



3 Bloody Sundays

3. Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie were laid out on 28 June 1914 in the official residence of the Governor of Sarajevo. On the following day, the bodies began their journey to Metković, from whence the coffins were taken to the nearby flagship of the Imperial and Royal Navy Fleet, the *Viribus Unitis*, and from there, to Trieste.

The Assassination

While Bertha von Suttner's body was still being transferred from Vienna to Gotha for cremation, manoeuvres of the Imperial and Royal XV and XVI Corps began in Bosnia. Two divisions of the XV Corps were to defend themselves in the area of the Ivan Ridge on the border with Herzegovina, while two divisions of the XVI Corps were to attack them there. Archduke Franz Ferdinand wanted to be present at the conclusion of the exercise on 27 June.¹⁶⁸ After a meeting with the German Kaiser at Franz Ferdinand's chateau in Konopiště (Konopischt) south of Prague, the Archduke travelled with his wife Sophie to Bosnia via Vienna. The aim of his trip was not only to grant a visit by his own high-ranking person to the new province and the troops. Franz Ferdinand wanted more. As has been mentioned, since for personal rather than objective reasons, he no longer harmonised with the Chief of the General Staff Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf, he wanted to observe in action the successor he had in mind for the post of Chief of the General Staff of the entire armed force of Austria-Hungary, the regional commander of Bosnia-Herzegovina, General of Artillery Oskar Potiorek, as part of a larger manoeuvre. To a certain degree, this was a test to help the Archduke make a final decision. His visit to the provinces, which had been annexed in 1908, was also intended as a demonstration. Potiorek had requested that they come, since in his view something had to be done for the image of the Monarchy and to 'show our colours'. It was still not clear in the spring whether the visit would take place, since at that time, Emperor Franz Joseph appeared to be dying, and the heir presumptive was naturally required to remain in Vienna. However, the elderly monarch rallied once more, and the journey was fixed.

It was by no means the first time that a high-ranking person had travelled to Bosnia or Herzegovina. Visits of this nature had occurred relatively frequently. However, there was certainly cause, given the ever-recurring crises in the Balkans, to demonstrate the connection between the two southernmost provinces of the Monarchy with the Empire as a whole, and to pay them particular attention. There was therefore undoubtedly sufficient reason to go ahead with the journey. And the occasion itself, the observation of a manoeuvre by the Archduke, who in 1909 had taken over the role of Inspector General of the Troops 'placed at the disposal of the Supreme Commander', and who since that time had been making such troop inspection visits on behalf of the Emperor, was nothing new. The journey also did not appear to be more hazardous than other tours taken by the Archduke. However, assassination attempts against high-ranking officials

in 1902, 1906 and 1910 had already made it necessary to introduce heightened security measures.¹⁶⁹ No real objection was made to the visit from the political or military point of view. Neither Baronet Leon von Biliński, the joint finance minister who was responsible for the Austro-Hungarian central administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, nor the governor of the two provinces, Oskar Potiorek, who took care of political and military matters on the ground, expressed concern or misgivings at any time. Quite the opposite: they were glad that the Archduke and his wife had decided to make the trip.

Here, too, it remained for later generations to conclude that a series of warnings had in fact been given. Numerous expressions of concern had indeed been issued, and reports had been submitted of imminent assassination attempts.¹⁷⁰ The vice-president of the Bosnian National Assembly, Jozo Sunarić, had warned of a hostile mood among the Serbs, saying that the visit to Sarajevo appeared to be too risky. The Serbian envoy in Vienna, Jovan Jovanović, had apparently also heard rumours of a planned assassination. The head of the Evidenzbüro, (military intelligence service) of the Imperial and Royal Army, August Urbánski von Ostrymiecz, had also voiced his concern. Even the Archduke himself needed reassurance, and ordered his Lord Chamberlain, Baron Karl von Rumerskirch, to consult the Lord Chamberlain of the Emperor, Prince Alfred Montenuovo. He also had objections, although of an entirely different kind: in Montenuovo's view, the visit by the Archduke, who would 'only' be present as Inspector General of the Troops and not as future Emperor, would not make a good impression on the population with its oriental mindset. For a visit by such a high-ranking individual, they would expect to see an appropriate degree of pomp.¹⁷¹ When the Emperor had visited the province in 1910, there was not only a splendid display, but safety measures were also taken, with double rows of soldiers positioned along the roads through which the monarch drove. The Inspector General of the Troops could not expect the same treatment, even though he was entitled to demand it.

All in all, numerous objections and misgivings were voiced. Some were only recorded in writing in memoirs after the fact. Overall, any serious assessment of the last journey made by Franz Ferdinand will conclude that it was not without controversy, and that warnings had been given. However, visits by prominent individuals, then as now, are always accompanied by such concerns. Ultimately, the word of the Archduke held sway: '[...] I will not be put under a protective glass cover. Our lives are at risk at all times. One simply has to trust in God.'¹⁷²

In his book *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad*, ('The Trail Leads to Belgrade') Fritz Würthle analysed the warnings and misgivings in terms of their validity and came to the undramatic conclusion that they did not exceed the usual levels for such occasions. Warnings had been issued before almost every visit, and certainly not for Bosnia alone. Of all the warnings, however, there was none that was sufficiently severe as to clearly state the extent of the risk.

Another aspect was unequivocally clarified by Würthle, for which he also provided sufficient proof: it did not matter who came to Sarajevo. In principle, any visitor travelling from Vienna of any degree of prominence was to be the target of an attack at the next possible opportunity. It also did not matter on which date they came. Only in the subsequent interpretation of events and, above all, in assessments of the particularly determined and symbolic nature of the act, was it emphasised that the visit by the heir to the throne was the sole reason for the formation of the group of assassins, and that the date chosen, 28 June, or 'Vidovdan' (St. Vitus' Day), the day on which a Serbian-Albanian army had been beaten by the Ottomans in the battle on the Kosovo Polje in 1389 and the Turkish Sultan Murad I was murdered by the Serbian knight Miloš Obilić, would have been a particular provocation. However, it is likely that these notions were just as contrived as others that arose in connection with the double murder. One thing is certain: The conspirators had been inspired by a whole series of murders and attempted murders, most of all not by the murder of Sultan Murad, but by the more recent attempted assassination by Bogdan Žerajić of the former Austro-Hungarian Governor of Bosnia Marijan Varešanin in 1910. In Bosnia, the 'Vidovdan' was not a public holiday, and the large majority of the Bosnian population, Catholic Croats and Muslims, would certainly have had no reason to join in the chorus of Serbian nationalists. The assassins themselves also only mentioned St. Vitus' Day in passing, if at all. In the official record of the event, they claimed that they would have attempted an assassination on any date. Also, they had already been planning the murder since March 1914, in other words, since the newspapers had begun reporting that the heir to the throne might visit Bosnia, without giving a specific date.¹⁷³ In the end, the dates for the visit were arranged to coincide with the manoeuvres by the XVI Imperial and Royal Corps, and whether or not they were conducted depended solely on the level of training of the troops, the weather conditions and the acceptance of the exercise. The visit to Sarajevo was scheduled to take place following completion of the manoeuvre. This was a Sunday and – by coincidence – St. Vitus' Day.

Last of all, there were moments that occurred during the sequence of events that made the assassination appear to be ordained by fate to an even greater degree. The manoeuvres were conducted to the full satisfaction of the Archduke. Potiorek had proven his worth, and could now hope for promotion. If Conrad, the Chief of the General Staff, were to be released from his duties as Franz Ferdinand wished, then Potiorek was the most serious contender for the post. The most important purpose of the visit had therefore been fulfilled. While Franz Ferdinand observed the manoeuvres, his wife, Duchess Sophie von Hohenberg, travelled several times to nearby Sarajevo from her temporary residence in Ilidža, opened an orphanage and took a tour of the city. It would, therefore, not have been absolutely necessary to visit the Bosnian capital. Indeed, Franz Ferdinand hesitated one last time before coming to Sarajevo. However, the lieutenant colo-

nel sent to meet him by Governor Potiorek, Erich Merizzi, advised that a cancellation of the visit at the last minute would be such an insult to the supreme head of the military and civil administration, and therefore signify such a loss of prestige, that the heir to the throne set his doubts aside. Merizzi had not only argued on objective grounds however, but also because he was particularly friendly with Potiorek, and wanted to make sure that the high-ranking visit would be fully satisfactory.¹⁷⁴ And so the heir to the throne and his wife departed from Ilidža by train, and in Sarajevo boarded their own car brought especially for the visit, a Graef & Stift that Count Franz Harrach had provided for Franz Ferdinand, and drove from the station into the city. The first attack occurred on the journey to the city hall when a hand grenade was thrown by Nedeljko Čabrinović. It fell on to the unfolded canopy of the car, either bounced off or was knocked aside in time, and exploded underneath a car driving behind. Merizzi was slightly injured and was brought to hospital. The Archduke appeared angry rather than shocked, and now it was Oskar Potiorek who persuaded him to change his plans. When the initial turmoil had died down, he suggested that they visit the hospital where his adjutant and friend Merizzi was being treated. Franz Ferdinand agreed and left the city hall with his wife and the accompanying party. A chain of events caused the car in which the Archduke was travelling to come to a standstill at the Latin Bridge over the Miljačka River, just where Gavrilo Princip, another of the assassins who were dispersed throughout the city, was sitting. He fired at the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne and Duchess Sophie. Both were fatally wounded.¹⁷⁵

That day, 28 June, began like any other, and yet it was not to end the same way. The shots on the Latin Bridge in Sarajevo made world history. Six of the seven assassins standing ready in the city were Bosnian citizens of Serbian nationality, while the seventh was a Muslim from Herzegovina. They had been influenced and radicalised by the Greater Serbia movement that had begun to be known as 'Mlada Bosna' ('Young Bosnia'), and supported its goal of destroying the Habsburg Monarchy in order to create a Yugoslav state. They referred to themselves as 'Yugoslav nationalists',¹⁷⁶ and claimed that they had wanted to set an example. They were also willing to sacrifice their own lives. Čabrinović and Princip swallowed potassium cyanide that had been given to them as a precautionary measure by their contacts in Serbia. However, the poison failed to take full effect, and only caused them to vomit. Their terrorist act was intended as an expression of protest. Some members of the group had recoiled at the last minute, saying that murder was an inappropriate way of bringing a protest to public attention. This was of no interest to its younger members, who were keen to go through with the plan. However, they would not have known that their attack and, above all, the shots fired by Gavrilo Princip would trigger a world war and indeed herald the downfall of the Habsburg Empire. They were inspired by Mazzini, Marx, Bakunin, Nietzsche and others, had at times studied in Belgrade and had ardently participated in the discussion

surrounding the 'tyrannicide'. In time, a whole list of people began to be regarded as 'worthy of assassination': the Austrian Emperor, Foreign Minister Count Berchtold, Finance Minister Biliński, General of Artillery Potiorek, the ban of Croatia, Baron Ivan Skerletz, the Governor of Dalmatia, Slavko Čuvaj and naturally the heir to the throne Franz Ferdinand.¹⁷⁷ There were cross-connections to Croatian and Bosnian exile circles in the USA, Switzerland and France, but the most stable link was to Serbia. The assassination was prepared not by the American friends of 'Mlada Bosna', but by the secret Serbian organisation 'Ujedinjenje ili smrt' ('Unification or Death') which was linked to the head of the Serbian military secret services, Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević (or 'Apis'). Some of its members gave the would-be assassins necessary lessons in shooting near Belgrade, and procured the hand grenades and pistols as well as the potassium cyanide. Even Dimitrijević could admittedly not have assumed that the successful assassination of Franz Ferdinand would lead to war. His goal was more modest: to send a signal to the southern Slavs in the Monarchy and to put pressure on the Serbian government. In his opinion, any further concessions to the Danube Monarchy on the part of Belgrade would cost Serbia its influence over the southern Slavs in the Monarchy. However, he of all people must have been aware that a hardening of policy towards Vienna could at some point mean war.

