

Origins of the War

THE recently published "British Documents on the Origins of the War"* (British Library of Information, New York), is the latest important contribution to the evidence which is being debated on two continents in the attempt to assign responsibility for the Great War. Historians will doubtless discuss this question for generations, and doubtless will disagree; but the debate is of more than historical interest: the issues involved are shaping public opinion, they have been written into treaties, they are factors which cannot be neglected by those who seek the cause and cure of international misunderstanding. Therefore the editors of *The Saturday Review* have asked a group of experts in the history of the war's beginning to examine the new evidence now presented and comment on its significance. Charles Seymour discusses in this number the case for Austria, Bernadotte E. Schmitt the case for Great Britain; Sidney B. Fay the case for Germany. Next week Michael Florinsky will write upon Russian, and William L. Langner upon French, responsibility for the war. Professor Shotwell, who was to have written an introduction to this symposium, has been called to Europe, hence, this brief editorial note.

Germany's Part

By SIDNEY B. FAY
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THE most interesting revelations in the recently published British Documents do not relate to Germany, but, naturally enough, to England herself and to her Entente friends. The "minutes" by Sir Edward Grey's Foreign Office Secretaries, Sir Eyre Crowe and Sir Arthur Nicolson, show early in the crisis their deep distrust of Germany, their sympathy with the Franco-Russian point of view, and their pressure upon Sir Edward not to exercise any restraint upon Russia and thereby jeopardize England's undertakings with Russia in regard to her Asiatic possessions. The passages suppressed from the original British Blue Book of 1914, but now published with admirable completeness and precision, show that the important omissions were made chiefly to shield the reputation, not of England herself, but of the two Powers who were soon to become her allies. They indicate, for instance, England's knowledge of Russia's early decision for military measures, France's strong support and encouragement of Russia, and President Poincaré's energetic rejection of Sir Edward Grey's proposal of direct conversations between Vienna and St. Petersburg to settle amicably the threatened Austro-Serbian conflict even before the publication of the Austrian ultimatum. As these questions of England's own policy and her relations to France and Russia are to be dealt with by others, we shall confine ourselves to new points in these British Documents which touch Germany.

There are two other reasons why these documents reveal relatively less that is new concerning Germany than those of the other Powers. One is that seven years ago the Kautsky Documents gave a very full record of Germany's part. The other is that the British Blue Book of 1914 omitted less from the correspondence between London and Berlin than from that between London and the other capitals of Europe.

The few documents prior to the Archduke's murder show England and Germany on friendly terms in spite of the suspicions roused by the rumors of negotiations for an Anglo-Russian naval understanding. A long report on the visit of the British fleet at Kiel describes the genuine cordiality with which the British officers and men had been everywhere received and the German hopes that they might soon pay a return visit. The correspondent of the *Daily Mail* asked a British officer what was the state of feeling between the sailors of the two nations; the officer, not knowing his interlocutor, made the significant reply: "There is nothing the matter with the feeling if the — press would only leave it alone."

On July 6, Prince Lichnowsky, returning to

London from Kiel and Berlin, told Sir Edward Grey privately and confidentially about the anxiety and pessimism which he believed he had just observed in Germany. "The murder of the Archduke had excited very strong anti-Serbian feeling in Austria; and he knew for a fact, though he did not know the details, that Austria intended to do something." The situation was exceedingly difficult for Germany, he said; if she told the Austrians that nothing must be done, she would be accused again of always holding back her ally; if she let events take their course, there was the possibility of very serious trouble. In view of this, but more especially in view of the recent increases in the Russian army, the anti-German feeling in Russia, and the fears of some Anglo-Russian naval arrangement, there was some feeling in Germany "that trouble was bound to come and therefore it would be better not to restrain Austria and let the trouble come now, rather than later." In saying these things, aside from whether they were true or not, the German Ambassador showed his earnest desire for peace and his lack of political wisdom. He apparently hoped to forestall possible trouble and to get Grey to exercise a moderating influence in Russia. But in reality he only strengthened that feeling of suspicion and fear at the very moment when diplomatic tension made them a most dangerous psychological factor for war. Nor did he succeed in securing British moderating influence upon Russia. Upon the news of the Austrian ultimatum and Sanzonov's hasty conclusion that it "meant war," Sir Eyre Crowe made a significant minute, typical of the influence which he continually exerted at Downing Street during the following critical days:

The moment has passed when it might have been possible to enlist French support in an effort to hold Russia back. It is clear that France and Russia are decided to accept the challenge thrown out to them. Whatever we may think of the merits of the Austrian charges against Serbia, France and Russia consider that these are the pretexts, and that the bigger cause of Triple Alliance versus Triple Entente is definitely engaged.

