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THE DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND OF THE EUROPEAN WAR

When on August 1, 1914, the fateful news came over the wires that Europe stood at Armageddon, the people of this country were scarcely able to accept the fact, for it was difficult to understand why the flower of European manhood should be sent forth in arms to shatter the cultural and material progress of a century. But to the close student of European diplomacy it has long been evident that some day the conflicting interests of the Great Powers and some of the smaller states, an intricate system of alliances, *ententes*, and secret agreements, and the armaments accumulated in the last generation must produce a "catastrophe of which it is impossible to measure either the dimensions or the effects" (Mr. Asquith). The various peoples involved have been preparing against the Great War till most of them were near the end of their resources, and now that it has come, they have accepted their fate calmly and bravely, on the ground that even defeat is preferable to uncertainty. The historian, however, is impressed by the peculiar alignment of the warring nations. It is the first war between Austria and Russia, the first between England and Germany, the first since 1763 between Germany and Russia. Except for the Crimean War, France and England have not fought together since the seventeenth century, nor England and Russia since the struggle against Napoleon, with whose country they are both now in alliance. Finally, except when at the beginning of the eighteenth and again of the nineteenth century they resisted the ambitions of Louis XIV or Napoleon,

Germany (Prussia) and Austria have been inveterate enemies since the days of the Reformation.

The causes of the present war are to be traced to four sets of forces, more or less interdependent: (1) the racial problems and ambitions of Austria-Hungary; (2) the rivalry of Austria and Russia in the Balkan peninsula; (3) the struggle to maintain the balance of power in Europe; (4) the competition for sea power, commerce, and colonies; not to speak of the burden of armaments entailed by the foregoing rivalries. In this paper an attempt will be made to describe the development of these questions up to the outbreak of the war.

1. The Racial Problems of Austria-Hungary

The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as is well known, is a collection of races so organized under the Compromise of 1867 that a majority of Slavs is held down by minorities of Germans and Magyars in Austria and Hungary respectively. But this situation has not proved satisfactory to either of the dominant races, let alone any one else. The Magyars, in their desire for greater political and economic freedom from Austria and as the natural outcome of their political ability, which can be compared only to that of the Anglo-Saxons, have endeavoured to force their ways upon the non-Magyar races subject to them, with a view to increasing the resources available against Austria. Not only have the Slavs of Croatia and the Rumanians of Transylvania resented this treatment, against which Austria has afforded them little relief; their loyalty to the Hapsburg Crown has begun to weaken, and they have been impressed by the comparatively free institutions of Servia and Rumania. So the Austrian half of the Monarchy has learned that Hungarian policy has seriously weakened the Hapsburg State in international dealings; while to preserve the unity of the joint army, it has made repeated concessions to Hungary which have merely whetted the appetite of that partner. Gradually the conviction has spread in the Monarchy that somehow or other recognition must be afforded to the national life and consciousness of its conglomerate peoples. Federalism in one form or another has become a word to conjure with and absorbed the attention of publicists. Some favour the creation of a third or Slav kingdom out of Carinthia and Dalmatia (Austrian), Croatia and Slavonia (Hungarian), and

Bosnia-Herzegovina (a *Reichsland*); others desire a centralized organization for the entire Monarchy, with adequate local government for the various races. The late Archduke Francis Ferdinand, though he talked little and gave his chief attention to the army, was supposed to favour some such solution. At any rate his sympathies were decidedly with the Slavs; and it is surely an irony of history that the one man who had the will and the power to grapple with the problem should have been cut down on the eve of his accession to the throne by one of the race whose best friend he was.

To devise a sound foreign policy on the basis of such racial antagonisms would be difficult in any case. For Austria the task is complicated by the foreign connections of some of the races. The Ruthenians of Galicia are of the same stock and speak the same language as the Little Russian subjects of the Tsar. The Croats are practically Serbs, though their Roman Catholicism separates them somewhat from the latter. In southern Tyrol and along the Dalmatian coast there is a considerable Italian element, and Transylvania contains a majority of Rumanians. How far will these races, all of whom have been at one time or another susceptible to irredentist propaganda, support the traditional policy of the House of Hapsburg, has been a question ever present to the German and Magyar ruling classes.

That traditional policy, as revealed in the annals of four centuries, is clearly one of territorial expansion. Since her expulsion from Germany in 1866, Austria-Hungary has regarded the western Balkans as her theatre of operations, with perhaps Salonika as the ultimate goal. This ambition is logical enough, for in the last forty years every Great Power has increased its territorial possessions. Austria could not be left behind, and in 1878 she was permitted to "occupy and administer" Bosnia and the Herzegovina, as they constituted the *Hinterland* to her Dalmatian provinces, though the fiction of Turkish suzerainty was retained. But she could not hope to advance farther along the Adriatic coast, because Italy, her ally since 1882, also had designs on Albania and would have resisted an Austrian occupation. Early in the twentieth century Russia became interested in the same region, apart from the fact that Montenegro, whose guns on Mount Lövchen commanded the Austrian harbour of Cattaro, had long been a Russian protectorate.

Austria-Hungary was therefore compelled to regard Servia,

which she surrounded on two sides, as the only region open to her expansion. A hundred years ago when the Servians under Kara George were seeking to emancipate themselves from Turkish rule, they repeatedly asked to be annexed to the Hapsburg Crown. The request was refused, doubtless to the regret of later Austrian statesmen; but throughout the nineteenth century, Austrian influence was dominant in Serbia, for the family of Obrenovich, which usually possessed the throne, was too weak to stand alone. So it was easy for Austria to secure a favourable tariff for her goods, in return for which Serbia was encouraged to export her live stock to Austrian markets; while the Magyars were free to carry out their policy in Croatia without fear of agitation inspired from Serbia. The value of Austrian friendship was demonstrated to Serbia in 1885 when she rashly attacked Bulgaria to prevent the union of eastern Rumelia with Bulgaria proper. The aggressor was badly defeated, and only the intervention of the Dual Monarchy stopped the Bulgarian advance on Nish. After that King Milan and King Alexander were as clay in Austrian hands; and from 1897, when Russia and Austria agreed to maintain the *status quo* in the Balkans, Serbia seemed to have become the permanent vassal of her great neighbour.

This situation was upset by the Servians themselves. In 1903 King Alexander and his consort were murdered in their palace by Servian officers who resented his Austrophil leanings and the scandals of his court. The new king, Peter Kara-georgevich, was Russian in sympathy, but he determined to rule as a constitutional monarch, and left his ministers to their own devices. They cultivated friendly relations with Turkey, and by introducing modern packing methods, made it possible to ship Servian meats southwards to Salonika and beyond. Henceforth Austria could not reduce the politicians of Belgrade to terms by closing the Hungarian frontier to Servian cattle. She was able to break up a Servo-Bulgarian customs union in 1905, but she could not check the material and financial progress of Serbia, who was strong enough to defy the Monarchy for six months, to the utter derangement of the latter's finances, when it proclaimed the annexation of Bosnia and the Herzegovina in October, 1908.

That crisis marks the beginning of the tension which ended with the Austrian ultimatum of July 23, 1914. Austrian policy towards Serbia plus Magyar chauvinism in Croatia had led to a

recrudescence of Pan-Servian agitation, which aimed at the union of the Serbs of Austria and of Servia under the rule of the Servian Crown. But the annexation of the "occupied" provinces blocked the plan, apparently for ever, which was the more serious because in no other way could Servia hope for access to the sea. Probably she would have appealed to the sword had not Russia, France, and Great Britain advised her to yield. Her declaration of March 31, 1909,¹ stated that "Servia recognizes that the *fait accompli* regarding Bosnia has not affected her rights . . . and she undertakes to renounce from now onwards the attitude of protest and opposition which she has adopted with regard to the annexation since last autumn." As the result of her undertaking "to modify the direction of her policy with regard to Austria-Hungary and to live in future on good neighbourly terms with the latter," the relations between the two governments assumed an air of "correctness," and a satisfactory commercial treaty was concluded; but the dormant hostility was revived by the dramatic events of 1912-1913.