The Shock

28 June 1914 was a Sunday. Time and again, attempts have been made to capture the mood of that day far away from Sarajevo, and particularly in Vienna. It was a sleepy Sunday, but in contrast to today, when only a few people in positions of influence are likely to be found in Vienna on their day of rest, in 1914, there was a large number in the city – politicians, officials and members of the military alike. Only the Emperor and his household had already left for the royal holiday residence in Bad Ischl. On top of this, the following day, 29 June was a public holiday, offering the prospect of two days of early summer relaxation. However, shortly after midday, the peace was suddenly broken. Telegrams and telephone calls buzzed across the Monarchy. In fact, it was astonishing how quickly news of the murder of the heir to the throne and his wife was disseminated, reaching one person here and another there. Nobody was left unmoved. Shock, helplessness, anger and verbal aggression were expressed. Joyous reactions were also reported. Count Ottokar Czernin, the envoy in Bucharest at the time who would later become Foreign Minister, noted in his memoirs that in Vienna and Budapest, expressions of joy outweighed those of sorrow.¹⁷⁸ Josef Redlich, already mentioned above, whose diary is one of the most important sources for this period, since it has the advantage of being authentic rather than having been written sub-

sequently, noted the oft quoted words: 'In the city [Vienna], there is no atmosphere of mourning; in the Prater and out here where we are in Grinzing, there has been music playing everywhere on both days [i.e. 28 and 29 June].'¹⁷⁹ Joy was also reported in Hungary. And why should individuals here or there not have experienced a pleasant shock on hearing the news? The heir to the throne had certainly not only made friends. Quite the opposite! Hans Schlitter, the Director of the State Archives, who had been very close to the Archduke, noted in his diary: 'When one looks back at the catastrophe with a philosophical calm, one could conclude that as a result of the satanic act, Austria has been saved from greater catastrophes and that a difficult problem has been resolved at a stroke. But this can never be proven.'¹⁸⁰ The diplomat Emerich Csáky, who at that time was posted in Bucharest, made a simple assessment: Franz Ferdinand may have had 'supporters, although they were very limited in number, but friends he had none. Instead, his enemies were all the greater in number; in Hungary, he was literally hated.'¹⁸¹ For this reason, no attempt was made in Hungary to hide the fact that the murder triggered a sense of relief. The aristocracy went one step further, arranging the requiem for Franz Ferdinand on the very same day as the grand wedding celebrations by members of the Szápáry and Esterházy families. No member of the upper aristocracy and top echelons of society wanted to miss the opportunity to attend the wedding, unless there was an express reason for staying away.¹⁸² Ultimately, the tables were turned, and the Viennese court was subjected to a barrage of criticism for rendering it impossible for the Hungarian nobility to pay its last respects to Franz Ferdinand. A lengthier interpellation on the matter was even made by Count Gyula Andrássy in the Hungarian Reichstag (Imperial Diet), demanding clarification from Prime Minister Tisza regarding the events leading to the assassination and its immediate consequences.¹⁸³ Crocodile tears were shed.

Rumours began to spread, soon catching up with verified information: the assassin was the son of Crown Prince Rudolf, who had killed Franz Ferdinand because he believed he had murdered his father; the Freemasons were mentioned, as well as the German 'secret service', the Hungarian prime minister Count Tisza, who was in league with 'Apis', the Russian General Staff, etc.¹⁸⁴

However, the predominant reaction was shock and a desire for revenge. The fact that the Archduke was a symbol, and that a hope had been destroyed, which was by all means intact, that the Habsburg Monarchy would have the opportunity to shake off the rigidity of the late Franz Joseph years, provoked a sense of outrage and gave cause for hatred. For those in authority, it became clear almost straight away that the trail led to Belgrade, and that accountability and atonement must be demanded from Serbia. Conrad von Hötzendorf, who until 27 June had accompanied the heir to the throne before departing for Sremski Karlovci, where he received news of the murder, expressed a view that was widely held: 'The murder in Sarajevo was the last link in a long chain. It was

not the work of an individual fanatic, but the result of a well-organised attack; it was a declaration of war by Serbia on Austria-Hungary. It can only be answered by war.²¹⁸⁵

No mention was made of the fact that Conrad would have known how far-reaching the effects of the murder of Franz Ferdinand would be. No mention that Austria-Hungary suddenly had no prospects. No further reference to the fact that a reorganisation at state level could have reshaped the Monarchy from its foundations upwards and made it viable. At a single stroke, everything that Franz Ferdinand had planned and prepared with the aim of reforming the Empire was no longer of interest. And the fact that in the shorter or longer term, this would have brought about an end to dualism was also in effect considered irrelevant. After all, the alternative to reform of the Empire was collapse. No mention was made of the plan to seek an understanding with Russia. Suddenly, the 'secondary rule' by the Archduke, which had been the subject of repeated criticism, also no longer existed.

The murder in Sarajevo strengthened the position of the Emperor. Not that this was what Franz Joseph had wanted, since it had been clear to him, too, that preparations must be made for the transition to his successor. Yet now, suddenly, the entire structure, so laboriously assembled, had become obsolete. The words ascribed to Franz Joseph on hearing of the double murder in Sarajevo are: 'A superior power has restored that order which I unfortunately was unable to maintain.' In this context, they took on a stark double meaning. As it quickly transpired, Franz Joseph was not of a mind to experiment with 'secondary rule' a second time. The next in line, Archduke Karl Franz Josef, who automatically adopted the mantle of heir to the throne, was neither to take over the Military Chancellery run by his murdered uncle, nor inherit control of the staff of civilian advisors that Franz Ferdinand had sought. Now, there could also be no mention of the fact that Conrad von Hötzendorf had been due to be replaced half a year later. The Chief of the General Staff was the man who in terms of military matters had the fullest confidence of the Emperor, and who had the final say. He would also certainly be needed in the very near future. Domestic policy experiments were frowned upon, and not only that: the new heir to the throne was initially to be involved as little as possible and be given the role of observer at best. Just how thoroughly this was put into practice already became evident during the weeks that followed. This was by no means due to negligence, but was entirely deliberate: Emperor Franz Joseph was making one more attempt at a neo-absolutist about-turn. The hidden reality behind this apparent fierce determination and show of power was a terrible dilemma: at the top of the Habsburg Empire, a huge power vacuum began to spread – slowly, but surely.

Even after the news of the murder in Sarajevo had lost its novelty, and attention had turned to the new heir to the throne and above all the position taken by Austria immediately following the assassination, a certain degree of international goodwill could still be felt. It is also certainly not incorrect, as has been repeatedly remarked, to say that

the community of European states would initially have fully understood any immediate action taken by Austria against Serbia. However, these simple sentiments, which were founded on a sense of solidarity, were not to be held for long.

Once the shock had subsided and emotions were superseded by rational thinking, in other words, when reactions were once again based on deliberation, everything was brought to bear that had been locked away over many years. As is so often the case, historical analogies were sought and the entire 'Serbia file' consulted. Perhaps this was due to the fact that a portion of the decision-makers were officials who were apt to draw on the 'history file' for information, or because it was simply human nature to agree with previous judgements and to replicate actions already taken. In short: in June and July 1914, the 'Serbia history file' for the period between 1908 and October 1913 was taken out of storage. Pressure was to be applied and war at least be threatened, although in contrast to earlier years, this time, force was to also actually be used. The 'security' theory also played a role. However, nothing was to be repeated from the past. Collective action was taken in the form of a range of different measures prepared by the respective groups of states that were bound together by the alliances they had created.

In Vienna, where nearly all the staff at the Foreign Ministry were already working at their desks on the day after the assassination, there was almost unanimous agreement as to what should be done: the Balkan problem, specifically the problem of Serbia, should be resolved once and for all. Minister Berchtold hesitated briefly before his advisors persuaded him to opt for a military solution.¹⁸⁶ However, in fact, this was no longer necessary, since Emperor Franz Joseph, with whom Berchtold had an audience on the afternoon of 30 July, had already more or less decided. Subsequently, what later became known as the July Crisis unfolded, during which actions that had been long deliberated over were put to the test, and long-prepared decisions were taken. The war was precipitated. Not only that: it was deliberately unleashed. And it was Austria-Hungary that loosened the fetters. The German Empire offered a guiding hand whenever Austria-Hungary lost its nerve. However, Russia also bore no small share of responsibility for unleashing the war, and all other countries either took certain steps or omitted to take others that would later lead observers to claim 'if only...'

The July Crisis

Within the space of 48 hours, the whole picture had changed. From that point onwards, the slow, almost sedate approach taken by the Habsburg Monarchy can be followed that led to the outbreak of the Great War. However, Austria-Hungary by no means acted in isolation, since the other European states that then entered into the war neither stood and watched nor were they even surprised. They set about taking coordinated ac-

tion. The war could perhaps have been triggered and unleashed for another reason, but here one really does have to rein in one's imagination and reconsider only the specific event that led to its outbreak.

