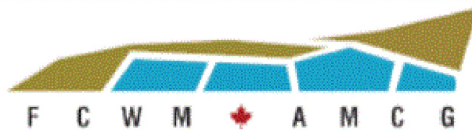
The British government had in fact a certain culture of disorganisation. Minutes were never taken in meetings of ministers. The prime minister chaired meetings with his pencilled agenda, and ministers left the room with their own scribbled notes, which led to many misunderstandings and

some acrimony. Invited guests to the cabinet meeting produced no notes of their presentations, and correspondence was done by each in his own fashion.

This is now being changed drastically by this apostle of minuteness. Starting with the CID and passing later to the Cabinet, Hankey creates a top notch secretarial service in which, over the years, he will become an important collaborator to policy-making.

For the moment, Hankey has just finished prepare a War Book with instructions to all Departments, Dominions and Colonies in case of declaration of war. This superb instrument, started by a sub-committee in 1910, could not be more timely. — It will help his influence enormously in a few weeks

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●Roskill, Hankey: Man of Secrets: Vol. 1 - 1877-1918; Hankey, Supreme Command, I., p. 118-23.



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## July 16, 1914

### Hungarian pirouette



### The decision to agree by Hungarian Prime Minister Tisza

The Hungarian Prime Minister, Stephen Tisza, has held fast to his position in the Austro-Hungarian Council, in Vienna. Since the beginning of the crisis, he has insisted despite the mood in the city, that the army should not invade Serbia without seeking conciliation or arbitration.

But the ministers of the Council see the occasion as an opportunity to reaffirm the status of the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary as a great power in Europe. They believe that if the army does not intervene immediately, other countries of the Balkans will see nationalist movements gain momentum and challenge the present order. It is not to Austria-Hungary's benefit that the Ottomans be beaten back completely out of the Balkans.

In particular, the South Slav (Yugo Slavs) nations of the Balkans want to obtain the protection of Russia to assert their full independence.

This is not good for Hungary. The long conflict between Romania and Hungary for Transylvania, which might take a wrong turn if Russia gets involved in protecting Slav nationalities, influences Hungarians to think in terms of deterrence. The prospect that negotiations might result in Austria suggesting that Serbia be controlled by the offer of becoming a third part in the Dual Monarchy (the 'trilateral' option) is not seen by Hungarians as a positive outcome.

Tisza therefore changes his mind in regard to the Ultimatum to Serbia. He now agrees that the violent takeover should take place before it is too late. The plan immediately becomes firm for July 25th.

— His turnabout is so radical that he goes to the extent of thanking Germany for making this possible.

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● Strachan, *The First World War*, Vol. 1, p. 76-8; Cowles, *Kaiser*, p. 316.

## July 17, 1914

### Twentieth Century Ushered In



### Churchill Finds Oil!

One of the most decisive moves that were made by the British Government just before the First World War was made by Winston Churchill.

Churchill is the Minister of the Admiralty. As 'Lord of the Sea' — he is not a Lord and sits in the House of Commons, but that is the traditional title of the minister in charge of the Royal Navy — he has the responsibility for the preparedness of the great fleet of warships of the British Empire.

**On 17 July 1914**, Churchill presents a bill in Parliament for the purchase of 51% of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (the future BP) for 2.2 million Pounds. This ensures availability and best price for the largest reserves known.

The decision is a huge one as the British Empire was very much built so as to accommodate the Royal Navy with coal all over the world. British ships could go on all seas, progressing from coaling port to coaling port, without relying on any that were not imperial property.

Now the shift to oil reorients the energy sources, and re-draws the geopolitical map for energy. All of a sudden, oil-rich ports multiply in importance.

The great advantage of oil is that it can be pumped at sea from oilers to warships, a manoeuvre that was very difficult with coal, which had to be laboriously steam-shovelled from one ship to another. Oil also extends the mileage for the same volume, and it can be ignited much more easily, allowing big ships to be put under steam in record time.