The Ballplatz—the Vienna foreign office—had allowed the Balkan war against Turkey to proceed on the assumption that the hated Servians would be promptly trounced. Instead, they marched to victory, occupied western Macedonia, and at the end of the campaign proceeded to capture Durazzo on the Adriatic coast. Not only would this port give the landlocked kingdom its outlet to the sea; the unexpected successes of Servian arms, the increase of territory, and the prospect of a permanent Balkan alliance made a profound impression on the Slav subjects of the Dual Monarchy, whose racial animosities promised to be considerably accentuated. Furthermore, Servia and Montenegro had jointly conquered the Sandjak of Novi Bazar, from which Austria had retired in 1909, and secured a common frontier which would sometime lead to an integral union of the two states. This Greater Servia would permanently block the road to Salonika; it could lend powerful support to the Pan-Servian propaganda that was beginning to lift its head again.

The Vienna government, therefore, felt it necessary to impose a veto upon Servian ambitions and demanded the evacuation of Durazzo. A dangerous European crisis was produced—for

¹ It is quite important to remember that this note was delivered to the Powers, and not to Austria, thus clearly emphasizing the international character of the Balkan problem.

Russia seemed disposed to take up the cudgels for Servia—only to be weathered by the creation of an independent Albania that was intended to forestall both Servian and Italian aspirations. But Austro-Servian relations were not improved by this solution, and when Servia recouped herself by defeating Bulgaria in the distressing quarrel of the Balkan allies, Austrian rage and disappointment knew no bounds.¹ The labours of a generation were wasted, the new Servia was allied with Greece and friendly with Rumania, and the Slavs of the Monarchy rejoiced greatly in the success of their brethren.

Under these circumstances the new orientation of Austrian policy was awaited with interest. Just two weeks before his death the late Archduke Francis Ferdinand, who was the driving force behind the aggressive policy of recent years, received Emperor William at Koposnicht in Bohemia, and according to one story, secured from him the promise of German assistance for a renewed *Drang nach Osten*. A *casus belli* could easily have been found in the recent concordat between Servia and the Vatican, by which the government of Belgrade challenged the traditional claim of Austria to protect Roman Catholics in the western Balkans. As it turned out, the murder of the Archduke afforded a more satisfactory pretext, but it is scarcely open to doubt that had Francis Ferdinand lived, there would have been extreme tension between Servia and Russia. Whatever the dispute, Russia would inevitably have been brought into the dispute.

2. *Austro-Russian Rivalry in the Balkans*

The vast expanse of her territory and the fact that the Baltic is closed to navigation during half the year make Russia's natural outlet the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, over which Constantinople stands guard; for the greater part of her grain crop, which is the chief item of her export trade, is raised on the black lands in the southern provinces of her European empire. The fact that many ships loaded with Russian grain were cooped up in the Black Sea when Italy attacked the Dardanelles in 1912 amply vindicates the national desire for a free passage to the Aegean and the Mediterranean. But long before economic considerations

¹ Since this was written, the speech of Signor Giolitti in the Italian parliament has revealed that Austria would have gone to war then had she not been restrained by her allies.

assumed their present importance, historical and political forces were driving the Russians along the *chemin de Byzance*. They ever regarded themselves as the heirs of the old Greek empire, from which they took their two-headed eagle, and they aspired to bring Russian culture to those southern Slavs who are cut off from the main Slav stocks by a solid barrier of Germans, Magyars, and Rumanians. To achieve her goal Russia has resorted to endless intrigue, formed diplomatic combinations galore, fought wars innumerable; without, however, advancing her frontier perceptibly beyond the Rumanian barrier. But if the main Russian current has made little progress, if Constantinople has not yet become Tsarigrad, to the great satisfaction of other powers, it is historically true that as a result of the Russian campaigns against Turkey, though not always as a realization of Russian plans, five Christian states have arisen in the Balkan peninsula to become possible outposts of Russian influence.

Of these five, Greece was too far away and until recently too weak to be of particular service; and Rumania, who had saved the Russians before Plevna in 1877, only to be "rewarded" by the seizure of Bessarabia, a trans-Danubian province inhabited by Rumanians, was by this act of ingratitude thrown into the arms of Austria-Hungary. But Bulgaria, Servia, and Montenegro, new states with slender resources and thoroughly Slav in spirit, were excellently suited to serve Russian designs, which have usually been opposed by Austria-Hungary, lest she be surrounded on three sides by the same power. So for thirty-five years after the Congress of Berlin, which put these new states on the map, Austria and Russia struggled for ascendancy at Sofia, Belgrade, and Cettinje. For some years Bulgaria was pro-Russian, Servia pro-Austrian, an arrangement quite to the liking of the two Great Powers. Prince Ferdinand, however, had ascended the Bulgarian throne in 1887 against the wishes of the Tsar, and his people resented the hectoring Russian protectorate; gradually, therefore, Austria supplanted Russia in Bulgarian affection. To offset this, the Russophile Peter Karageorgevich became king of Servia. Thus the *protégé* of one Power blocked the southward expansion of the other, and since 1903 Austro-Russian rivalry has been acute.

About the same time, the intolerable misgovernment of Macedonia precipitated a general uprising, in which the Bulgarians, Servians, and Greeks thought more of exterminating

each other than of driving out the Turks who, incidentally abetted the good work. The European Powers tried to carry through a programme of reforms which should put an end to the prevailing anarchy, a task that was really hopeless in the face of Austro-Russian jealousies; and the British failure to effect a compromise was a potent cause of the Revolution of July, 1908, which ushered in the Young Turks, as represented by the Committee of Union and Progress. Other highly interesting schemes were also nipped in the bud by this convulsion. In January, 1908, Baron Aerenthal, the Austrian foreign minister, ignoring the agreement of 1897 which guaranteed the *status quo* in the Balkans, had secured the concession for a railway through the Sandjak of Novi Bazar which could be extended to Salonika and pave the way for Austria's advance to the Aegean. Russia had countered by proposing a line from Nish, Servia, to the Adriatic which would block the designs of Vienna and at the same time serve her own economic interests.

Railways and reforms were alike lost sight of in the consternation produced by the Revolution; and before Europe could accommodate itself to the new order of things, Austria-Hungary announced the annexation of Bosnia and the Herzegovina and Bulgaria proclaimed her independence. Neither act modified the existing situation in reality, though both were violations of the Treaty of Berlin, and Russia had, in June, 1908, accepted the annexation in principle. But she had stipulated that advance notice should be given of its consummation; this had been omitted, and M. Isvolsky, the Russian foreign minister, felt that he had been tricked. His vigorous protest was backed by France and Great Britain, who demanded a European Conference on the ground that a general European treaty could be revised only with the consent of all its signatories. The same Powers also gave their diplomatic support to the Servian demand for compensation. But inasmuch as none of them was willing to fight, Russia bowed before Germany's intervention "in shining armour," and thanks to the assistance of her ally, Austria scored a distinct diplomatic success.

In the fullness of time, however, the wheel has come full circle. The defiance of the public law of Europe was profoundly resented in Italy, where it was regarded as the first step towards that Austrian advance along the Adriatic which Italy was determined never to permit. When the opportunity came, Italy

went to Tripoli, thus shattering the Triple Alliance because her new colony was at the mercy of the French and British fleets in the Mediterranean; and when the Turkish resistance proved stubborn, she encouraged, if she did not abet, the formation of the Balkan League, which practically extinguished the Turkish Power in Europe. Out of that conflagration arose the new Serbia which has provoked Austria to bring on the present war. For the sake of an unreal triumph, she has been compelled to stake her very existence and to raise for—let us hope—a last settlement those problems she desired to avoid indefinitely.