On Monday 29 June 1914, which was a public holiday, as mentioned above, attempts were still being made to recall every decision-maker of any importance back to his post. The protocol procedures had to be decided, which then led to the over-hasty and in many respects unworthy farewell to the murdered couple in Vienna and the low-key burial in Artstetten in Lower Austria. For a short period, the whole process seemed to be conducted at an extremely hectic pace. Yet the haste only applied to the treatment of the dead. On 29 June, Emperor Franz Joseph returned to Vienna. A week later, the heir to the throne and his wife were due to be buried. If proper preparations had been made, it is likely that all important heads of state and heads of government of Europe, as well as several from overseas, would have been able to attend. Hardly anyone, least of all the monarchs, would have failed to accept an invitation to Vienna if they had been made aware of the fact that the murder was an attack on the monarchic principle, or at least as something that could happen to anyone in a position of power, or who represented it. Kaiser Wilhelm II, for example, had already travelled post-haste from Kiel to Berlin, and wanted to attend the funeral in Vienna with his brother, Prince Heinrich. However, after receiving a telegram from Vienna, the German Kaiser was suddenly found to be suffering from lumbago, and shortly afterwards, it was announced that Prince Heinrich would not attend either.¹⁸⁷ The rumours began to fly – and with good reason.

The fact that no such gathering of leaders was called was an early indication that no event of this nature would be permitted to impose or to hinder the decisions that had to be taken. These measures were therefore not, as has occasionally been postulated, simply a product of scheming by the Lord Chamberlain, Prince Alfred von Montenuovo, which resulted in the excessive haste of the burial in a ceremony that hardly fulfilled the requirements specified by protocol. Ultimately, he was only empowered to fulfil the wishes of the Emperor. The Foreign Ministry was also at fault, since it wanted neither the Tsar nor the British King nor the French President to set foot in Vienna.¹⁸⁸ While the bodies of the couple were brought to Trieste (Triest) with the flagship of the Imperial and Royal Navy, the battleship *Viribus Unitis*, and from there transferred to Vienna by train, at the Ballhausplatz (Austro-Hungarian Imperial Chancellery), there was already talk of war with Serbia. In a letter to the principle of the Military Chancellery of the murdered heir to the throne, Colonel Alexander Brosch von Aarenau, one young employee of Berchtold, Baron Leopold Andrian-Werburg, wrote that 'very valuable fruit for the Monarchy should ripen' from the blood of Franz Ferdinand.¹⁸⁹ However, Berchtold and the Emperor did agree that it would not be possible simply to attack Serbia, as General Conrad had wanted. It would be far preferable to agree on the procedure with Germany, although the Emperor was clear that Serbia should be treated with

a firm hand.¹⁹⁰ The Austrian Prime Minister, Count Stürgkh, added his own opinion to the range of different responses by suggesting that the connection between the Slavs in the Monarchy and those outside it could only be broken by war, and that there would be dangerous consequences if this were not done.

The war atmosphere was so all-pervasive that the Hungarian Prime Minister, Count Tisza, found it necessary on 1 July to make the Emperor aware of the fact and to express his consternation.¹⁹¹ Here, it was not least the Hungarian newspapers and journals of the calibre of the *Pester Lloyd* that began a frenzied campaign to settle the account with Serbia. As on so many occasions, however, the newspapers simply captured a broadly prevalent mood and for their own part added to its intensity. However, Tisza was particularly disconcerted after having been told by the Foreign Minister on the same day, 1 July, that the murders in Sarajevo would be used as a reason for making Serbia pay, and wrote to the Emperor to inform him that something was being planned. The Emperor, however, was fully aware of the mood, as he was of the policy being pursued at the Ballhausplatz – and he also approved of it. Ultimately, the question now was merely how to put the decision in favour of war into action. In a study of the records made by journalist Heinrich Kanner, Robert A. Kann published a conversation between Kanner and the joint Finance Minister Baronet von Biliński, in which he attempted to find out when exactly the decision to go to war was made. Biliński replied: ‘We already decided to go to war at a very early stage; the decision was already taken right at the beginning.’ Kanner asked him about the precise date, and Biliński said that it was the period between 1 and 3 July.¹⁹² He could of course have been mistaken as to the exact day.¹⁹³

It was by no means the case that the Ballhausplatz became caught up in a frenzy of bloodlust and was motivated in its deliberations by a desire for revenge. The decision to precipitate a war with Serbia was in fact probably founded on numerous experiences, assumptions and feelings. After all, how could a state be trusted that repeatedly made promises and failed to keep them, signed agreements and then broke them, that pursued power politics without taking account of the concerns of others, and with which it was simply impossible to negotiate by means of a policy without war? Another likely factor was that the important foreign policy decision-makers – the minister, his chief of staff, the first head of the department, as well as others – had gained their diplomatic and political experience mainly in Russia, Serbia or in other parts of the Balkans, and had therefore been ground by the mill of Balkan policy for years and even decades. Berchtold had become minister due to his experience with Russia. His chief of staff, Count Alexander Hoyos, the head of the presidential department, Count Forgách, and his closest colleague, the envoy Baron Alexander von Musulin, had all been influenced by the annexation crisis. Furthermore, they were keen to repeat a whole series of actions from the annexation crisis, but without making previous errors. They also remembered particularly well that the two states had already stood on the brink of war in October

1913, and that an outbreak had only been avoided when Serbia had backed down at the last minute.

Berchtold's decisions were also based to no small degree on disappointment. He had after all hoped to be able to stabilise the situation in the Balkans, and had until June 1914 been optimistic that an agreement could be reached with Serbia. Now, he had failed, and indeed, felt that he had been humiliated. His policy to date could be interpreted as being weak. This time, he was disinclined to show weakness once again.

There were others, such as Conrad, who also brought their experiences to bear. For the Chief of the General Staff, the Balkans were associated with the only experience of war that he had been able to gain thus far, since he had been involved as a second lieutenant in the campaign of occupation in 1878. Thus, Conrad was able to draw on experiences gained at the beginning of his career. He now regarded the unfolding events as a confirmation of what he had been claiming for years: that the Monarchy must initiate a war at the earliest possible opportunity against Serbia, Italy, and – if it were to become necessary – even a civil war against Hungary. War scenario 'U' (for 'Ungarn', or 'Hungary') had in the interim been shelved, but the others were still relevant. While Conrad recognised that the ideal point in time for taking revenge action against Serbia had already passed, the problem now might still be tackled. For him, the decisive issue was whether or not Russia already felt itself sufficiently strong to enter the war as protector of Serbia. Until 1913, Conrad had hoped that an intervention by Russia could be ruled out, while in his annual memorandum for 1914, he already anticipated that the Tsarist Empire would act.¹⁹⁴ The fact that Biliński and Potiorek were in favour of war is hardly surprising, since both bore their share of the blame for the success of the Sarajevo attack. Potiorek in particular was accused of gross neglect in failing to protect the heir to the throne. For Biliński, and for the head of the civil and military administration of Bosnia, the decisions taken at the Ballhausplatz and by the Emperor on war or peace thus had an additional, highly personal quality.

Attempts have been made to study the psychological factors of the July Crisis and how they affected Austria-Hungary, and the unsurprising conclusion has been reached that those in positions of authority were suffering from unimaginable stress.¹⁹⁵ The pressure on each individual was certainly enormous, since the task they faced was not only to take some form of action, but to act correctly. They also had expectations to fulfil. And none of them was at first entirely sure of the Emperor's genuine reaction to the murders. However, it can be assumed that no unpremeditated actions were taken, or that bad decisions were taken as a result of stress. Quite the opposite: it is striking just how cool and calculated those involved were. For example, Minister Berchtold read daily press reviews in order to keep up to date with reporting trends. Ultimately, they only confirmed his views, and he had no need to alter his decisions in line with the leading articles of the daily newspapers. However, on the day after he had expressed his

condolences to Emperor Franz Joseph on the death of the heir to the throne, and in so doing had sensed the mood of the monarch, he let it be known that Sarajevo would be made 'the grounds for settling our score with Serbia'.¹⁹⁶

On the issue of how to proceed against Serbia, it was clear from the start that the Habsburg Monarchy would show determination. In light of the messages of support and sympathy from all parts of the Monarchy, it was a safe assumption that the double murder would not be used to provoke riots. Particular care had to be taken with other foreign powers. Here, attention was paid initially not to potential enemies, but to Austria-Hungary's most important ally. The first discussions by Berchtold, Conrad, Stürgkh and Tisza already focussed on the German Empire, although the position taken by Berlin was also discussed beyond the framework of the official consultations between the prime ministers and ministers.

On 1 July, Berchtold's chief of staff, Alexander Hoyos, presented his minister with a summary of an interview with the German journalist Victor Naumann, a man with excellent connections to the German Imperial Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, as well as to the permanent secretary in the Foreign Office in Berlin, Gottlieb von Jagow. Several interesting phrases were uttered during the conversation. According to Hoyos' notes, Naumann had claimed that now, if Kaiser Wilhelm were to be asked in the right way, he would provide Austria-Hungary with every assurance and would 'this time also hang on until war', since he appreciated the risks to the monarchist principle. In the Foreign Office in Berlin, he said, nobody would oppose this attitude, since the current moment was held to be right 'for taking the big decision'.¹⁹⁷

It should have been conspicuous that Naumann did not speak specifically of 'the Balkans', but of a 'big decision'. This was an early indication during the July Crisis that Berlin had more in mind than simply providing backing for Austria-Hungary in a war against Serbia. Naumann also added that the full seriousness of the situation must be explained to those responsible for taking decisions in Berlin, and that the conclusions that were being drawn in Vienna must be reported with full clarity. According to Naumann, nothing would be achieved in Berlin by 'tiptoeing about'.¹⁹⁸

Alexander Hoyos was an ideal partner for a clarifying discussion with representatives of the German imperial government. He had already been sent to Berlin during the annexation crisis and had at that time brought back the news that the Germans would provide backing. Hoyos also clearly believed that negotiations could be repeated and suggested to Berchtold that he undertake a new mission to Berlin. For the Foreign Minister, this suggestion came at the right moment, since his intention to go to war had been met with disapproval in some quarters. Since on 4 July a Cabinet courier was due to leave for Berlin anyway in order to deliver to the Berlin government an updated memorandum on the Balkan situation and policy, as well as a hand-written letter by Emperor Franz Joseph to the German Kaiser, Hoyos volunteered to travel to Berlin

himself with the documents.¹⁹⁹ He intended to use the opportunity to deliver a series of personal messages in order to provide as much detailed information as possible on the current assessment of the situation by the Ballhausplatz, and for his part, to gather information on the attitude of the German Kaiser and the imperial government.