— Overnight, the Near-East becomes the Middle East.

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●Karl E. Meyer, The Dust of Empire, p. 64.

July 18, 1914

## King George Flexing His Muscle



### Spithead!

On 18 July 1914, the Royal Navy is assembled with 260 vessels in the traditional anchorage of **Spithead**, where a pageant of enormous size is organized for King George V to review a great armada.

At this moment, the diplomatic despatches from Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Paris, Rome and Belgrade are describing the tensions that are emanating from the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

The display of might at sea is part of the Imperial propaganda of deterrence.

But at the end of the parade and some days of manoeuvres, Winston Churchill will take a momentous decision. Apprehending that war might be declared quite suddenly, he will direct the Grand Fleet to leave its port of call in Portsmouth and secretly sail to the Orkney islands, to the north of Scotland, and take shelter in the port of Scapa Flow. From there the fleet can dominate the North Sea, and prevent the exit of the German High Seas Fleet toward the Atlantic.

— It is a masterly stroke that prevents the fleet being caught in the Channel, or having to round the British Isles by the west, getting there too late.

— Forever to Winston's credit, «The Fleet Was Ready!»



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**July 19, 1914**  
**The point of Unlikely Return**

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**The Emperor's Seal of Approval**

Emperor Franz-Joseph, after consultations in many quarters, and inspired by the vociferous Imperial Council and the decisive support of Germany, decides, on **July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1914**, on the harsh ultimatum to be sent to Serbia.

He has had many evidences that the government of Serbia is not serious in countering the revolutionary nationalist movements which protest openly against the Austro-Hungarian regime, and which are known to

be behind the assassination of Archduke Francis-Ferdinand.

The city of Belgrade is defiant and is described as such by the ambassador. But the clock is now ticking against it.

The ultimatum is written by the Foreign Minister of the Imperial Government, Count Leopold von Berchtold, so as to be presented by the ambassador in Belgrade, Baron Giesl von Gieslingen, in the afternoon of July 23<sup>rd</sup>.

— A point of unlikely return has now been reached.

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●Schiavon, L'Autriche-Hongrie dans le première Guerre mondiale: La Fin d'un Empire, 73ff.



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## July 20, 1914

### Poincaré and Viviani



### French Spoken in St.Petersburg:

On July 20<sup>th</sup> 1914, the President of France, **Raymond Poincaré**, accompanied by the Président du Conseil (Prime Minister), René Viviani, arrive in St. Petersburg for a state visit with **Tsar Nicholas II**. The warship on which they sail, France, left port on July 15<sup>th</sup>, and took the long route so as to avoid having to cross German territory. The State visit is

expected to last until July 23<sup>rd</sup>.

The Heads of State are scheduled, first and foremost, to discuss the alliance treaty that links Russia and France, guaranteeing that if one is attacked, the other will join the war.

This secret meeting between Poincaré and Nicholas is of first importance for the Austro-Hungarian government. Their ultimatum to Serbia rests on the conviction that on account of the support of Germany, Russia will not decide to intervene militarily on the side of the Slavs of Serbia. That would indeed be a tragedy. Their ambassadors are scrambling to get any bit of information that they can on the talks.

But Russia is not far-advanced in its program of re-armament, and the Russian people are known to be very unhappy with the Tsarist regime. A jump into war by Nicholas might mean catastrophic revolution in Russia.

— And perhaps this is what is being discussed in St.Petersburg in French, hampering the treaty.

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MacMillan, Road to 1914, 582-3.



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July 21, 1914

## The Squeezing of Serbia for All She's Worth



### Vienna's Ultimatum

The secret document which is being sent from the Vienna Chancellery to the Belgrade Embassy is a bomb, and those who took part in its writing know it.