During the Balkan troubles, Austrian policy seemed almost designed to provoke Russia, for the treatment meted out to Serbia and Montenegro by Count Berchtold aroused intense resentment in Russia. But the Russian government avoided the trap, if one had been laid. Though making clear its determination to support Serbia if the latter were attacked, it unceasingly counselled moderation at Belgrade and Cetinje and declined to lose patience. In the end, Russia gained enormously. For, aside from the aggrandizement of Serbia, the railway accorded to Serbia across Albania to the Adriatic, and the linking-up of that line with the Rumanian system, promised to give Russia her coveted outlet on the Adriatic, to the intense disgust of Austrian commercial interests; while Rumania's intervention in the Balkan quarrel over Macedonia, with the connivance of the Tsar and contrary to the wishes of the Dual Monarchy, meant the end of that pro-Austrian policy consistently maintained by the Bucharest government since the Congress of Berlin. How completely the situation had changed to the disadvantage of Austria was clearly revealed in the spring of 1914, when the Tsar visited Bucharest for the first time since the formation of the Rumanian kingdom and arranged for the marriage of his daughter to the heir presumptive of the Rumanian throne. At the time of writing (November, 1914), Rumania has not intervened in the European war, primarily because the late King Carol was a Hohenzollern, but her public opinion, which was never keen for the Austrian alliance, has shown increasing restiveness, lest the government neglect a unique opportunity to bring the Rumanians of Transylvania and the Bukowina under the sceptre of King Ferdinand. Lastly, it was not agreeable from the Austrian point of view that ever since the Bosnian

crisis Russia has been distinctly cordial to Italy, who is nominally Austria's ally but really her rival for the control of the Adriatic.

The truth is, the Balkan policy of the Dual Monarchy had utterly collapsed, largely because it rested on false premises, partly because its directors had sadly miscalculated the course of the Balkan wars; but Vienna could scarcely be expected to admit defeat without a final effort to save the situation, and seems deliberately to have prepared for the present war, of which the murder of the Archduke was merely the occasion, not the ultimate cause. With respect to the Austrian and Russian policies, we must guard carefully against rash condemnations of either, for they are quite as legitimate as those of the United States, as adumbrated in the Monroe Doctrine. All the Balkan states would much prefer to work out their destinies free from the interference of any Great Power, but in their weakness and their jealousies they have repeatedly turned to their powerful neighbours, and the latter have accepted the omens as suited their several interests, just as we have done in Central and South America, with results not always happy or intended.

3. *The General European Situation*

The struggle to maintain the balance of power in Europe is of long standing. From the sixteenth century onwards, the various nations have never doubted that they could retain their freedom and their independence only if no one of them overshadowed the others, and whenever a single power has threatened to become or has become dominant, it has invariably succumbed to a coalition of its rivals. Philip II of Spain, Louis XIV, and Napoleon illustrate the point. Similarly, however much the issues of the present war may be refined, the simple fact is that the Allies regard Germany as a menace to their own safety and have resolutely determined to crush her.

Historically, this state of affairs is in no small degree the legacy of Bismarckian diplomacy, as exemplified in the unification of Germany. The necessity and justice of a united Germany are apparent, but the methods employed by Bismarck to achieve it have long been the subject of criticism. It is difficult to deny that the Iron Chancellor isolated diplomatically, then attacked, and ultimately despoiled Denmark, Austria, and France in turn.

It is equally true that France, in the person of Napoleon III, opposed the unification of Germany, and all things considered, the loss of Alsace-Lorraine was only a just punishment; but the "editing" of the Ems telegram, which precipitated the war of 1870, was as brutal and diabolical a manœuvre as history records. In short, splendid as the exploits of Bismarck were from the German point of view, they generated first in one, then in another, and finally in practically every European country an intense suspicion of German policy, a fear lest the new Empire should once again apply the tactics of "blood and iron" for the purpose of aggrandizement. Nor did Germany endeavour to remove this impression. Rather, she took advantage of every ruffle in the international situation to increase her army, which was already the most formidable in Europe; of recent years she has harboured the vision of a fleet which should challenge the armada of England; and she has never hesitated to rattle the sabre, even going to the point of twice (1875, 1887) threatening France with war and of issuing an ultimatum to Russia over a Balkan question not of immediate concern to herself (1909). Rightly or wrongly, Germany was regarded, at least since the accession of William II, as the standing danger to the peace of Europe; and the bases of the present coalition were laid years ago to ward off, if possible, the very calamity which has at last overtaken the Old World.

As long as Bismarck remained chancellor, this suspicion of Germany was less wide-spread. Realizing fully, as he has told us in his *Reflections and Reminiscences*, that Germany, in view of the circumstances of her birth and as a newcomer in the family of nations, must conduct herself with reserve and circumspection, he shaped her policy so skilfully that a coalition against her was neither possible nor necessary. France, he saw clearly, could undertake a war of revenge only if she were assisted by Austria or Russia. He therefore built up a Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy, which was unnatural in that the two lesser partners were hereditary enemies, but was amply justified as a defensive arrangement (1879-1882). The terms of the alliance have never been published; but its members have always insisted on its purely defensive character, and Italy's neutrality in the war confirms their view. The repeated renewal of the treaties, and the fact that no power dared to attack Germany testify to the prescience of Bismarck; fortunately, he did not live to see his

handiwork undone by the bungling diplomacy of his successors. With Russia he concluded secret "insurance" treaties to obviate the danger of Germany's being dragged into an Austro-Russian war over Balkan difficulties—one wonders if his ghost haunts the Berlin foreign office in these parlous days—and with Great Britain he maintained tolerably cordial relations. Germany, in fact, bestrode the continent like a colossus, with the tacit approval of the other powers (except France), because Bismarck was generally credited with a desire to keep the peace.

This situation was completely changed after 1890 when William II, carried away by a determination to govern as well as to reign, dismissed the statesman who "had cut a certain figure in the history of Germany and of Prussia." The Emperor announced that "the course remained the same"; but actually his policy was quite different. Its main features—the creation of a fleet and the development of imperial ambitions—will be examined in the next section of this paper; here it will suffice to continue our account of European diplomacy, in the strict sense of the words.

One cause of the breach between Bismarck and the Emperor was the refusal of the latter to renew the secret insurance treaty with Russia, which was the corner-stone of Bismarck's diplomacy, *pace* the Triple Alliance. Finding himself isolated, the Tsar soon formed that unnatural alliance with Republican France which Bismarck had succeeded in preventing and which made it possible for Germany to be attacked simultaneously on both her frontiers. There was some evidence, however, that this combination was directed primarily against Great Britain, and William II was quick to seize the advantage. On the one hand, he supported Russian policy in the Far East (revision of the Treaty of Shimonoseki, 1895), on the other he held out the hand of friendship to France, who was encouraged to send out the famous Marchand expedition that penetrated to Fashoda, on the southern border of the Egyptian Sudan, and nearly caused war between France and England. In 1898, at the time of our war with Spain, he is believed to have proposed an intervention against us by Germany, France, and Russia, which was quashed by the refusal of England; according to one account, he advocated similar action against England when the latter declared war against the Boer Republics, but was rebuffed by the refusal of France. These manoeuvres are the first symptoms of a rupture

between Britain and Germany, but they did not prevent a co-operative policy in the Far East during the Boxer troubles, and in 1901 there was a well-defined movement towards an Anglo-German alliance, despite the outburst of Anglophobia in Germany during the Boer war. The fact is, the fall of Bismarck left the diplomatic world without a guiding hand, which was the more regrettable because the expansionist spirit was still strong, and in a state of flux anything might happen.