Until this point, Vienna had known almost nothing about the prevailing attitude in Berlin. Kaiser Wilhelm II and Prince Heinrich had not attended the funeral of Franz Ferdinand. The German ambassador, Baron Heinrich von Tschirschky, had shown notable reserve. He had still received no instructions, and only said to Berchtold that to begin a war without being certain that Italy and Romania would not enter on the side of Serbia 'appears to be a very hazardous undertaking'.²⁰⁰ Von Tschirschky reported to Berlin that he had used every possible opportunity to 'warn in calm but unmistakable and serious terms against taking overhasty steps' – a classic formulation for a diplomat. Indeed, there were numerous and important individuals within Germany who were calling for moderation. However, they remained in the minority, and the criticism voiced by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* newspaper of the war hysteria in the Viennese press was an exception.²⁰¹ Pressure was then immediately brought to bear on the *Frankfurter*, and from 4 July onwards, all the German civilian press struck a harsh, anti-Serbian tone.²⁰²

Hoyos arrived in Berlin on Sunday, 5 July. He first delivered the documents to the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, Count László Szögyény and gave him information. He then met the deputy secretary in the German Foreign Office, Arthur Zimmermann, who apparently claimed that war would be 90 per cent likely if the Monarchy decided to take action against Serbia.²⁰³

Hoyos assured Zimmermann that the Monarchy was by no means prepared to accept the murder of the heir to the throne without acting. To this, Zimmermann literally replied: '[...] we have in fact been rather afraid that this might be the case.' In the afternoon, the prepared documents were handed to Kaiser Wilhelm. He studied them, but instead of discussing them with only political representatives, chose to include Gustav von Krupp, who spoke for the armaments industry. When asked by the Kaiser whether German industry would be in a position to survive even a large war on several fronts, he answered with a clear 'Yes'. Count Hoyos also met with the Imperial Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, as well as with the permanent secretary in the Foreign Office, von Jagow, who had apparently returned to Berlin from his honeymoon, as well as again with Zimmermann. On this occasion, the Balkan memorandum written by the Foreign Ministry in Vienna was discussed, which did not correlate with the German concept, particularly with regard to the passages relating to Romania. However, in reality, the statement that Romania would no longer side with the Central Powers in the event of war would not have come as a surprise. King Carol had even given official notice of the fact on 2 July, just a few days after the assassination, that the country did not intend

to meet its alliance obligations should an emergency arise.²⁰⁴ For the time being, this announcement was not a source of much consternation. In Germany, the planners had however clearly already thought ahead and were agonising over war objectives. When asked what should happen to Serbia after an Austro-Hungarian victory, Hoyos allowed himself to make an unauthorised statement that was then most severely rebuked, above all by Tisza. Either Hoyos was improvising, or simply repeating the gossip circulating at the Ballhausplatz. At any rate, he told Imperial Chancellor Hollweg, von Jagow and Zimmermann that it would be advantageous to divide Serbia between Romania and Bulgaria.

Hoyos later claimed that it would not have mattered which aim he gave: the Germans simply wanted to be told of a clearly formulated goal. During the course of further discussions, he also claimed that he had left the issue open as to when exactly the war would begin, saying simply that it would be sooner or later. Bethmann Hollweg then replied that it was not a matter for the German Empire to give Austria-Hungary advice with regard to its policy towards Serbia. However, Germany would provide backing to the Danube Monarchy with all its force, and fulfil its alliance obligations in every way. In the report, he subsequently wrote for Emperor Franz Joseph, Hoyos said: 'If I had wanted his [Bethmann Hollweg's] personal opinion as to an opportune point in time, he would have said to me that if war were inevitable, then now would be better than later.' With these words, Bethmann Hollweg simply added his own version of what the German Kaiser and the Imperial and Royal ambassador Szögyény had already said.

In Szögyény's report, the decisive passage reads as follows: in Kaiser Wilhelm's view, there should be no delay in taking action against Serbia. 'Although Russia's position would be hostile, he [the Kaiser] has been preparing for this for years, and even if it should come to war between Austria-Hungary and Russia, we can be sure of the fact that Germany would with her accustomed faithfulness be at our side. If however we have indeed recognised the need for belligerent action against Serbia, it would be a matter of regret to him were we to fail to seize the moment, which is currently so in our favour.'²⁰⁵ This statement contained two messages: Germany would provide backing, and it also regarded the earliest possible point in time for war as favourable. These agreements by Kaiser Wilhelm and Bethmann Hollweg were later described as a 'blank cheque', and were also understood as such. Hoyos returned to Vienna, as he wrote, 'in high spirits'. Once again, it seemed, the die had been cast.

Hoyos had something else to tell his German hosts in passing. On behalf of the Ballhausplatz, he had been ordered to make it clear to Berlin that Austria did not wish to inform the Triple Alliance partner Italy of its plans to act against Serbia, since there was a risk of indiscretion and, that aside, Italy was likely to demand compensation. This fear was certainly not unfounded, since Italian diplomats frequently felt the urge to talk to the Russians, British and French,²⁰⁶ although it turned out to be a grave mistake that

not a single attempt of any significance was made to address the issue with Italy. Clearly, it was felt to be preferable to risk the prospect that Italy would invoke the Triple Alliance agreement and remain on the sidelines.

During the days that followed, discussions were held and actions were taken in Vienna and Berlin both in parallel and independently of each other before being finally interconnected. The political and, above all, military strategy in Vienna remained focussed on the problem of Serbia, and the only other area of interest was the issue of the Russian position. By contrast, in Berlin the prospect of a wider war was under consideration. This war was envisaged on a European scale, and was therefore planned with a very different approach to the isolated 'Third Balkan War' for which the policymakers in the Imperial and Royal Empire were preparing.

In the German Empire, the Imperial Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, was the most influential person when it came to taking political decisions. In Austria-Hungary, it was Berchtold who played the key role, as did Tisza to a certain extent. Of course, they were all by no means free to make their own decisions, Berchtold and Tisza perhaps even far less so than Bethmann Hollweg, although they played a very active part in the process. German historians, particularly Fritz Fischer, Imanuel Geiß, Egmont Zechlin, Karl-Friedrich Erdmann and Andreas Hillgruber, have pointed to the role of the close confidante of Bethmann Hollweg, Kurt Riezler.²⁰⁷ His diaries have been regarded as key documents in understanding the decision-making process in the circles surrounding the German Imperial Chancellor. Riezler was and still is a good example of the mode of thinking in July 1914. The German was convinced of the fateful nature of war, sounding a chord that resonated with Social Darwinist thinking. Indeed, the role played by fundamental Social Darwinist principles in both Germany and Austria-Hungary during the July Crisis should not be underestimated. In both states, the basic formula on which these principles were based, namely that the stronger consume the weaker, and that a decisive showdown was inevitable, was widely accepted.

The 'pre-emptive war club' was composed of Social Darwinists. For that reason, Riezler's views on the necessity of military armament could also have originated from Conrad von Hötzendorf, and were nothing other than a 'modern form of deferment' of armed conflict.²⁰⁸ 'Supremacy is the goal, not so much as to be in a position to fight a successful war, but rather to conceive of it, and to have the enemy conceive of it, too'. Bluffing became the key requisite of diplomacy. Stagnating major powers in particular found it necessary to fend off their enemies through diplomatic manoeuvring and to gain time by applying the bluff theory. Accordingly, if a group that was hampered by a stagnant major power were to avoid all risk of war, those powers that were in a position to make time work in their favour, would inevitably triumph.²⁰⁹

However, Riezler then pursued a very different line of reasoning to Conrad or any other Austrian Social Darwinist. In his view, the dynamic of the increase in Russian

power would make a battle between the Slav and Germanic peoples inevitable. In this, he reflected an attitude held by a broad section of educated and non-educated German middle classes, and also sounded an underlying tone which would then be formulated in a very similar way by Bethmann Hollweg and Kaiser Wilhelm: the war, which already appeared to be unavoidable, would be a conflict between Slavs and the Germanic peoples; in other words, a race war. Regional successes by Germany and Austria in a war of limited scope would only delay the Russian triumph. Proxy wars of this nature would ultimately only benefit Russia. For this reason, Austria-Hungary no longer had the option of staging a conflict in the Balkans as a proxy war. Now, everything was at stake. And here, an opportunity had presented itself: a war in the Balkans would ultimately only affect Russia's interests, and not those of the west. With this in mind, why not also wage war against Russia? If, however, the interests of a western European power became involved, then it could only be France, which would then have to be forced to the ground. The war, according to German calculations, would not bring about hegemony for Germany, but would elevate the German Empire to the degree of power held by England and Russia, while at the same time consolidating the situation in the Habsburg Monarchy both domestically and with regard to the Balkans.²¹⁰ Was this racial fanaticism? Dreams based on real possibilities? Flagrant militarism and imperialism? Wishful thinking, wanton irresponsibility, political incompetence, the logical continuation of a path already embarked upon, inflexibility? What was it that was being expressed? In any case, a new direction was being taken in world history.

However the message brought back by Hoyos from Berlin is interpreted, it certainly provided sufficient encouragement for taking further steps – as indeed was the case. Since it had been made so clear to Vienna that the German Kaiser and the imperial government wished not only for a targeted policy, but also to see it implemented unswervingly, and also that they were by all means prepared to enter the risk of a European war, the policymakers in the Ballhausplatz felt not only supported, but also somewhat pressurised. Now, they must also be seen by their alliance partner to act decisively.

Immediately after Hoyos' return from Berlin, the next round in the decision-making process began. On 7 July, the Joint Council of Ministers convened. Before the meeting, Berchtold had one further conversation with the German ambassador in Vienna, von Tschirschky. The ambassador had originally been very cautious, and had by no means sought to inflame the mood for war. Indeed, some of his comments had indicated the need for deceleration and calm. However, in this he had incurred the displeasure of his Kaiser. He was issued with a warning, and had in the interim received new instructions from Berlin. In short: now von Tschirschky, too, argued in no uncertain terms for a 'now or never' approach.