I think it would be impolitic, not to say dangerous, for England to attempt to controvert this opinion, or to endeavor to obscure the plain issue, by any representation at St. Petersburg and Paris.

And again, on July 27, Crowe noted that if Austria was determined on war with Serbia, "it would be neither possible nor wise and just to make any move to restrain Russia from mobilizing."

Germany's eleventh hour effort to exert moderation at Vienna, after learning the conciliatory Serbian reply and realizing the danger from Russia after all, received hardly any serious consideration in London. By July 29, but prior to hearing of Bethmann's bid for British neutrality, there are indications that Downing Street already had made up its mind that war with Germany was probable. Upon the announcement of the Austrian declaration of war on Serbia, Crowe noted, "I think we should not, in present circumstances, issue the otherwise usual declaration of neutrality," and Nicolson agreed. The British fleet had been ordered to its war station at Scapa Flow. And three despatches of July 29 of Grey to Goschen in Berlin, although published in the British Blue Book of 1914 (Nos. 88-89), now appear marked in the archives, "Not sent—War." One of these (No. 89) was the one in which, "in a quite private and friendly way," Grey gave his warning to Lichnowsky that, if Germany became involved, England might intervene. It was, however, not until Germany's intention to violate Belgium became clear that Sir Edward Grey abandoned his "hands free" attitude in speaking to the French and gave them the begged-for assurance of British support.

British Policy in July, 1914

By BERNADOTTE E. SCHMITT
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TWO questions are raised by the new British documents on July, 1914. In the first place, did the "Blue Book" of 1914 give an accurate record of what had happened, or were essential documents either falsified or suppressed in order to conceal inconvenient facts? Secondly, does the complete correspondence—677 documents as against 164 published in 1914—compel a revision of judgment about British policy?

As to the first, no important fact about British policy was kept back, except the statement of Sir

Edward Grey, the foreign secretary, to both the Russian and the German ambassadors in London that he assumed Russia would mobilize. The paraphrasing of telegrams (for protection of the ciphers) was honestly done, apart from one or two unimportant slips which probably resulted from the haste of the compiling. About a quarter of the documents published in 1914 were "edited" by the omission of passages that might be disconcerting to Great Britain's allies (and neutrals) or reveal the conduct of Germany and Austria in a more favorable light. The same verdict may be passed on the 513 new documents. By and large, the "Blue Book of 1914" was a remarkably full and honest publication, far more so than that issued by any other government. The answer to the second question is thus already indicated. The view of British policy created by the original "Blue Book" is not altered except in detail. Its motives, however, will be much understood, for in addition to the documents, the new publication gives the "minutes" of the foreign office officials which often tell more than a dozen despatches.

The British Government did not expect a grave crisis until about two days before the storm broke. On July 21, Sir Arthur Nicolson, the permanent under-secretary, observed, "I doubt if Austria will proceed to extreme measures—although Berlin is apparently anxious." There was not the slightest suspicion that Berlin was "anxious" only lest Austria should not proceed with sufficient vigor and promptness.

From the presentation of the Austrian ultimatum to the delivery of the Serbian reply, judgment was reserved in London. But when Germany demanded that the Austro-Serbian dispute be localized and Austria broke off diplomatic relations, the British foreign office concluded that war was practically inevitable and was soon convinced, by Germany's merely "passing on" British suggestions to Vienna, that she was forcing the pace. The famous proposal of Sir Edward Grey for a conference in London was made with a feeling of despair, a feeling that deepened as the days passed and Germany made no move for peace. At least none that was reported convincingly to London, for it was not until midnight of July 31-August 1, that any indication was received of serious German pressure on Austria; by this time, however, the news had come in of the German ultimatum to Russia and France. The minutes of Sir Eyre Crowe, the assistant under-secretary, whose mother was a German and who was married to a German lady, are eloquent of the suspicion with which every German move, or failure to move, was regarded.