Historian Margaret MacMillan described it this way in

her Road to 1914:

**«The ultimatum accused the Serbian government of tolerating criminal activities on its soil and demanded that it take immediate steps to end them, including dismissing any civilian or military officials Austria-Hungary chose to name, closing down nationalist newspapers and reforming the education curriculum to get rid of anything that could be construed as propaganda directed against Austria-Hungary. More, the ultimatum infringed Serbia's sovereignty. In two clauses, which in the end were to be the sticking point for Serbia, it was ordered to accept the participation of the Dual Monarchy in suppressing subversion within Serbia's borders and in the investigation and trial of any Serbian conspirators responsible for the assassinations. The Serbian government was to be given forty-eight hours to respond.»**

This is in fact a decree that the Austrian-Hungarian Council hopes will be refused so that an invasion can take place under a pretext, and Serbia can be squeezed for all its worth.

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●MacMillan, Road to 1914, 570.



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July 22, 1914

## Begging to be protected



### Turkey can't even choose Berlin

In the aftermath of two Balkan wars, in which it was made evident that the Ottoman empire could not hope to hold its remaining possessions in the Balkans, the Government in Constantinople – The Committee of Union and Progress, also known as The Young Turks– looks for an ally for protection.

After having knocked at all doors of preferred Great Powers: Great Britain, France and even Russia (its nemesis), Enver Pasha is authorized to approach the German ambassador in Constantinople, Hans von Wangenheim, to propose an alliance.

Despite the fact that Wilhelm II for many years has professed to be the friend of the Muslims world-wide, and has made ample propaganda and military arrangements about it (here with Sultan Abdul Ahmid II in 1898), the German Foreign Office cannot see the advantage of supporting a crumbling empire where very little is seen as compensation.

The British Foreign Office is not aware that Turkey is still looking for protection. Its response to the Ottomans in 1911 had been curt, despite pleas by Winston

Churchill that such an alliance would be profitable in the long run.

It will soon become obvious that having the Ottoman on side will be an important factor in the upcoming war. Access to the Middle East, the Dardanelles, the Black Sea, and Russian ports would have given the Allies a masterkey.

— For the moment, however, nobody has yet seen that far, except for the British First Lord of the Admiralty, whom nobody wants to hear on his geopolitical musings.

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●Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace*, 49-50; A.J.P. Taylor, *The First World War: an Illustrated History* (1963, Penguin, 1976), p. 77.



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July 23, 1914

## Une lettre de l'Ambassadeur



### L'Ultimatum à la Serbie

L'Ultimatum à la Serbie est présenté par l'Ambassadeur du Gouvernement impérial et royal de l'Autriche-Hongrie, **le 23 juillet 1914, à 1800 heures.**

Le document déclare en premier que le gouvernement de Vienne possède des évidences que les groupes subversifs qui s'opposent à l'autorité Austro-Hongroise sont supportés par des militaires et fonctionnaires du gouvernement royal de Serbie:

**« Il apparaît clairement, à la suite des déclarations et des aveux des auteurs criminels de l'attentat du 28 juin, que le meurtre de Sarajevo a été préparé à Belgrade, que les meurtriers avaient reçu les armes et les bombes dont**

**ils étaient munis d'officiers et de fonctionnaires serbes, qui faisaient partie de la «'NARODNA ODBRANA' et que, finalement, l'envoi des assassins et de leur armes en Bosnie avait été organisé et réalisé par les autorités de la frontière serbe.»**

L'Ultimatum oblige donc le gouvernement serbe à publier une proclamation royale dans son organe officiel et comme Ordre du Jour aux Armées, le 26 juillet, répudiant toute personne officielle ou non, impliquée dans de telles 'transactions criminelles,' et l'engageant à poursuivre avec toute diligence voulue toute personne ainsi impliquée.

L'Ultimatum donne ensuite dix exigences quant à la poursuite des coupables, et en faveur de l'autorité du gouvernement autrichien-hongrois d'intervenir dans tous les aspects du gouvernement serbe pour saisir et punir les coupables et leurs supporteurs, quels qu'ils soient, et assurer la sécurité future.