In the Joint Council of Ministers, which Chief of the General Staff Conrad also attended for a certain period of time, there was only one person who still spoke out

against an immediate war: Count Tisza. However, he had now modified his position since 1 July, the day on which he had still warned the Emperor in stark terms against allowing the Ballhausplatz to pursue a targeted pro-war policy. As has been shown in the studies by Norman Stone and F. R. Bridge, a key factor in Tisza's gradual conversion to the line taken by Berchtold was the result of the Hoyos mission.²¹¹ For all other joint ministers, for the Austrian prime minister Stürgkh and for Conrad, it was in any case now no longer a question of if but simply of when they should go to war.

Berchtold, for example, referred to the diplomatic successes achieved by the Danube Monarchy in the past in relation to Serbia – which had come to nothing. 'A radical solution to the problem that has systematically been created by the Greater Serbian propaganda operating from Belgrade, the corroding effects of which are felt by us all the way through to Zagreb and Zadar, is likely to be possible only through energetic intervention.' In the view of Count Stürgkh, a situation had now arisen 'that [...] categorically drives us towards a military conflict with Serbia'. Finance Minister Biliński added that: 'The Serb only understands violence; a diplomatic success would make no impression in Bosnia, and would rather be damaging than anything else.' War Minister Baron Krobotin also claimed bluntly: 'From a military perspective, he must emphasise that it would be more favourable to wage war now than later.'²¹² When one analyses the record of this Joint Council of Ministers, it is noticeable that the demand for war against Serbia was quite clearly made even before Conrad had presented the information on military strategy and operations as requested, although this was prohibited from being written down. One other thing is equally clear from the minutes: after Conrad's presentation, everyone present must have realised that it was highly probable that the conflict would not be limited to Austria and Serbia, but would be a European war.

Conrad had three questions to answer. The first was whether it would be feasible to mobilise against Serbia and then later against Russia. The answer was: yes, it would be possible, if full mobilisation were to be implemented no later than on day 5 of the deployment against Serbia. The second question was whether larger troop contingents could be left in Transylvania in order to intimidate Romania. This was an issue that was of particular interest to the Hungarian Prime Minister. Conrad also replied in the affirmative. The third problem was whether it would be possible to take up arms against Russia. In response, Conrad presented his war scenario 'R'. Months later, Conrad told the acting head of the Imperial Military Chancellery, Major General Marterer, that he had been 'fully aware of the difficulty of the situation, but as a soldier, he could not advise against going to war.'²¹³ The summary of the Joint Council of Ministers states that: 'On the grounds of these explanations, a lengthier debate unfolds on power balances and the likely progression of a European war.' Finally, only Tisza recommended that no overhasty action be taken, and it was he who pushed through the decision that mobilisation and later a war against Serbia should only be considered if, to quote the minutes

of the meeting: 'specific demands have been made on Serbia, these demands have been refused, and an ultimatum has been presented'. However, all participants in the Council of Ministers agreed that the specific demands on Serbia should be formulated in such a manner that only a rejection would be possible, and that therefore, a 'radical solution in the form of military intervention would be forthcoming.'²¹⁴

Despite his agreement in principle on sending a *démarche* to Serbia, Tisza felt it necessary to explain his position to the Emperor the following day. Ultimately, the Hungarian Prime Minister was aware of the fact that his opinion also differed from that of his monarch. His letter, which Berchtold took with him to an audience with the Emperor in Bad Ischl on 9 July, and which he read out to him, was therefore an apology and an explanation in equal measure. The *démarche*, said Tisza, could only serve to assign blame for a war to Serbia, 'which has burdened itself with the risk of war by abstaining, even after the atrocity in Sarajevo, from honestly fulfilling the obligations of a decent neighbour.' This was meant literally, and did not ultimately contradict the procedure that the Emperor had wanted to pursue. However, Tisza went further: 'In order to avoid an embroilment with Italy, to secure the sympathy of England and to enable Russia to remain a spectator in the war, we must for our part at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner issue a declaration that we do not wish to destroy Serbia, still less to annex it. After a satisfactory end to the war, it would namely in my view be advisable to reduce the size of Serbia by ceding its conquered territories to Bulgaria, Greece and Albania, while for ourselves, to demand at the most certain strategically important border regulations. Naturally, we would have the right to claim compensation for the war costs, which would provide us with a lever to keep Serbia under firm control for a long period of time.'²¹⁵ Tisza, who had criticised Hoyos for the statements he had made in Berlin, ultimately said precisely the same thing as the chief of staff of the Foreign Minister. However, it was the Hungarian prime minister who prevented earlier action against Serbia, and who allowed the July Crisis to become what it remains to this day: incomprehensible. In the meantime, the Foreign Ministry was able to go on as before: purposefully and cautiously.

The Austrian envoy in Belgrade, Baron Wladimir von Giesl, was in France at the time of the assassination. Rather than returning straight to Belgrade, he headed first for Vienna in order to receive instructions before reporting his departure to Berchtold after the Joint Council of Ministers on 7 July. He was given a succinct directive: 'However the Serbs react, you must break off relations and leave the country: war is surely coming.'²¹⁶

On the day after the Joint Council of Ministers, Berchtold surprised the Chief of the General Staff with the suggestion that he and War Minister Krobatin should go on holiday for a certain period of time in order to make it appear to the general public that nothing was amiss. Although the Emperor disagreed, and demanded that holidays be

deferred, the highest ranks in the military were no longer to be found in Vienna from 12 July onwards. The foreign press wrote of a 'jaunty war mood'.²¹⁷

It became increasingly clear that the positions taken by the Danube Monarchy and the German Empire concurred, and that the citizens of the two states shared identical expectations. The congruence of this attitude with the views held by the elites in Germany was blatantly expressed in a letter by the legation councillor at the Imperial and Royal embassy in Berlin, Baron Franz von Haymerle. On 8 July, he wrote to Hoyos: 'Here at the Foreign Office, we are being pressured from all sides into taking action. The mood is overwhelmingly supportive of us if we get going, otherwise, I would almost say, we are likely to be abandoned as a hopeless case.'²¹⁸ In his letter, Haymerle also made particular reference to a man on whom in his and others' view much now depended, the head of the presidial department in the Imperial and Royal Foreign Ministry, Count Forgách. Haymerle wrote: '[...] if he wants something very much, the Minister and, above all, Tisza will do it.' And there certainly was something that Forgách wanted. Perhaps this, together with his determined actions as head of the department, is partly the reason for Tisza's change of attitude. He had been the only one who had to be completely 'turned about'.

For the younger officials in the Foreign Ministry, as well as for many others, it was at any rate absolutely clear that the Monarchy would have to take a decisive step in order to secure the borders and the existence of the Empire. If this was not done, the Monarchy would dissolve and Berlin would lose its confidence in Vienna and possibly seek a new alliance partner. Those who held this view failed to understand why Berchtold took such a cautious approach, allowing so much time to pass instead of quickly unleashing the war against Serbia. However, Berchtold wanted to limit the war, and felt that the best way of doing so would be to demonstrate to the European powers the shameful role played by Serbia.

Here, there was certainly no small degree of wishful thinking involved, together with the narrowed view of power balances and interests in Europe mentioned above. This isolated view went so far that while Russia was repeatedly named as a potential war enemy, it was felt that it was at the least unlikely to take immediate action, and the chances of its intervening were put at even less than fifty per cent. Russia, France, Great Britain, Italy and whoever else it was felt to be appropriate, were to be informed of Serbia's guilt by means of a dossier, and in this way, kept at bay. The hope at the Ballhausplatz was that if participation by the Serbian government in the murder of the heir to the throne could be irrefutably proven, hardly anyone could step forward and condemn the Austrian measures as excessive. In this scenario, Russia would perhaps still provide verbal support to Serbia, but would decline to act, since France and Great Britain would of course also regard such support as inappropriate and would have to refrain from offering it. The British Empire played no real role in the Austrian deliberations, however,

and even France was only classified as being of little importance; necessary in terms of diplomatic activity but otherwise not really worth taking into consideration.

And so, work began in Vienna on compiling a dossier that was to prove once and for all that Serbia was guilty of the murder in Sarajevo and of anti-Austrian agitation in general. After all, in 1909, Serbia had expressly extolled good relations. The dossier was to include all the accusations and evidence that had been gathered in Vienna over time, as well as all the results of the investigation into the background to the Sarajevo assassination. On 4 July, the first meeting took place of a commission that subsequently became known as the 'war factory'. Essentially, there were six top officials from the Foreign Ministry who with the aid of a former state attorney, the legation councillor Baronet Friedrich von Wiesner, had the task of compiling everything that could be used as evidence to portray Serbia in a certain light. War was the only thing on everyone's minds. On the day after the Joint Council of Ministers, Wiesner was ordered to formulate specific demands on Serbia. They should not, however, be too easy to fulfil. Minister Berchtold even went one step further: he demanded that harsh terms be set that should end in a brief ultimatum.²¹⁹ Wiesner requested more material before travelling to Sarajevo himself on 10 July.

Belgrade was all too aware of the precarious situation and demonstrated a clear willingness to cooperate. At the same time, however, those in authority in Serbia remained deliberately superficial and noncommittal, since they neither wanted to expose Dimitrijević, the head of the secret service nor to admit that a network had been formed, literally in plain sight of the government, that was agitating with the clear goal of destroying Austria-Hungary. In light of the risk of war, it was probably of little importance that some of the attackers who had fled to Serbia had been arrested, together with Mehmedbašić, another of their number who had fled to Montenegro.²²⁰ King Petar I ordered a six-day period of respect at court. King Nikola of Montenegro even decreed two weeks of national mourning. Notes of condolence were delivered to Austria-Hungary and the double murder was criticised in the severest possible terms, while celebratory demonstrations were expressly forbidden. However, this failed to have any effect on the mood in Serbia and Montenegro, which was one of profound joy in both countries. The double murder was regarded as a heroic act, something that was just as difficult to hide from the Austro-Hungarian diplomats as the fact that the Russian embassy was the only one in Belgrade that declined to fly its flag at half-mast.²²¹ Already on 30 June, the *chargé d'affaires* of the Habsburg Monarchy in Belgrade, Baronet Wilhelm von Stork, wrote in a telegram that after what he had seen, it was time to pound on the table. This, he claimed, would be the only language the Serbian government would understand.²²²