The air was perceptibly cleared by the Anglo-French agreement of April, 1904, the famous *entente cordiale*, and the Anglo-Russian Convention of August, 1907. As German writers have argued that these reconciliations between England and her traditional enemies were inspired by the deliberate aim of King Edward VII to isolate Germany and build up a coalition against her, it is desirable to analyse the general situation with an open mind. When the Boer war was over, Great Britain found herself almost friendless in Europe, if indeed the Japanese alliance ensured her position in Eastern Asia. With two Great Powers she had quarrels of long standing—with France as regards Egypt and Morocco, with Russia over Tibet, Afghanistan, and Persia, in which neither antagonist was able to score a decisive advantage. It was, accordingly, quite intelligible that the British foreign office should offer to compromise, and equally reasonable that its offers should be accepted. After long negotiations France recognized the British occupation of Egypt in return for a free hand in Morocco; in this spirit of give and take it was also possible to adjust various disputes in Newfoundland, the Niger region, Madagascar, Siam, and the New Hebrides. The Russo-Japanese war having ended in a division of Manchuria between the two combatants, Russia and England were able to strike a bargain in the Middle East. Both agreed to keep out of Tibet, Afghanistan was recognized as under the influence of Great Britain, and Persia was divided into three spheres of influence, one Russian (in the north), one British (along the Gulf of Oman), the third lying between the other two as a neutral zone; while Russia recognized the predominance of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf. No more important advances in the direction of a sound diplomacy have been made in a century: the legitimate ambitions of each party were frankly admitted, and a long list of disputes amicably settled, any one of which might and several of which did almost lead to war. As the various documents stand, they seem to be

conceived in a spirit of enlightened statesmanship and sound common sense.

Were there any ulterior motives? Do the facts that by forgetting their own differences France and England got a free hand against Germany and that Russia, thanks to her agreements with Japan and England, could interfere with Austrian and German designs in the Near East, do these facts justify Germany in saying that she is the victim of a conspiracy hatched by England out of jealousy and joined by the Dual Alliance for the sake of *revanche*? Lord Lansdowne and Sir Edward Grey, the British statesmen responsible for the agreements, have repeatedly declared that they had no point against Germany, the British government has denied that it was bound by any military arrangements with its diplomatic coadjutors, and British public opinion has indicated very clearly that it was opposed to a formal alliance with any European power. None the less, by giving its diplomatic support to those powers against which Germany's alliance with Austria and Italy was arranged and by receiving the support of the same powers against certain German and Austrian schemes distasteful to herself, Great Britain did, beyond a peradventure, pursue a policy actually anti-German and sometimes anti-Austrian; while her traditional friendship with Italy suggested that the third member of the Triple Alliance was but a lukewarm partner. But to admit this orientation is to justify it, historically at least, for British continental policy has been directed, ever since Wolsey and Henry VIII, towards preserving the balance of power; and Britain emerged from her "splendid isolation" in the early years of the twentieth century for the sound reason that after the Russian disasters in the Far East, the Dual Alliance was no longer a match for the Teutonic Powers and because in a variety of ways Germany had shown an unmistakable hostility not to England alone but to her far-flung Empire as well. But if England was thus driven to protect herself against Germany, it is equally true that Germany was slowly but surely being isolated in the diplomatic game. Here, then, was a situation full of dangerous possibilities, and several times before 1914 an explosion was narrowly avoided.

The German government had manifested little interest in the Anglo-French agreement, as it did not believe that two nations who had been rivals for centuries could suddenly strike up an effective friendship; but when the battle of Mukden pointed to the

collapse of Russian power, Germany determined to recover her ascendancy of Europe by an aggressive policy towards France, which would incidentally test the value of the *entente cordiale*. In this fashion arose the question of Morocco, which kept Europe on tenter-hooks for six years, for Germany claimed that France and England had no right to settle this problem without her consent. In the opinion of the writer, this position was thoroughly justified, not only as an assertion that the Concert of Europe still existed, but also in international law. But when Germany attempted to impose *her* solution by threatening France with war, the British government was bound by its agreement and by its interests to support France by every means in its power, as indeed it did in the crises of 1905 and 1911. There is no reason for doubting that on each occasion the British army was ready for service in France if Germany pressed matters to the limit, though in neither case, so far as is known, did Great Britain actually threaten Germany. In the light of recent events, it is reasonable to believe that but for British participation in continental affairs, France would have long since been crushed and Germany established on the English Channel, and in this fact history will probably recognize an ample vindication of British policy. It is necessary, however, to emphasize that this policy was in no way aggressive, for Anglo-German relations became difficult only when Germany manifested hostility towards France, and the British press was almost unanimous in saying that England would have nothing to do with a war of revenge. Further confirmation of this view is found in the agreement of November, 1912. "I agree," wrote Sir Edward Grey to the French ambassador in London, "that if either government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common." There is absolutely no evidence that either France or England ever regarded the *entente cordiale* as a means to attacking the German Empire, which for that matter, would have been absurd when Russia, the ally of France and the friend of England, was both unable and unwilling to fight.

As regards French policy in general, apart from its relations with England, Germany alternately asserted that it was domi-

nated by the desire for revenge, and endeavoured to transform it in her own interest by establishing close economic relations between the two countries. But the proud Republic consistently rejected the German overtures, except for a few months in 1911, when M. Caillaux thought of settling the Morocco controversy on the principle of a joint exploitation. It is almost impossible to determine how far France still nourished the grievances of 1870. But her pacific policy during the Balkan crises of 1908-1909 and 1912-1913 and her dignified calm at the time of the Zabern incident suggest that she asked only to be left alone, as far as that could be reconciled with the Russian alliance.

The Anglo-Russian Convention gave umbrage to Germany because since it secured England's position in the Middle East, the latter was willing to support Russian policy in the Balkans, in as far as it was directed towards securing genuine reforms in Macedonia. But as such reforms were not popular in Vienna and Berlin, the story was invented that the object of King Edward's visit to the Tsar at Reval in June, 1908, was to precipitate a Balkan conflict, at the end of which England, France, and Russia would divide the Ottoman Empire among themselves and their clients. No proof of this plot was ever put forward; had there been any such design, the Bosnian crisis would have been utilized to further it and would scarcely have ended in the humiliating defeat of the Triple Entente. Also, it is well known that Great Britain refused to entertain a Russian proposal for opening the Straits of Constantinople to men-of-war. Four years later, during the Balkan wars, Sir Edward Grey repeatedly accepted the Austrian view in the dispute over Albania, even so far as to send a British squadron to overawe the Montenegrins when they captured Scutari and thought to present Europe with a *fait accompli*. If Great Britain had formed an alliance, even defensive, why did Sir Edward Grey, in those momentous days of last July, persistently refuse to declare the solidarity of England with the other powers of the Triple Entente, despite the most urgent entreaties from Paris and St. Petersburg? We now know that in 1912 Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey offered to make the following declaration to Germany:

"The two powers being naturally desirous of securing peace and friendship between them, Britain declares that she will neither make, nor join in, any unprovoked attack upon Germany. Aggression against Germany is not the subject, and forms no part, of any treaty, understanding, or combination to

which Great Britain is now a party, nor will she become a party to anything which has such an object."

To this proposal, Germany returned an unsatisfactory answer. She not only refused to take a corresponding obligation, but she demanded a pledge of British neutrality in the event of Germany's being engaged in war of any kind. Obviously, Great Britain could make no such promise, for Germany could then begin a war of aggression at her convenience and could even overrun Belgium with impunity. Nothing, therefore, came of these negotiations.