Contrairement à ce qui est attendu, la Serbie acceptera dans les 48 heures, sauf qu'elle demandera une arbitration de la commission international de La Haye ou des Puissances européennes signataires du Traité du 31 mars 1919.

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●Schiavon, 74. ●Le drapeau royal du Roi de Serbie, Wikipedia.



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July 24, 1914

## Canada's Imperial decision



### The Komagata Maru Incident

In May 1914, the Japanese merchant ship *Komagata Maru* arrived in the port of Vancouver with 400 East Indian potential immigrants. These were passengers who had been told by members of their families who had immigrated to Canada and the United States that they would find good wages if they came. The Indian citizens were all subjects of King George V, and many were former members of the Indian Army.

However, the arrival of the ship prompted a reaction, among the residents of Vancouver, that there were too many people of Asian origin who were immigrating to Canada. They opposed their disembarkation, and they were supported by the Canadian border authorities. The Canadian government refused access to a majority with far-fetched regulations that could be applied to prevent their acceptance. The ship remained in port for two months, without important concessions.

In July, the authorities called for the Canadian warship Rainbow to come from Esquimalt to

Vancouver and escort the ship to the high sea, to find another port. This was done on **July 23<sup>th</sup>, 1914**.

The passengers of the Komagata Maru ran into further complications when they returned to the port of Calcuta, where they were intercepted by British authorities for subversion. Revolt and loss of life was incurred there.

This incident of racist inequality was the object of a formal apology by the Government of Canada, in 2008.

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●Milner, Canada's Navy, 35; Johnston et al., Du Littoral à la Mer, p. 249-51; Wikipedia, «*Komagata Maru* Incident»



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**July 25, 1914**  
**Holà, Pas Si Vite!**



### **La décision russe: un vent froid vers l'Autriche-Hongrie**

Au cours de la journée d'hier, le Conseil des ministres de Russie a fait parvenir au gouvernement de la Serbie des recommandations à l'effet que l'Ultimatum qui lui a été servi par l'Autriche-Hongrie devrait être soumis à l'arbitrage des Grandes Puissances d'Europe. **Le Tsar Nicholas II** a non seulement donné son accord à ce message, mais il a mobilisé quatre districts ainsi que ses flottes des mers Baltique et Noire, pour souligner le sérieux de son message. Il a aussi ordonné à son ministre des finances de retirer des capitaux investis en Allemagne.

En Angleterre, le Foreign Office a décidé de garder la Royal Navy en mer, et d'approcher l'Ambassadeur allemand pour une intervention pacifique commune auprès de l'Autriche-Hongrie, que l'Allemagne a refusée. Le Kaiser, contre l'avis de son ministre, a rappelé sa Marine dans les ports, pour la mobiliser.

Pendant ce temps, à Paris, le gouvernement français laisse entendre à l'Ambassadeur allemand qu'il ne peut pas promettre de ne pas s'impliquer dans l'affaire serbe si la Russie s'y engage militairement. Le Quai d'Orsay est de plus choqué d'apprendre que l'Allemagne a empêché les communications télégraphiques entre le Président en mer et son gouvernement à Paris. C'est un geste agressif et menaçant qui augure mal pour la diplomatie française.

En soirée du **25 juillet 1914**, la Serbie, forte des encouragements russes, se plie aux demandes des Autrichiens-Hongrois, mais avec un caveat: les clauses de l'Ultimatum qui diminuent la souveraineté d'État de la Serbie doivent être revues par les Grandes Puissances ou par l'arbitrage du Tribunal International de la Haye.

Il s'agit là des premiers indices que la Russie ne laissera pas passer. Les diplomates viennent de comprendre l'enjeu.