Baronet von Wiesner compiled his investigation report in Sarajevo and summarised the results of his research in a two-part telegram sent to Vienna on 13 July. He con-

cluded that: 'There is nothing to prove or even to suppose that the Serbian government is an accessory to carrying out the assassination, or its preparation or the furnishing of weapons. On the contrary, there are reasons to regard this as altogether out of the question [...]' This part of the dispatch was frequently cited after the war as proof of how unfounded Austria's suspicion of Serbia had been, and how maliciously it had acted. In reality, however, the situation was entirely different. After the war, the decisive passages from the telegram by Baronet von Wiesner were in fact deliberately rendered falsely or reproduced in truncated form by the new southern Slavic government. The passage mentioned came at the end of the first part of the telegram. At the beginning of the second part, he wrote that: 'From statements made by the accused, it can hardly be contested that the decision in favour of the assassination was made in Belgrade, and was prepared [...] with the involvement of Serbian state officials. The bombs originate from the Kragujevac Serbian army depot [...]' For Wiesner, the issue of the involvement of other Serbs in positions of authority, particularly members of the government and the high-ranking military, remained unresolved, as did the question of whether the bombs, Browning guns and ammunition had only recently been removed from the Kragujevac army depot or whether this had occurred some time previously. Wiesner left all those issues open for which he still had no irrefutable proof, while at the same time making a strong recommendation in the second part of his telegram for intensifying Austro-Hungarian demands on Serbia.²²³

The extent to which Serbian politicians and members of the military at the highest level were aware of the preparations for the assassination, however, really was impossible to prove in individual cases. The same applied to the level of knowledge held by Hartvig, the Russian ambassador in Belgrade. Such information was only partially disclosed in 1917 during the 'Salonica trial'. In the interim, it has become possible to analyse the Serbian documents to the extent that there can be no further doubt that there was knowledge of the attack, as well as partial responsibility.²²⁴ The Serbian government overall had no idea, however, and naturally, it had also not ordered that the assassination should be carried out. However, it has already long been proven that the Prime Minister, individual ministers and members of the military, and, above all, the head of the Serbian military intelligence service, Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević, had known what was happening. Not only that: in Belgrade, it was also soon known who had procured the bombs and pistols for the attack, while clearly no reason was seen to arrest the men responsible, Major Vojislav Tankosić and Milan Ciganović, let alone take action against the extreme nationalist secret organisation Narodna Odbrana ('National Defence'). Steps such as these were only attempted after the Viennese government had presented the demands set out in its ultimatum on 23 July.

In his description of the chain of events, to which he gave the suggestive title *Die Spur führt nach Belgrad* ('The Trail Leads to Belgrade'), Fritz Würthle considered why at

that time the Austrian line of argument was not believed. Two events could have played a role here, namely the Friedjung trial and the 'Prochaska Affair'. Both shattered the credibility of Austria-Hungary, since in the first case, evidence was procured that the Foreign Ministry in Vienna had gullibly used falsified Serbian documents, while in the second, the Austro-Hungarian press could be accused of boundless exaggeration when depicting incidents surrounding the Imperial and Royal consul in Prizren, Prochaska, in 1912. Here, at best, incompetence and a targeted campaign were to blame for this loss of prestige and credibility.

However, reference was not only repeatedly made by other countries to the Friedjung case or the Prochaska Affair because it was felt that the background to Sarajevo could be assessed in a similar way. This was also a conscious ploy to deflect attention. Probably the most incontrovertible proof would have made no difference, since the aim was to contradict the Austrian arguments on principle. The fact that initially, no demands of any kind were made on Serbia by Vienna, was regarded as confirmation of the validity of this assessment. However, those who issued warnings knew different, particularly those who benefited from the work of the cryptographers. This was the case in St. Petersburg, for example, where the Italian ambassador took it upon himself to express his concerns and on 16 July let slip the deliberate indiscretion that Austria-Hungary was planning to take steps against Serbia in the belief that Russia would limit itself to a verbal response. However, the Russians were also well-served in other ways, too. They had cracked the Austro-Hungarian diplomatic code and knew at least at the same time as the Imperial and Royal ambassador what instructions Vienna had given to its representative in St. Petersburg.²²⁵ There was therefore ample opportunity to prepare for what was to come, both in St. Petersburg and in Belgrade.

In the meantime, further war games were being planned. The acting Chief of the Imperial and Royal General Staff, General von Höfer, who was representing Conrad while he was away on leave, analysed the operational plans against Serbia and feared that the Serbs could remain gathered in the southern parts of the country, 'which would be the worst possible scenario'.²²⁶ (In fact, the Chief of the Russian General Staff did indeed recommend a strategic withdrawal of this nature, although this did not go down well with the Serbs).²²⁷ Höfer was concerned that: 'It could perhaps be three weeks following the call for mobilisation before decisive battles are fought'. If the Serbs were to back down, however, the dilemma would be even greater, since 'having the mobilisation costs paid for and then making an about-turn would entail a vast amount of work.' And so the speculations continued.

The Archduke and his wife had been buried, and the succession arranged. Via the Lord Chamberlain's Office, Count Harrach had presented the car that he had placed at the disposal of the heir to the throne and his wife to the Emperor, who had then arranged for it to be transferred to the Military Museum in Vienna. The car arrived

at the museum on 14 August. The upper echelons of the government and the military were on holiday, and the Emperor was in Bad Ischl. Surely nothing of any importance could happen now?

The days turned into weeks, and finally, the weeks turned into a month. One could of course be forgiven for asking why a country that was so sure of what it wanted as Austria-Hungary should have waited so long. While work continued at the Ballhausplatz, the date for 'stepping forward' always seemed to be unfavourable. In the 'war factory' at the Ballhausplatz, the note to Serbia had already been produced that was to demand an explanation and atonement for the double murder in the form of an ultimatum. The envoy, Baron Musulin, had undertaken the final editing of the Wiesner paper and had been honing it for several days.²²⁸ His work was monitored by the head of the presidial department, Count Forgách. Musulin was admired for the elegance of his style, regarded as linguistic expression at its most accomplished. As Emanuel Urbas, who was assigned to Musulin as his assistant, recalled in 1951 in his memoir *Schicksale und Schatten* ('Fates and Shadows'), this obsession with linguistic perfection led him to make full use of the time available to him, and he polished away at his note 'as at a gemstone'.²²⁹

In the first draft, which had been formulated before Wiesner's mission, the demands on Serbia still sounded relatively harmless. First, it stated that the Imperial and Royal government assumed that the Serbian government condemned the murder of the heir to the throne and his wife in just the same way as the entire cultivated world. However, as a demonstration of goodwill, a series of measures would be necessary. The note ended with a request for a response. Count Forgách wanted a far more harsh formulation, and Musulin then added item 6 in particular, which ran: 'The Royal Serbian government undertakes to bring to trial the accessories to the plot of 28 July who are to be found on Serbian territory; organs delegated by the Imperial and Royal government shall participate in the inquiries in relation to the matter.' The aim was not, therefore, to allow Austrian organs to participate in the Serbian judicial administration, as it then sounded from the Serbian note of response, but to participate in the inquiry. In this respect, there had even been a precedent, since in 1868, following the murder of the Serbian prince Mihailo, Austria-Hungary had enabled Serbian functionaries to make inquiries within the territory of the Danube Monarchy.²³⁰ Even so: the demands had become significantly harsher, and the 'request for a response' turned into a 48-hour deadline. As Emanuel Urbas wrote so vividly decades later: 'The intention was to produce a document that through the overpowering force and the succinctness of its language must conquer the world. We were after all contemporaries of Karl Kraus [...] We had learned to believe in the autonomous magic of the word as the cradle of thought and deed.'²³¹

Forgách had been concerned that his minister might eventually wish to back down. However, Berchtold's motivation was very different. As he put it to the Emperor, a 'fee-

ble approach could discredit our position with Germany', and in principle, the decisive factor was being able to exert control over Serbia in practice.²³² Everyone feared that the other could give in and 'become weak'. Thoughts continued to focus only on war, and the German Empire also persistently pressed for war. Ambassador von Tschirschky now began to issue continuous warnings and convey messages from Berlin that all, in countless variations, demanded the same thing of Vienna: war, and as quickly as possible!

In the interim, the resistance of the most prominent opponent of war, the Hungarian Prime Minister Count Tisza, had also evaporated. On 19 July, he agreed during the next Joint Council of Ministers to the dispatch of the note of request containing the demands on Serbia, and only wanted reassurance that no territorial demands on Serbia would be made. Here, Tisza also showed flexibility, when for example he regarded the separation of Ada Kaleh, a small island in the Danube near the Iron Gates, and other minor strategic border adjustments as fully appropriate. A further proposal suggested that Serbia be divided among other Balkan states. Perhaps Romania, Bulgaria and Greece would wish to take advantage of this opportunity, and would therefore support Austria-Hungary's position and possibly also enter the war against Serbia. The Austrian Prime Minister, Count Stürgkh, also raised the possibility that the Serbian dynasty could be deposed. At any rate, there was unanimous agreement that the note of request should be sent to Serbia as soon as possible, and that it would have to be worded in such a manner that acceptance by Belgrade would be impossible.²³³ Item 6 was intended as the trap into which Belgrade would almost inevitably walk.

In the Hungarian Council of Ministers, the modalities for conscripting the Landsturm (reserve forces) were discussed and a recommendation sent to the Emperor.²³⁴ Again, one step further had been taken towards war, although outwardly, nothing had changed. By now, however, the opportunity had forever been lost of exploiting the shock generated by the murder of Franz Ferdinand as a chance to attack Serbia in a spontaneous reaction. In Berlin, there was an initial discussion as to whether by attacking Serbia quickly, Austria-Hungary could precipitate the capitulation of Serbia in a very short time due to its evident military superiority, with Russia and France entirely incapable of intervening. Then, it would be advantageous for Germany to act as mediator and bring Vienna to the negotiating table. In this way, the calculated risk would have paid off and a limited goal would have been achieved in the spirit of Riezler's bluff theory, without having started a major war. As a result, Austria-Hungary, the remaining stagnating major power, would perhaps have reached a point at which it could overcome its weakness and together with the German Empire make strong progress. Yet now, the moment of surprise had been missed, and with its passing, the probability of intervention by Russia and France became more likely.

However, from the moment when it became clear to Berlin that Russia had recovered from the shock and had returned to its former policy of supporting Serbia, the

old considerations regarding the relation between an eastern and a western front were again brought to bear. According to the operational plans of the German general staff, France should first be attacked with force, while the fighting against Russia would only be aimed at stalling the enemy's advance. In order to ensure rapid victory over France, a strong right wing that would spread out over Belgium towards northern France would be used. By marching its troops on to neutral Belgian territory, Germany naturally risked bringing Great Britain into play. While German policy aimed at keeping the British Empire out of the war, the Schlieffen and Moltke Plan made no allowance for this. The dilemma could hardly have been more complete. The military leadership of the German Empire calculated that the chances were good that it would be possible to fight a war on two fronts – and to do so successfully – on condition that Great Britain declined to attack. Although the political leadership was also keen to do anything that would keep England at bay, it became so dependent on the military plans that this goal became no more than an illusion.