Nevertheless England persevered in the attempt to arrange an understanding with Germany. Sir Edward Grey has himself stated that as a result of the pacific policy pursued by both governments during the Balkan wars their relations "sensibly improved." Influential individuals and societies—on both sides of the North Sea—sought to dispel whatever of hostility there was between the English and German peoples, and there was a wide-spread desire in both countries for an agreement. The possibilities in that direction, as far as England was concerned, may be imagined from Sir Edward Grey's despatch of July 29, 1914, in which he returned to his idea, "hitherto too Utopian," of a general peace treaty. "If the peace of Europe can be preserved, and the present crisis safely passed," runs this historic document, "my own endeavour will be to promote some arrangement to which Germany could be a party, by which she could be assured that no aggressive or hostile policy would be pursued against her or her allies by France, Russia, and ourselves, either jointly or separately." This must surely destroy once for all the legend that the one aim of British policy was to surround Germany with a ring of iron, and when the circle was complete, precipitate a general war. Britain's case against Germany may safely rest upon this unprecedented proposal, and upon the subsequent offer that if France and Russia would not accept "any reasonable proposal . . . to preserve European peace, . . . His Majesty's Government would have nothing more to do with the consequences."

The refusal of the German government to respond to any of these overtures is the most tragic feature of the war. Were London reconciled with Berlin, it might play the mediator between Paris and Berlin. Frenchmen had certainly not for-

gotten Alsace-Lorraine, but they were tired of militarism, and they had shot their last bolt in the revival of three years' service. If the Republic could have been guaranteed against attack, and if Germany could have brought herself to concede genuine self-government to the disputed provinces, one cannot help thinking that in time France would have abandoned the Russian alliance. A peace league of France, Germany, and England was not more unthinkable than was a few years ago the reconciliation of England with France and Russia. Then, if the German military party was bent on war, it could have waged a campaign against Russia, in which the sympathy of the world would have been with Germany.

Why should Germany wish to fight Russia or Russia Germany? Hitherto, as joint abettors of the partition of Poland, they have considered their interests identical in restraining the schemes of the Poles to recover their independence and in preserving monarchical absolutism generally against the democratic demands of the last fifty years. Likewise in the domain of high policy co-operation was long the order of the day. At the time of the Crimean War, Prussia steadfastly resisted the urgings of France and England to join them, and was rewarded by Russian neutrality in the wars of 1866 and 1870 against Austria and France, without which Prussian triumphs would have been impossible. Bismarck, to the end of his career, "kept the wire open to St. Petersburg"; and if William II abandoned this policy, he managed to preserve excellent personal relations with the Tsar and up to a few years ago supported Russian designs in the Middle and Far East. As recently as 1910 Russia accepted the German proposals for the Baghdad railway, and was then enthusiastically praised in the German press for what appeared to be an abandonment of France and Great Britain, which countries were then the chief antagonists of German diplomacy. Germany did not then regard herself as the bulwark of European civilization against Muscovite aggression; nor can it be forgotten that during the Russian revolution, the authorities of Berlin afforded every facility to the Russian government for tracking down and capturing Russian revolutionaries in Germany.

Russo-German intimacy was shattered by two circumstances. First, Russian opinion has gradually become convinced that the road to Constantinople lies through Berlin. Bismarck's conduct at the Congress of Berlin, where he supported England and

Russia in demanding the revision of the Treaty of San Stephano, dictated as it was by the Russians at the gates of Constantinople, caused profound resentment throughout the Tsardom and has never been forgotten. Thanks to this, the Russian government had no little difficulty in restraining the popular demand for war in 1908-1909 when Germany supported Austria-Hungary in the annexation of Bosnia, and again in 1912-1913 in the creation of an independent Albania. Add to this that German culture has long been unpopular in Russia; that the commercial treaty dictated by Germany during the war with Japan was rather unfavourable to Russian interests, and that Germany would insist upon its renewal; that Russian material prosperity and industrial development has made enormous strides in the last five years, but is hampered by the lack of an ice-free port; and that for two decades Germany has done her best to regenerate Turkey with the purpose of checking the Russian advance: and it is quite clear why the present war is immensely popular with the Russian masses.

On the other hand, the Balkan revolution upset the existing situation entirely to the advantage of Russia. The crash of the Ottoman Empire relieved the Balkan states of the pressure from the south and correspondingly aggravated the difficulties of the Dual Monarchy, whose Balkan policy Germany had made her own, in spite of Bismarck's warning. It was also problematical how long Turkey could survive her last operation. From the German point of view it was not unnatural that the peace strength of the German army should be increased to 875,000 men. But the rest of the world saw only additional proof that every increase of armaments had been begun by Germany, and it could point out that when the other continental nations had followed the example of Germany, the latter's position was no better and no stronger than before, indeed rather weaker. For Russia, irritated by the German chancellor's prediction of a struggle between *Germanentum and Slaventum* and the sudden contempt manifested in Germany for all things Russian, began to stiffen her back. She entered a vigorous protest against the reorganization of the Turkish army by a German general (January, 1914), and allowed the Russian press to reply in kind to a particularly abusive article in the *Cologne Gazette*. These trivialities became serious with the Russian announcement that a practice mobilization of the army was contemplated for the autumn of 1914; to

which the German press replied by freely discussing the desirability of a preventive war with the Russian colossus.

In this atmosphere of tension and mutual exacerbation, the Austrian ultimatum was hurled at Serbia on July 23. And when we read in the German White Paper that "we (Germany) gave Austria an entirely free hand in her action against Serbia"; that "any action which she might consider it necessary to take . . . would receive our approval"; and that "we were fully aware in this connection that warlike moves on the part of Austria-Hungary against Serbia would draw Russia into the field"; it is difficult to believe that Germany was not entirely willing for war to come.

The main point of this rather detailed narrative will be missed if it has not become apparent that since the accession of William II German policy has pursued no definite goal as regards the other powers, but has been everything by shorts and nothing long. And not only has German policy been incalculable: there has been a great deal of talk about the mailed fist, much rattling of the sabre, and a wide-spread ventilation of the idea that Germany could "lick all creation"; while particular German diplomats have exhibited a lack of *savoir faire* most distressing to the polished agents of the older nations. Germany's position in the world assuredly was not all that she could desire, in spite of her army; but if she has failed to improve it, the blame must rest chiefly with the Emperor, his four chancellors, and the successive occupants of his foreign office. One and all, they have shown but little of that spirit of give and take which is the secret of success, they have preferred force to argument, and they have convinced the rest of Europe, not to say the world, that the ambitions of the Pan-Germans represented the official policy. It is significant that one must search far and wide in German discussions of international problems for even a suggestion that other powers might have legitimate grievances against Germany, or that they might not in good conscience regard their interests from the German point of view. Jealousy of German commercial progress has perhaps had something to do with her present isolation; but the United States has managed to acquire colonies, to develop a considerable foreign commerce, and to build a powerful navy without exciting universal fear. The trouble with Germany is, she has tried to emulate Bismarck; but she has not asked herself what was possible, and she has not produced statesmen of his

calibre who knew how or were able to control a situation created by themselves.

4. *The Question of Expansion*

Behind these various struggles for influence in the Balkans and in support of the balance of power, there is the problem provided by expansionist ambitions of most of the Great Powers. It is a work of supererogation to discuss whether any of the nations actually needs lands beyond the sea or an increase of European territory: it is sufficient to recognize that none of them, with the possible exception of Great Britain, has been satisfied with its present possessions, and it is safe to say that at the end of the war, whichever side is victorious, the vanquished will have to cede territory, either in Europe or elsewhere, or likely enough in both. In fact, the disposition of other lands and other peoples has been the chief occupation of the European chancelleries for the last generation; the disputes chronicled in the first three sections of this paper show how fragile has been the framework of the European state system when confronted with conflicting colonial ambitions, and Armageddon has come precisely because certain powers conceived that their aspirations could be realized only at the point of the sword. On the whole it is difficult to say that one government has been more responsible than its rivals for the tension, for all have at one time or another been arrogant and unscrupulous, and to this extent all are equally responsible for the war.