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● Snyder, Louis L., *Historic Documents of World War I* (London, Toronto: Nostrand, 1958), «The Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum to Serbia, July 23, 1914», p. 58-63; «Russia's Advice to Serbia, July 24, 1914», p. 63-5; «The Serbian Response to the Austro-Hungarian Ultimatum», July 25, 1914», p. 65-70.



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## July 26, 1914

### A Royal Imbroglio

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#### The George-Henry Talks

In the hope of ensuring that Great Britain will stay out of the Serbian affair, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany asks his younger brother, Henry of Prussia, to go to London and speak with King George V to obtain assurances of British neutrality.

Henry is a Grand Admiral of the German Navy, a rank that he has attained after a long career at sea. Only three years younger than the Kaiser, he is a grand son of Queen Victoria through her older sibling Victoria ('Vicky'). He is «Georgie»'s cousin, who is the son and successor of Edward VII, Queen Victoria's first son. The two know each other well and share valued family connections.

Prince Henry conveys an optimistic outcome of the conversation of **July 26<sup>th</sup>, 1914**, to his brother the Kaiser. Wilhelm's antiquated notion of high honour and monarchical power, believes that George can indeed interfere favorably in British policy. But this is not the case. The British Parliament is completely different from the German Parliament. The Constitutional Monarchy of Great Britain has very little influence

on the Government other than to sometime «encourage and to warn» in private. In fact, Foreign policy remains firmly in the hands of the Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey, who is expertly supported by a strong Foreign Office diplomacy, highly experienced government bureaucracy, and by Prime Minister Asquith.

The Henry-George conversation results in a tragic imbroglio. Wilhelm believes that Great Britain will now remain aloof of the Serbian affair. Seeing the unexpected Serbian concessions, he also believes that Emperor Franz-Joseph can now be considered satisfied with the reply.

— This is end of the first act of a Shakespearian tragedy, which sets the actors in cross-currents that cast them unsuspectedly in unremediable conflict.

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•Cowles, The Kaiser, 335-6, fn 3.



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July 27, 1914

## L'Autriche-Hongrie ne démord pas



### :Les positions se durcissent

**Le 27 juillet 1914**, le Conseil Impérial Austro-Hongrois, après avoir reçu le 25, la réponse de la Serbie à l'Ultimatum du 23, décide qu'elle opte pour une invasion de la Serbie, sans permettre à un arbitrage des Grandes Puissances ou à un Tribunal international de jeter lumière sur l'acceptabilité de son geste dans le contexte géopolitique européen.

Le Chef de l'état-major austro-hongrois, le général Conrad, a fortement recommandé cette décision et demande une seule journée pour mettre fin aux préparatifs de l'Armée.

Il a d'ailleurs su que le gouvernement serbe a mobilisé son armée immédiatement après avoir émis sa réponse, déterminé à faire résistance à une avance vers ses frontières, même si l'armée serbe reste affaiblie de ses combats dans les deux guerres des Balkans, au cours des trois dernières années.

La réponse pourtant claire des Russes, qu'ils emboîteraient le pas d'une déclaration de guerre, reste encore en doute à Vienne, puisqu'on y pense que l'appui allemand y posera un obstacle important. L'incertitude perçue de l'Angleterre, et les doutes sur l'automatisme du Traité français-russe, portent au risque, à un moment jugé le plus propice à venir pour rétablir la position Autrichienne-Hongroise dans l'échiquier européen.

De leur côté les Français se préparent à une crise imminente. Plusieurs pensent qu'un conflit européen qui sourd depuis longtemps doit aboutir.

— Le 27 juillet, les Allemands et Autrichiens-Hongrois croient que les Anglais vont rester chez eux, et les Français croient qu'ils vont les appuyer. C'est ce qui permet aux deux camps de croire que le risque en vaut la chandelle.

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● Macmillan, Road to 1914, p. 592; Kirchberger, An Eyewitness to History, p. 341; Schiavon, L'Autriche-Hongrie dans le première Guerre mondiale: La Fin d'un Empire (SOTECA,14-18, 2011), p. 76; Cowles, The Kaiser, 327-8.