Since the German operational plans left no room for manoeuvre in terms of policy, but rather dictated it to a certain degree with all the consequences that this entailed, developments took on a dynamic of their own and ultimately spun completely out of control. This is the true tragic role played by the German Empire during the July Crisis: not that it agreed to support Austria-Hungary and indicated its unconditional assistance, but that in a parallel reaction to the impending war, it had equipped itself from the start for a war of global dimensions. What was planned and prepared for in Berlin was therefore entirely different from the limited – and probably also somewhat parochial – view taken in Vienna. After all, the notion that it would be feasible to 'wage a bit of war' demonstrated only too clearly the Danube Monarchy's narrow, continental perspective that moreover was still focussed on just a few areas of Europe and was in no way attuned to the reality of alliance politics.

Elsewhere, too, there was a tendency to indulge in illusions. In Bucharest, for example, where there was already clear agreement that Romania would not side with the German Empire and Austria-Hungary were war to break out, a diplomatic effort was even initiated to persuade Serbia to back down. King Carol and the Romanian government appeared to favour this approach as the best way out of a dilemma that had arisen when Germany had made it clear that it would increase its support for Bulgaria, and would expose Romania by publicising its secret alliance agreement were it to be hostile.²³⁵ The Romanian government sent Nicolae Cantacuzino, the Romanian chargé d'affaires in Switzerland, as an envoy to Belgrade with the remit of convincing the Serbian government 'in extremis' to accept the threatening note from Vienna in order to avoid war.²³⁶

From St. Petersburg, the Austrian ambassador reported that it was evident that Russia was not yet entirely sure whether or not a certain degree of pressure should be

applied to Serbia. This then led the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergei Sazonov, to tell Count Friedrich von Szápáry that 'Europe should not impede Austria in its dispute with Serbia [...] Certainly, the provocations of Serbia, as a result of which Europe has now already been brought to the brink of war for the third time within the space of five years' must be stopped once and for all.²³⁷ However, what statements like this actually meant in reality was difficult to assess, always on the assumption that they really were rendered correctly by Szápáry or whoever else received them. The diplomatic reports during the July Crisis clearly reflect the range of different sentiments that were prevalent: boundless pacifism and, to an equal degree, bellicose posturing, the desire to attempt a diplomatic solution at any price, and the resigned opinion that nothing more could be done. Hardly anyone held back from offering half-truths and, when no other option was available, from lying outright. It was almost as though preparations were even now being made to colour the way in which the situation would subsequently be portrayed, and to ensure that later, the blame would incontrovertibly be placed elsewhere.

Certainly, several governments in Europe were fully expecting Austria-Hungary to prepare a harsh *démarche* to send to Belgrade. The German ambassador at the court of St. James's, Prince Karl Max Lichnowsky, informed the London Foreign Office that Austria-Hungary was planning something against Serbia. France, Russia and Serbia were immediately informed. In Rome, there was an awareness that action was being planned, even though the wording of the *démarche* was not known. Again, the information came from Berlin. The British ambassador in Vienna, Maurice de Bunsen, reported to London on 16 July that on the previous day, he had learned from an informant what was being prepared.²³⁸ Count Heinrich Lützow, the former Imperial and Royal ambassador in Rome, was the source of the information. However, Sir Maurice had other good sources elsewhere. The Russians knew about the Viennese 'war factory', and received from their allies any information that their cryptographers were unable to provide.²³⁹ In the end, everyone knew that everyone knew. Ultimately, it also probably no longer mattered that somebody knew the exact wording of the note destined for Serbia. It was evident that in Vienna, steps were being taken towards war, and this knowledge led to a bout of shadow-boxing in London, Paris, Rome, St. Petersburg and Belgrade. However, the British government still believed it was possible to avert the disaster and took up the 'pledge theory' that was clearly widely supported at the time: if Austria-Hungary were to attack Serbia, then it would be sufficient, in the view of London and subsequently also Paris, if the Imperial and Royal armies were to obtain a pledge, for example Belgrade, in order to then negotiate from a position of strength and be able to dictate peace terms to the Serbs.²⁴⁰ The 'halt in Belgrade' became a key factor of British policy.²⁴¹ However, who would want to act as guarantor that Europe would stand by while Imperial and Royal troops occupied Belgrade? When was that

even supposed to happen? Ultimately, it would still have to be proven that the 'Balkan war scenario', which had been devised in the Operations Division of the Imperial and Royal General Staff in a way that contradicted tried and tested strategies, would be successful. While since the time of Ludwig von Baden and Prince Eugen, Imperial troops had always pushed through across the Danube to take Belgrade quickly, in 'war scenario B', the main forces were to attack from Bosnia and Herzegovina, in other words, from the west, initially through low mountainous terrain, with dense forest and many gorges, that was difficult to surmount. While this may have been designed to achieve the desired strategic surprise that is an integral part of all campaign plans, cutting a virtual swathe through the Mačva region, it precluded the rapid seizure of Belgrade. The 'halt in Belgrade' was not possible, since the operations plan only provided for the occupation of the Serbian capital after large parts of Serbia had already been taken. In general, however, conclusive decisions regarding operational directions and goals, as well as the numbers of troops to be deployed against Serbia, could only be reached when it became clear whether the war really would remain limited to the Balkans or whether it would also be waged against Russia. If that were to happen, then everything would change.

However, this was just one of the dilemmas facing the Imperial and Royal Army. To this was added the fact that mobilisation had not even begun to be put into operation, since the diplomatic activity that would decide whether relations should be broken off and war would be declared had still not yet fully begun. An earlier mobilisation was prohibited for a number of reasons, however, not least due to financial considerations. Following two mobilisations within a very short period of time, the underlying message was: only mobilise when war really is imminent.

The Imperial and Royal General Staff has occasionally been accused of completely failing at the start of the war, because while it had always argued the case for pre-emptive military measures and vehemently rattled its sabre,²⁴² when the time came it requested another 14 days in order to be fully ready for action. However, this criticism overlooks a number of different factors. Conrad was unable to initiate mobilisation measures on his own. While he had spoken to Count Berchtold of striking out immediately on 29 June,²⁴³ this ultimately held no sway. The decision regarding the war was not a matter for the military. When matters did come to a head, the army needed its time to conscript the reservists, stock up its formations and arrange for the troops to depart for their assigned staging areas, in other words, to mobilise them. Compared to the time still needed in Russia in April 1914 for general mobilisation, the Imperial and Royal Army was much faster.²⁴⁴ However, as it would later become evident, time was not really a decisive factor. The start of the war in 1914 cannot be measured against the standards of 1939, or any other later date.

In July 1914, some actively serving soldiers were on leave for the harvest. This may have been a particular feature of the Imperial and Royal Army, although a similar al-

lowance was also given in France. The recall of these soldiers alone would already have attracted attention and would probably have also immediately caused all potential enemies to initiate countermeasures. In the light of later events, this may not have been of much consequence, but what is certain is that with the aid of the soldiers, a harvest was brought in that would otherwise no longer have been possible to gather. As a result, no soldier was recalled and harvest leave was only cancelled from that point onwards.

Hardly had this problem been considered and a solution found when the next one surfaced. The President of the French Republic, Raymond Poincaré, and the Prime Minister, René Viviani, who was also Foreign Minister, intended to travel to St. Petersburg on a state visit that had already been arranged some time previously. Now the issue was raised in Vienna as to whether it would not be better to allow the duration of the visit to elapse in order to deny France and Russia the opportunity of directly agreeing on the joint measures that would have to be taken at the highest level. This really was a naïve notion, since it by no means prevented the occasion of Poincaré's visit from being used to obtain all the necessary assurances that would be needed were war to break out in the near future, as well as to compare the information that had been gathered regarding Austrian preparations. Moreover, the French President may perhaps not even have travelled to St. Petersburg if Austria-Hungary had already sent the *démarche* with its fixed deadline. It was Minister Berchtold who wanted the Austrian *démarche* to be deferred. The date under discussion was 25 July, and this information was passed on in confidence by the Foreign Ministry to the governor of the Austro-Hungarian Bank, Alexander Popovics.²⁴⁵ The Joint Council of Ministers on 19 July, at which Conrad again made a presentation, finally set the date for the delivery of the ultimatum at 23 July. Once again, time went by, and speculation was made as to whether the risk of war had perhaps passed.

By this time, it was already an open secret that Austria-Hungary was planning to present an ultimatum to Serbia. This fact was known not only by the members of the Joint Council of Ministers, but rather, it is likely that a large number of other people had been directly or indirectly informed, too – quite apart from Berlin and the major European state chancelleries. On 20 July, the finance ministers of the two halves of the Empire met with their closest advisers and the governor of the Austro-Hungarian Bank for a conference in Budapest in order to discuss the financial measures required for mobilisation. Right at the beginning, attendees of the meeting were informed under the oath of highest confidentiality that the date for the dispatch of the ultimatum had been pushed forward to 23 July. On this day, the French President Poincaré boarded the *Jean Bart*, the ship that would take him back to France. At around midday, the Austrian envoy in Belgrade, Baron Giesl, was given a sealed envelope with instructions not to open it before the afternoon. When he did so, he found inside a *démarche* that was not to be handed to the Serbian government before 6 p.m. It was the note containing the

ultimatum that had been written about two weeks previously. The Serbian government was given a period of 48 hours to fully accept the demands.