In the division of the spoils the Germanic powers have fared least well. Austria-Hungary has added only the contiguous provinces of Bosnia and the Herzegovina, and has seen her cherished schemes indefinitely postponed by the Balkan wars of 1912-1913. Germany has planted her flag in German East and Southwest Africa, the Cameroons and Togoland and Kiaochao and on a few insignificant islands in the Pacific; but by the side of the enormous possessions of Great Britain, France, and Russia, these acquisitions are mere dribbles. To make matters worse, Germany has witnessed an enormous expansion by her present enemies in the last thirty years—England in Burmah, Egypt, and South Africa; France in Tonkin, Morocco, the Sahara and beyond; Russia in Central Asia and Manchuria, not to mention her growing influence in the Balkans; even little Belgium has secured, in the Congo, a domain more valuable than all the

German colonies together. Nor has it escaped Germany's attention that France and Russia have more or less excluded commercial competitors from their preserves, and that much talk has been heard of a customs union within the British Empire which would make that astonishing aggregation of lands and peoples a self-sufficing economic entity.

Germany's position is, indeed, difficult enough. The country is fast becoming a replica of England. Food is imported in increasing quantity, and for their raw materials German manufacturers are more and more dependent upon the produce of *other nations and their colonies*. Only a small proportion of Germany's exports go to her colonies, as against the fact that France, England, and Russia find their best markets in their dependencies. Now there is nothing to prevent any of these countries, in a moment of jealousy or blindness, from shutting Germany out of both her export and import markets by measures perfectly warranted in international law. Furthermore, the population of Germany is greater than that of France or the white-peopled dominions of the British Crown, yet the German emigrant who demands an agreeable climate cannot settle in a land ruled by the Kaiser's government.

In short, Germany contends that she, the most marvellous industrial and commercial nation of the age, which in normal circumstances will one day overtake the United Kingdom in the gross amount of its foreign trade, has not found a "place in the sun" commensurate with her greatness and possibilities. Prosperous as she is to-day—or was on the eve of the war—a hundred years hence she will be at the mercy of her present enemies and the United States, all of which possess enormous tracts of land which they are not now adequately using. Why should not Germany, whose civilization and culture are equal if not superior to that of any other nationality, be given a chance to share in the development of virgin soils and backward races? Is not *Deutschland über Alles* as reasonable a slogan as *Britannia Rules the Waves*? And Germany believes that for years the allied Powers have intrigued and endeavoured to surround her with a network of alliances which should once for all forestall those ambitions whose realization is a matter of life and death with her; that out of sheer jealousy of her wonderful commercial expansion, they have denied to her the resources on which her future depends.

There is not much truth in the charge. To begin with, during

the eighties, when the scramble for Africa was at its height and Germany had every opportunity to acquire overseas possessions, Bismarck deliberately encouraged France in a policy of colonial adventure, with the expectation of embroiling her with England and Italy and of diverting her from a war of revenge. The ruse was successful, and Germany was not attacked; but it was overlooked that however much Britain and the Latin nations might quarrel with each other, they acquired the best lands in Africa and Asia, the very regions that Germany has desired of recent years to possess for herself. It is further to be remarked that Germany obtained her four African colonies through the good will of Great Britain, who in each case resigned valid claims of her own in order to gratify German ambitions; all differences between the two powers were satisfactorily adjusted by the Convention of 1890, which provided, *inter alia*, for the cession of Heligoland to Germany, the best possible proof that Great Britain cherished no animosity towards the great continental power. As regards France, Germany courted her so assiduously for twenty years after 1880 that a conflict of colonial ambitions was unthinkable and non-existent.

In the last decade Germans have complained bitterly of Franco-British opposition to their most cherished schemes, namely, the Baghdad railway and a partition of Morocco in which they should have a share. The last independent state of Africa Minor, the Shereefian empire, had long been a victim of European intrigue without falling a prey to it. Geography suggested that it would round off the French Mediterranean possessions; but a convention of 1880 had made Morocco a kind of international hunting-ground. The Anglo-French agreement of 1904, which recognized French predominance there, was concluded without Germany's being consulted. Instead, however, of protesting, the Kaiser's government declared its "cordial" acceptance of an arrangement that augured well for the peace of the world; not till after the battle of Mukden did William II decide that Morocco must be preserved in its territorial integrity and independence (speech at Tangier, March 31, 1905).

The two statements of policy were quite contradictory, but each excluded Germany from that share of Morocco which her publicists and politicians insistently demanded. To the end of the controversy her policy remained obscure: in 1906 the Algeiras Conference at her demand appointed France and Spain *as the*

agents of the Powers, and Morocco was formally internationalized; in 1909 Germany once more recognized the predominant political interests of France; in 1911 when France, accepting the omen, occupied Fez, the German government protested and sent a cruiser to Agadir, which port, under the international arrangements sanctioned by Germany herself and to which she appealed, was not open to foreign ships. France was certainly not blameless in the long discussion, for with the connivance of Great Britain she had practically nullified the Act of Algeiras and she had not accorded Germany the economic privileges guaranteed in the Convention of 1909; but at least she never concealed her ambition to annex Morocco sooner or later. In the crisis of 1911 Germany began, there is much reason to believe, with the intention of taking southwest Morocco for herself; in the end she allowed France to establish a protectorate, in return for concessions of French territory in central Africa that brought her in touch with the Congo, upon which she had long nourished designs. Germany may have changed her plans because of English intervention; but had she stuck to the position assumed in 1905, that Morocco must not be absorbed by any European power, she would have been on unchallengeable ground. The conclusion seems to be that Germany was using Morocco as a means of testing the friendship of England and France, and regarded the acquisition of territory *in that region* as of secondary importance. Naturally enough, Great Britain gave France the support promised in 1904; but she favoured Germany's policy of the open door, and she raised no objection to the territorial rearrangements in the Congo basin. In his speech of November 27, 1911, anent the controversy, Sir Edward Grey stated that British expansion in Africa was undesirable, and that "if Germany has friendly arrangements to negotiate with other foreign countries with regard to Africa, we are not anxious to stand in her way any more than in theirs"; Britain was not pursuing "a dog-in-the-manger policy."

As regards the Baghdad Railway, Germany had a clear case. From the economic point of view, British and French as well as German, there was no reason why a railway should not be built from Constantinople across the Anatolian plateau to Baghdad and ultimately to the Persian Gulf, and at first there was no opposition; in fact, the concession was obtained from the Sublime Porte with British help. But British and French capitalists were offered only a minor share of the stock, and were excluded

from the management; the kilometric guarantees assumed by the Turkish government prejudiced the work of reform in Macedonia, and must lead to an increase of the Turkish customs; and German publicists began to show how an attack on Egypt would be feasible after the line was completed. So the British government refused its consent for many years. But the situation was changed after the German failure in Morocco and the Italian occupation of Tripoli: Germany could never dominate the Mediterranean, which is the highway of the British Empire; and in 1913 both England and France withdrew their opposition to the Baghdad line, which had been accepted by Russia in 1910. A few more years of peace, and Germany would have achieved a diplomatic and economic triumph for which the whole world would have been grateful.