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**July 28, 1914**

**War !**

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## **Austria-Hungary Declares War to Serbia**

### **Hell Breaks Loose!**

**On 28 July 1914**, one month exactly after the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand, Austria-Hungary declares War on Serbia.

«At 11:10 A.M. on July 28, 1914, Count Leopold von Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs, sent the following telegram from Vienna to M.N. Passitch, Serbian Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs. This declaration of war was received at Nish at 12:30 P.M.

« VIENNA, JULY 28, 1914. THE ROYAL SERBIAN GOVERNMENT NOT HAVING ANSWERED IN A SATISFACTORY MANNER THE NOTE OF JULY 23, 1914, PRESENTED BY THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN MINISTER IN BELGRADE, THE IMPERIAL AND ROYAL GOVERNMENT ARE THEMSELVES COMPELLED TO SEE TO THE SAFEGUARDING OF THEIR RIGHTS AND INTERESTS, AND, WITH THIS OBJECT, TO HAVE RECOURSE TO FORCE OF ARMS. AUSTRIA-HUNGARY CONSEQUENTLY CONSIDERS HERSELF HENCEFORTH IN STATE OF WAR WITH SERBIA.»

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● Snyder, Historic Documents of WW1, p. 74.



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July 29, 1914

Oups!



### The German Kaiser backpedals too late

**29 July 1914** is a disastrous day for Wilhelm II. His statements that he would support Austria-Hungary «through thick and thin» in the Serbian affair are now coming back to haunt him. He learned yesterday that Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria-Hungary declared War to Serbia without consulting him. Wilhelm thought that the Serbian response was acceptable. It now becomes clear that Russia will not back down, despite a personnel «Nicky-Willy» correspondence with the Tsar, begging each other to step back.

Worse, he also learns from the German ambassador in London that the British Government has now turned quite decidedly against Austria-Hungary for its harsh action. Foreign Minister Grey has stated that he thought that Germany's support of the Ultimatum and the Declaration of War was ill-advised. This nullifies the optimistic illusions that the «Georgie-Henry» conversation had created. Grey's statement in fact contains this grave sentence, warning that if Germany gets involved in a conflict between Russia and Austria-Hungary in which France is drawn:

**« ...THEN THE SITUATION WOULD IMMEDIATELY BE ALTERED, AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WOULD, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, FIND ITSELF FORCED TO MAKE UP ITS MIND QUICKLY. IN THAT EVENT IT WOULD NOT BE PRACTICABLE TO STAND ASIDE AND WAIT FOR ANY LENGTH OF TIME...»**

Wilhelm tries to backpedal with the Austrians in the middle of the night:

**« UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WE MUST URGENTLY AND EMPHATICALLY URGE UPON THE CONSIDERATION OF THE VIENNA CABINET THE ADOPTION OF MEDIATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ABOVE HONOURABLE CONDITIONS. THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CONSEQUENCES WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE FOLLOW WOULD BE FOR AUSTRIA AND FOR US, AN UNCOMMONLY HEAVY ONE.»**

— But he is too late. The Austrian-Hungarian bombardment of Belgrade will triggers a full Russian mobilization.

•Cowles, The Kaiser, 337-9;



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**July 30, 1914**  
**No Return!**



## **The Brinkmanship of Emperors**

**30 July 1914** was the last day in which the war could still have been avoided. But none of the people who could have prevented it knew that they still could.

Some historians have argued that more competence in the late diplomacy could have brought down the escalation, but

competence in diplomacy is difficult for foreign ministers and ambassadors when monarchs get involved personally.

**Emperors Nicholas II of Russia, Francis Joseph of Austria-Hungary, and Wilhelm II of Germany** have created worlds around them where their status and influence are at the source of foreign policy. Their high officials, selected by them, were inspired by what they heard from them, what they knew of them, and what they thought they desired.