Let us take another look at the time factor. The *démarche* had been agreed on 7 July, and was in essence ready for delivery on 12 July. Directly afterwards, its contents were reported to Berlin, though not with the final wording. In the light of the calculations made regarding the date, it was already recommended at this point in time that the note should not be presented until 25 July due to the visit to St. Petersburg by Poincaré. Kaiser Wilhelm wrote a marginal note – one of his many comments – on the dispatch informing him of the delay: ‘What a pity!’²⁴⁶ During the days that followed, the text of the note was perfected, while at the same time, diplomatic activity continued at many different levels. Naturally, the most important representatives of the press were also informed. On 16 July, the head of department, Count Forgách, called in the editor of *Die Presse*, Moriz Benedikt, explained to him the reasons for waiting, and already outlined the contents of the *démarche*. He mentioned the ‘harsh terms’, including #investigation and punishment of the guilty parties and similar demands’. Benedikt noted that according to Forgách, ‘It would have been better if we could have got going at once’, but as was the case with other countries in comparable situations, it would have been necessary to achieve mobilisation immediately and demands would have had to be made under the pressure of this mobilisation. ‘However, we did not want to start mobilising, since we have already done so twice before. Each time, the costs amounted to many hundreds of millions, and then no fighting occurred. We cannot afford to spend so much money for a third time and to disappoint the army. This is absolutely out of the question. Although this is a major disadvantage, we do not wish to do otherwise, in order not to lose sympathy, particularly in England, which until now has not been unfavourably disposed towards us.’ When asked by Benedikt whether any consultations had been made with regard to a localisation of the war, Forgách replied: ‘No. We cannot talk about it, in order to avoid admitting in advance that we may possibly go to war. We believe that Russia is not sufficiently prepared to wage a war.’ This view was also held by Germany, he said, the same Germany ‘that is very keen to take action and is already prepared, now if necessary, to liquidate the global situation. However, we do not believe that Russia will enter the war, since we cannot envisage the Tsar declaring war at the grave of the slain Archduke. France is [...] peaceable’, and anyway, ‘war is not inevitable. A peaceful end may also ensue. This cannot be precluded. They may indeed agree to all our demands. We shall not negotiate for long. Yet it is possible that they will agree to everything, and then naturally, a peaceful end will be achieved. However, the terms will be harsh.’ The ‘general opinion’, he said, was in favour of war. ‘The hope is that the matter will be cleared up, so that we can finally rid ourselves of our own timidity and show that we are still capable of achieving something.’ There was no question of territorial expansion, he said, but Serbia must ‘naturally repay the costs of the war’. Benedikt

concluded from this conversation that the Foreign Ministry was anticipating a peaceful solution after all. And he conceivably left feeling dissatisfied.²⁴⁷

In the days following the dispatch of the draft note to Berlin, German diplomats also believed that Austria-Hungary might be softening. Count Berchtold had also expressed his concern to ambassador von Tschirschky that Serbia might accept the ultimatum. What then? For this reason, Berlin proposed setting harsher terms that it would be simply impossible for Serbia to accept. Naturally, the German pressure for war was also linked to the fact that they wanted to exploit the situation, and in an overestimation of their own potential, regarded themselves as being by all means capable of keeping France and Russia in check. The Germans had superior artillery and German guns were better than those of the French and the Russians. In the view of the German General Staff, France had not yet overcome the transition from a two-year to a three-year period of military service. In the German Empire, the harvest had already been gathered. Why wait any longer? For this reason, concluded von Jagow, the permanent secretary at the Foreign Office in Berlin, 'localisation cannot be accomplished, and if Russia attacks Austria-Hungary, this will be a *casus foederis*.'²⁴⁸

The German Empire also created the impression of being lulled to sleep. The sailing weeks at Kiel were hardly over before Kaiser Wilhelm embarked on a journey to Nordland that had been planned for some time. Politicians and members of the military were on holiday, while the latter declared that besides, everything was so well prepared that military action could be started immediately at any time. They also wanted to enjoy a few peaceful days on holiday before war broke out.

However, this policy of distraction and creating a sense of calm was not the most influential factor for France and Great Britain. In both countries, so much energy was consumed with their own affairs that neither Sarajevo nor the developments during July were considered worthy of notice. In France, greater attention was paid to the politically delicate trial of Henriette, the wife of the former Prime Minister Joseph Caillaux, who had shot the chief editor of the *Figaro* and had been released on the grounds of temporary insanity. The administration in France showed disinterest in events in Austria-Hungary and emphasised particularly that the murdered Archduke Franz Ferdinand had been extremely unpopular there. How could such a development possibly lead to a particular crisis?²⁴⁹ The cabinet led by Viviani, which at that time was still newly formed, had not yet gained an overview of the situation, and ultimately spent most of its time handling the visit by President Poincaré to Russia, during which entertainment was to play a not too minor role. A return visit by Tsar Nicholas II to France was planned for the summer of 1915. London, meanwhile, was being challenged by events in Ireland, where there was a threat of civil war. For this reason, developments there were of the uppermost importance for politicians and the military alike, and hardly anything else seemed to matter.²⁵⁰ However, this situation was to come to an abrupt end.

On 22 July, Berlin was informed of the final text of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum. The text met with agreement, although it was also clear that the departure of the French state visit from Braşov (Kronstadt) would have to be postponed by about an hour. For this reason, Count Berchtold was informed that he should tell the Austrian envoy in Belgrade that the time for delivery of the *démarche* on 23 July should be 6 p.m. Aside from that, there was now also no doubt in Berlin that the Serbs would hardly be in a position to accept the Austrian note.

The delivery of the Austrian note had a shock effect. Perhaps the belief really had evaporated that Austria-Hungary would act in such a manner, or perhaps the leading state officials had been bluffing. To a large extent, the ensuing comments expressed outrage. In Belgium, the note was described as 'unqualifiable'. The British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, spoke of 'the most formidable document that was ever addressed from one state to another'. Italy let it be known in St. Petersburg that Austria had set 'unacceptable' conditions. And the response by the Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov to the *démarche* was: 'This is war.'²⁵¹ Clearly, every leader of every state chancellery had already chosen the fitting words for the occasion that would be passed down to later generations. After all, they had had enough time to do so. There was almost no-one who failed to offer a quotable statement as a reaction to the climax of the July Crisis. Ultimately, the whole affair amounted to a farce, however, since it had been known in advance that the ultimatum was being prepared. Many people had known that the terms would be harsh and even veritably impossible to meet, and several had also been informed of the wording.

Belgrade became a seething cauldron. Prime Minister Nikola Pašić, who had been away on an election campaign trip, raced back to the capital. A series of meetings, consultations and dispatches followed. Only now was one of the men behind the Sarajevo attack, Major Tankosić, arrested. Ciganović escaped. Romania put its special envoy to use and was probably the only party to advise Serbia to accept the Viennese *démarche* unconditionally.²⁵² However, the French envoy in Belgrade believed he could foresee the problems on the domestic front that loomed if unconditional acceptance were to be made and what risks would be borne by those in Serbia who proposed capitulation when he said that if this were to occur, the King would be summarily murdered.²⁵³ France advised acceptance of as many of the Austrian demands as the honour of Serbia would allow. Otherwise, it was precisely President Poincaré who was of the opinion that in the light of German support for Austria-Hungary, no flexibility should be shown towards Berlin. Russia left no-one in doubt as to its readiness to support Serbia, and this was also communicated immediately to the Ballhausplatz. In Vienna, it was impossible to know whether or not this was a bluff. At any rate, the dominant mood was one of 'full determination to wage war with Russia as well, if need be'.²⁵⁴

Of all the great powers, only Great Britain showed a willingness to mediate. After the first cabinet meeting to address foreign affairs at all since the assassination in Sarajevo, the Foreign Secretary, Edward Grey, suggested that four powers that were not immediately involved in the conflict, namely Great Britain, the German Empire, France and Italy, should take a joint initiative. However, since Sir Edward probably knew that time was running out, he proposed at the same time that Austria-Hungary should extend the deadline for the response to the ultimatum. After none of the powers addressed reacted positively during the course of 24 July, Sir Edward made a direct enquiry in Berlin as to whether it would be prepared to accept the Serbian note of response in Vienna. However, this thought had not occurred to Berlin. Quite the opposite: on one dispatch, Kaiser Wilhelm wrote a comment regarding a meeting with Foreign Minister Berchtold with the Russian chargé d'affaires in Vienna: 'Entirely superfluous'.²⁵⁵

However, since Berlin had of necessity to retain an interest in keeping Great Britain out of the war, the overt reaction to British recommendations for mediation was at least positive, and it was agreed that a conference should take place. However, unequivocal rejections from St. Petersburg and Paris rendered German acceptance inconsequential. Kaiser Wilhelm repeatedly made it clear that he was now only waiting for war to break out. When a report reached Berlin that Austria-Hungary had made it clear that it had no territorial ambitions against Serbia – a demand that Prime Minister Tisza had forced through in the Joint Council of Ministers on 19 July – the German Kaiser, adding one of his famous marginal notes to the relevant passage, wrote: 'Feeble.' A shift in the balance of power 'must come about. Austria must become preponderant in the Balkans.'²⁵⁶

On Saturday, 25 July, the war had in effect arrived. In a note delivered just a few minutes before the expiry of the 48-hour deadline, Serbia, while not rejecting the Austrian demands outright, set out a series of limitations designed to make it clear that surrender of Serbian sovereignty merely in order to enable Austria to pursue the men behind the assassination, including on Serbian territory, was out of the question. The relevant passage in the response written by Serbia on 25 July stated that the involvement of Imperial and Royal organs in the investigation would be 'a violation of the constitution and of criminal trial law'. In so doing, it interpreted the Austrian demand for involvement in the investigation of the men behind the Sarajevo assassination as being tantamount to Austria-Hungary wishing to exclude Serbian authorities from the proceedings. Naturally, those in authority in Serbia were also aware of the fact that this was an arbitrary interpretation.²⁵⁷ However, they were certain of Russia's support, and had as a precaution informed the Entente powers of the contents of their response in advance. They also thought that it might perhaps be possible to negotiate one or other of the items in the *démarche*.

The note of response was brought to the Austro-Hungarian embassy by Prime Minister Pašić in person. This served to underline the importance of the document to be delivered, as well as to express a certain degree of anxiety. Naturally, the note of response was not delivered mutely; instead, the Serbian position was explained using all available clichés. At this late stage in the day, Pašić was no longer concerned about his electoral campaign, and he would have been fully aware of the importance of the document.

The note of response – and this was the consistent view of nearly all state chancelleries – was extremely skilfully worded. It had been revised until just before being delivered. For this reason, it contains deletions – something highly uncommon for a document of this significance – that Prime Minister Pašić had still made at the last moment while being driven to the Austrian embassy. However, there was no question of this being an unconditional acceptance. Since the Austrian envoy in Belgrade had been given no room for manoeuvre, and he had only been given permission to accept a full agreement to the Austrian *démarche*, he was obliged in accordance with his instructions to leave the embassy, board a train and in this way to make it clear that diplomatic relations had been broken off. In Serbia, mobilisation had already begun hours before the note of response was delivered.