Here attention must be called to a fact which has been practically ignored in the chaos of the war. Early in the summer of 1914 an agreement was reached between Great Britain and Germany which proves up to the hilt that the former was not afraid of German expansion. While the details have not been published, it is known that Great Britain gave Germany a free hand in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, thus removing the last obstacle to the Baghdad line, and that an understanding was reached as to the disposition of the Portuguese colonies and the Belgian Congo in case their present owners were willing to sell part or all of those lands.

But probably no amount of argument and exposition will ever convince Germany that England was not her inveterate enemy; for by the very fact of being in possession of the most desirable lands of the globe, the British Empire was a standing challenge to German ambitions. Having by a variety of means, many of them questionable from an austere moral standard, established herself all over the world, England clearly desired the maintenance of peace and the preservation of the *status quo*, and her complacency received a profound shock by the advent of a power that demanded recognition as an equal, that conceived its civilizing mission in large and vigorous terms. To Germans English suspicions savoured of jealousy, English preparations of hypocrisy, a favourite word in their political discussion; and it was particularly unpalatable that more than a million Germans had found new homes in the scattered British dominions, where they had lost touch with their Fatherland. In the fiery lectures of

Heinrich von Treitschke, Great Britain was pictured as a great robber state, to which the world rendered an unwilling tribute; her naval supremacy was called an anachronism in an age when all nations used the ocean as a highway of commerce; and her supposed hostility to the cause of German unity was proclaimed a sufficient reason why Germany should attempt a settlement with *perfidæ Albion*, which should be "the longest and most difficult of all." How widely these ideas had been disseminated, was revealed at the time of the Boer War, when all Germany seemed to pour forth a long-cherished hatred and contempt of England and her institutions; an explosion not unintelligible when one recalls the outburst of the *Saturday Review*. "Were the German fleet destroyed tomorrow," wrote the organ of Tory chauvinism on September 18, 1897, "there is not an Englishman in the world who would not be the richer . . . *Germaniam esse delendam*." As the German government made no effort to restrain the excesses of the press, Englishmen assumed that German policy was dictated by a considered hostility to their Empire and let loose the vials of their own wrath upon their Teutonic kinsmen. The press of both countries continued for years to poison the minds of their readers; and if indeed the circumstances under which this war began show that English suspicions were justified, it is none the less true that the attitude of public opinion on both sides of the North Sea made the negotiation of an agreement, or at least a *détente*, unusually difficult, if not impossible.

The real issue between Germany and England, however, has been neither the fulminations of the press nor the complaints of diplomatic hostility, but the growth of the German navy. For this rivalry geography is primarily responsible. The only shore line of the German Empire is that of the North Sea and the Baltic, from which its merchant fleets go forth to the ends of the earth. But across their lines of communication lie the British Isles. It is strictly true, as the war has convincingly demonstrated, that by closing the Straits of Dover and the North Sea from Scotland to Norway, the British navy can prevent a single German merchantman from reaching the Atlantic Ocean; in other words Germany's foreign commerce lies at the mercy of a foreign power. On these grounds the Kaiser has demanded of his people, and they have willingly provided, the sinews for the construction of a fleet "so strong that even for the adversary

with the greatest sea-power, a war against it would involve such dangers as to imperil his own position in the world." This quotation from the memorandum attached to the German Navy Law of 1900 indicates precisely the ground on which Germany has justified her enormous naval expenditure in the last sixteen years. Germany has built her fleet solely for purposes of defence, in particular for the defence of her commerce. Nor, on theoretical grounds, can any power take umbrage at this argument, and England has always justified her colossal navy on the ground that she must always keep the sea open for the supplies of food and raw materials, any cessation in the regular arrival of which would lay her open to starvation and revolution.

Why then has the United Kingdom regarded the creation of a German fleet with suspicion, and strained every nerve to keep a handsome lead? In the first place, because England's position is unique. No other nation in the world depends absolutely upon the sea for its subsistence. Even to-day, when her flag has been swept from the ocean, Germany is able to import goods through neutral countries and to carry on some export trade. England, on the other hand, "will be the sea's victim on the day she ceases to be its queen." If it is urged that Great Britain can escape from her predicament by consenting to the inviolability of private property at sea in time of war, she replies that she cannot surrender the one weapon available to her for the crushing of an enemy—unless she were to raise a conscript army, which would be more burdensome than the cost of her navy. Besides, as war on land interrupts commerce between the belligerents, it is logical that maritime intercourse must be similarly suspended. The problem is really insoluble, and both England and Germany long ago recognized the fact.

In the second place, the German fleet was constructed under circumstances that Great Britain could not disregard. In order to arouse public sentiment in favour of a large naval programme, the Navy League, which is little more than a branch of the Admiralty, conducted a vigorous campaign in which the menace of the British fleet was adduced as the chief argument. The press and the professors in the state-controlled universities used the most unbridled language, and even in high quarters little reserve was shown. "As my grandfather reorganized the army," said the Kaiser on January 1, 1900, "so shall I reorganize my navy, without flinching and in the same way, so that it will stand on the

same level as my army [the most powerful in the world], and that with its help, the German Empire shall reach a place which it has not yet attained." To this may be added another quotation from the memorandum of 1900: "It is not absolutely necessary that the German battle fleet should be as strong as that of the greatest naval power, because a great naval power will not, as a rule, be in a position to concentrate all its striking forces against us." The point of this remark lay in the fact that in 1900 the British fleet was scattered all over the world; the most powerful ships were stationed in the Mediterranean, and home waters were practically defenceless, a distribution dictated by the political and strategic problems of the Empire. But in view of the creation of a German fleet, which seemed intended for use against England, it was necessary to abandon most of the foreign stations and concentrate the squadrons nearer home; a process which, begun in 1904, ended with the practical withdrawal even from the Mediterranean. This necessity was an important factor in bringing about the agreements with France and Russia, and Germans have argued that this shifting of British naval power was a sign of aggressive intentions; the chronology of the process, however, shows that each step was taken *after* and not *before* each increase of the German navy.

The third reason for England's distrust of Germany was found in the size and character of the German fleet. The navy law of 1900 provided for a fleet of thirty-eight battleships, fourteen large cruisers, and thirty-eight small cruisers, together with a large torpedo-boat flotilla, to be completed by 1920. Laws of 1906 and 1912 increased this programme to forty-one battleships and twenty cruisers; by substituting battle cruisers for the cruisers, and by providing for the automatic replacement of obsolete ships, the scheme envisaged a fleet of sixty-one battleships of the latest type, that is to say, of *Dreadnoughts*, which would constitute the most powerful armada in the history of the world. As the *Dreadnought* type was introduced by the British Admiralty, it is fair to say that by its own action it superseded the splendid fleet created since the Naval Defence Act of 1899. The all-big-gun ship, however, had been foreshadowed by Italian and American constructors, and it was the intelligent anticipation of England in 1905 which has given her such overwhelming odds against her present enemy, if indeed at an enormous and ever-increasing cost. But sixty-one battleships of any kind

would have worried Englishmen, because battleships are not built to protect a nation's commerce; that function appertains to light cruisers, of which Germany has built few, and a battle fleet was superfluous for her coast defence. Convinced, therefore, by the size and character of the German fleet and the tone of public discussion in Germany that England or her Empire would one day be the victim of German aggression, Englishmen submitted to heavy taxation in order to preserve a margin of even 60 per cent. for their own navy, and it may be that the future historian will lay upon England the responsibility for the burden of armaments which has given the war its Titanic mould. In justice to Germany one must admit that a section of the Conservative party in England advocated a "preventive" war against Germany before her fleet became too formidable. The Civil Lord of the Admiralty, in the Balfour government, said at a dinner, according to one account, that the German fleet could be destroyed before people read in the newspapers that war had been declared. In 1909 there was a kind of panic about the alleged inadequate shipbuilding programme of the Asquith government, in the course of which Germany was accused of secretly accelerating the construction of its ships; and much against its will the Liberal cabinet was constrained to sanction the addition of eight *Dreadnoughts* in a single year. Likewise, the movement for universal military service, so ably conducted by the late Lord Roberts, was bound to give offence in Germany, because she was openly referred to as the enemy against whom a conscript army might be used.