All three Emperors personally actively triggered policy that they were not able to reverse at the last moment. The momentum of their earlier statements and decisions, having its effect in the reluctance of their ministers and generals to suddenly reverse the current of policy, carried Europe into the Great War. All three lost their Empire, Nicholas and Francis Joseph lost their life.

On this day, Austro-Hungary opens hostilities against Serbia, Russia goes into full mobilization, and Germany is drawn into the world conflict that Berlin is now attempting to avoid.

From this point, the «Military Travel Plans» are launched. Train schedules unfold inexorably. The Machine of War takes over. Allies will join in as if mesmerized.

— These Emperors' brinkmanship was imprudent and immoral.



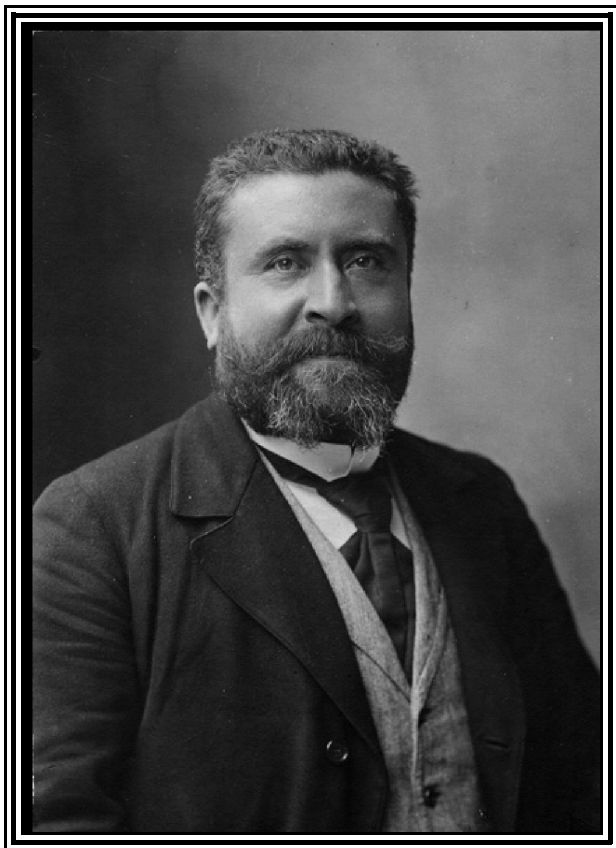
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July 31, 1914

War Fever



## A Wave of Patriotism Across the Lands

At noon on **July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1914**, the full mobilisation of Russia becomes known in Berlin. The German Government issues an Ultimatum to Russia to reverse course in twelve hours. But the mobilisation cannot now be halted on account of the multitude of simultaneous actions that are taking place all over Russia.

There is no reply to Germany from Russia. Germany therefore triggers a «State of Imminent War», in the afternoon, which also sets in motion large numbers of pre-planned actions, notably the withdrawal of all German shipping to ports, the reporting of military personnel to their war formations, sometimes at long distances by train. Plans of War are unsealed in division headquarters. The war frenzy is now fully on.

On this feverish day of exaltation, the promise of the international socialist movements, that they would resist interstate wars by general strike and by blocking industries, goes by the wayside.

The great French socialist leader, **Jean Jaurès**, is assassinated in a café. He becomes the symbol of the socialist ideals overwhelmed by the nationalist

fervour sweeping the workers to their patriotic duties.

France issues orders to get her Navy and ports ready to defend. Military personnel are also deployed to action stations and supplies are transported where needed.

The British Navy is now in its War Disposition, with strong fleets around the North Sea. Foreign minister Grey is speaking with Paris and Brussels, informing Parliament of the evolving situation.

— National states have done their work. They have mustered their strengths for an imminent extreme effort.

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●Tuchman, Guns of 1914, p. 87; Ibid, Proud Tower, 461.



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