On the whole, however, the present government of Great Britain sincerely exerted itself to moderate the naval rivalry. In 1906 and 1907 it built only three capital ships, instead of the four recommended by the late Conservative ministry, and in 1908 only two; without meeting with any response from Germany, who increased her programme (two ships in 1906, three in 1907, four in 1908: this was the cause of the panic of 1909). At the Hague Conference of 1907 the British delegates were instructed to propose a limitation of armaments, to which Germany demurred. Since 1911, when he became First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. Winston Churchill has twice proposed "a naval holiday," and finally struck an unofficial bargain with Admiral von Tirpitz for a ratio of sixteen to ten in the construction of battleships. In addition, from 1907 to 1912 the British government con-

ducted intermittent negotiations with Germany anent the whole question. Germany demanded a political agreement, and assuredly this was the one avenue of escape from an insuperable dilemma; for only if each government was convinced of the sincerity and good faith of the other, was it possible, under the circumstances, to ignore the possibility of an unprovoked attack. So in 1912 Great Britain offered to pledge herself not to attack Germany or to join any combination which had such an object in view. This was not satisfactory to Germany, who required a declaration of absolute neutrality on the part of England in any war to which Germany might be a party, and the idea was dropped. Nevertheless, the resolute determination of Great Britain to retain her maritime supremacy, the abundant proof that she was not a colossus with feet of clay, and the rally of the Empire to her assistance had left its impression upon Germany; and in view of the colonial agreement the outlook for a definitive naval understanding was promising.

As regards the commercial rivalry of England and Germany, which in some quarters is held up as the real cause of their war, it may be remarked that for years Germany has been England's best customer, not excluding British India, and that she has bought more from Germany than any country except the United States. The reciprocal trade of the two nations in 1913 amounted to over \$700,000,000. Again, an examination of the trade figures shows that about 75 per cent. of Germany's foreign commerce is with countries of the European continent, to which Great Britain sends only about 40 per cent. of her exports; in the overseas dominions of the British Empire, with which the Mother Country does one-third of its business, German commerce has but a slight hold. While it cannot be denied, therefore, that there is a certain general competition between the two countries, it is quite evident that this has been very much exaggerated, and that they are mutually dependent. Finally, it is a gross misrepresentation to say that British trade is being extinguished by the advance of Germany. Germany had to catch up with England's lead of three-quarters of a century, and since 1907 the former has about held her own. The following table, which is calculated in millions of dollars, speaks for itself.¹

¹ Approximate figures only. The exports from the United Kingdom refer to British products only. The re-export trade would increase the exports by about one-fourth.

YEAR	UNITED KINGDOM				GERMANY			
	Imports	% increase	Exports	% increase	Imports	% increase	Export	% increase
1890	2100		1315		1120		790	
1899	2425	15	1320	0	1360	21.5	1000	27
1903	2710	12	1450	10	1580	16	1250	25
1907	3225	19	2130	47	2250	42	1770	41
1911	3400	6	2270	6	2385	6	2025	11.5
1911	3400	6	2270	6	2385	6	2025	11.5
1912	3775	11	2435	7.5	2530	6	2185	7.9
1913	3845	1.9	2630	8	2665	5	2480	13.5

But these figures do not consider the growth of population, which between 1890 and 1910 stood at 26 per cent. for Germany, as opposed to 18 per cent. for the United Kingdom. From the following table showing the exports per head of the population, it would appear that the advantage, in recent years, actually rests with England.

	UNITED KINGDOM	GERMANY
Average 1900-1904	\$31.81	\$19.78
“ 1907-1910	44.32	25.81
“ 1911-1913	54.55	34.31
Increase 1900-1913	\$22.74	\$14.53

Leaving figures aside, it would be exceedingly difficult to prove that the British people were jealous of Germany's prosperity. Intelligent discussion of the subject always emphasized the fact that the two countries were partners, not rivals; the tariff reform movement, which was to save England—and the Empire—from German competition was repudiated in three general elections; neither in the United Kingdom nor in any part of the Empire governed from London—that is, except in the self-governing dominions—have Englishmen enjoyed any trading privileges that were not available for Germans as well. Since the war began, there has been no looser statement than that which ascribes England's participation to a jealousy of Germany's commercial prowess; for war means the interruption of business, and England suffers more from that than any other nation.

There is, then, no reason for rejecting Mr. Asquith's statement that Great Britain is fighting for the maintenance of the

public law of Europe and the right of small nationalities to exist; to which may be added, considerations of enlightened self-interest. Until the violation of Belgian neutrality by Germany, English opinion was almost unanimous in favour of standing aside, and Sir Edward Grey repeatedly told France that English help was dependent upon popular sentiment. The promise of naval assistance was not given until Germany had sent her ultimatum to Paris, and that was conditional. But the German affront to Belgium left England no alternative. The promise to compensate Belgium after the war and to respect her independence and integrity, coming as it did from a government which, on its own admission, had broken its pledged word, was obviously worthless, apart from the fact that the exponents of German expansion have long held that Belgium must one day be incorporated in the German Empire. Now since the fourteenth century England has consistently opposed the absorption of the Low Countries by a strong power; this was the issue in her struggle with Louis XIV, and she entered the lists against the French Revolution precisely because the First Republic was bent on extending its frontier to the Rhine. So in 1914. The aggression of Germany threatened to upset the balance of power; were she successful, would not England be her next victim? The truth is, so inevitable was the participation of England if Belgium were molested that Germany must actually have desired to see England drawn in; or else her statesmen and diplomatists are the sorriest and most incapable that ever directed the destinies of a great nation.

The documents found in Brussels merely show that England was prepared to resist a German invasion of Belgium; and in the spring of 1913 Sir Edward Grey officially assured the Belgian government that England intended to respect the neutrality of Belgium if other powers did so. Until Germany can *prove* that an unprovoked attack upon her by way of Belgium was planned by Great Britain, we shall continue to hold the mistress of the seas guiltless of provoking the great conflagration and justified in taking part. As to her "bloodguiltiness" and "treachery" to the Teutonic race, it is enough to remember that Germany did not discover "the Slav peril" until two years ago, and that for more than a decade she has been practically the ally of the Unspeakable Turk.

With every desire, therefore, to do justice to Germany's

appeal for a fair judgment, one can only admit that in the court of history she must bear the major responsibility for the greatest of all wars.

In conclusion, one cannot help feeling that behind the mazes of diplomacy and the ambitions of nations, there has long existed on the part of governments and peoples alike, or certain of them, a subconscious desire to make use of the colossal armaments accumulated during the last generation. Not that there was any murderous intent or willingness to be shot, but the battle-ships and the armies had produced no return as investments, and in spite of Norman Angell's argument that war does not pay in the long run, many millions of men were certainly disposed to have at least one more try before the world settled down to a monotonous and everlasting peace. The fighting spirit is not yet dead in the human race; on the contrary, modern democracies have often shown themselves more chauvinistic than the governments entrusted with the conduct of international relations. Nor are the hatreds and animosities engendered by centuries of conflict and aspiration to be killed off in a day, even by an appeal to the pocket-book. To the peoples of Europe Louis XIV and Frederick the Great, Napoleon and Bismarck still stand for great causes or great crimes; while the wars of the nineteenth century left behind them more problems than they solved. And so, just as the individual will often sacrifice his material welfare on the altar of an ideal, the embattled nations of Europe are willing to suffer infinite pains if only their several destinies, as they conceive them, may find opportunity of realization.

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