The foreign office was apparently disposed to recognize that Austria was entitled to much satisfaction from Serbia; but it resented the attempt to ride rough-shod over the other Powers. The Serbian reply was held "reasonable," and Russia right in going to the assistance of Serbia. In Nicolson's opinion,

Russia cannot and will not stand quietly by while Austria administers a severe chastisement to Serbia. She does not consider that Serbia deserves it, and she could not, in view of that feeling and of her position in the Slav world, consent to it.

But whereas Russia was ready to negotiate a compromise, Austria would make no concessions. Therefore the British Government, which was fully informed of the progress of Russian mobilization, would exert no pressure in St. Petersburg to retard or stop that measure.

Russia cannot be expected to delay her own mobilization, which, as it is, can only become effective in something like double the time required by Austria and by Germany.

As London saw the matter, however, the fate of Serbia was incidental. The real issue was a conflict between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, or more accurately perhaps, of Germany and Austria against Russia and France, for Italy on the one hand and Great Britain on the other were both uncertain what they would do. There was a genuine fear for the future if Britain did not support Russia, for the ambassador in St. Petersburg telegraphed:

If we fail her now we cannot hope to maintain that friendly coöperation with her in Asia which is of such vital importance to us.

Both Nicolson and Crowe held very strongly that a diplomatic victory for the Central Powers would destroy the Entente and the European balance.

Still, there was always the chance that peace would be preserved. Other crises had been weath-

*British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Edited by G. P. GOOCH and HAROLD TEMPERLEY. Vol. XI. "Foreign Office Documents (June 28th-August 4th, 1914)." Collected and Arranged with Introduction and Notes by J. W. HEADLAM-MORLEY, Historical Adviser to the Foreign Office. London: Printed and Published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1926. New York: British Library of Information, 44 Whitehall Street. \$3.

ered, and although this one was "much more acute than any that Europe has had for generations," Austria might yield at the last moment. So Great Britain refused to commit herself until war was a fact, in spite of repeated pleas from Russia and France for a declaration of solidarity and from Germany for a promise of neutrality. Not only was there the fear that a commitment would remove "the one restraining influence" on Germany or "induce and determine" France and Russia "to choose the path of war;" obviously the British Government wished to be free, if war was avoided, to continue the policy followed hitherto of maintaining friendly relations with all Powers, which would be impossible if a pledge were given to either side.

In this situation, Sir Edward Grey played the game honorably and manfully. On July 27, Crowe was already arguing for intervention.

It is difficult not to remember the position of Prussia in 1805, when she insisted on keeping out of the war which she could not prevent from breaking out between the other Powers over questions not, on their face, of direct interest to Prussia.

The war was waged without Prussia in 1805. But in 1806 she fell a victim to the Power that had won in 1805, and no one was ready either to help her or to prevent her political ruin and partition.

On July 31, he returned to the charge in a long memorandum to Grey, in which he laid down three points. (1) "The theory that England cannot engage in a big war means her political suicide." (2) "The whole policy of the Entente can have no meaning if it does not signify that in a just quarrel England would stand by her friends." (3) "France has not sought the quarrel. It has been forced upon her." Sir Edward agreed with his adviser, as can be seen from his "Twenty-Five Years." But he knew that he had neither his cabinet nor public opinion behind him for such a policy. What he said to the French ambassador on July 31 is highly significant.

The commercial and financial situation was exceedingly serious; there was danger of a complete collapse that would involve us and everyone else in ruin; and it was possible that our standing aside might be the only means of preventing a complete collapse of European credit, in which we should be involved. This might be a paramount consideration in determining our attitude.

So on August 1, although it was known that Germany had addressed ultimatums to Russia and France, Grey refused either "to give Germany any promise of neutrality," or to promise assistance to France. Parliament, he told Paul Cambon, would not authorize the sending of an expeditionary force to the continent "unless our interests and obligations were deeply and desperately involved," and he insisted that "we had no obligation" to help France.

This categorical statement, which was accepted by the French ambassador, ought to dispose once for all of the contention that Great Britain was bound to France by a "verbal agreement" or a "moral obligation," or in some other manner. These new documents show, with the utmost clearness, that the promise given on August 2, to defend the French coasts against a German naval attack was conditional on such an attack being made, and that on August 3, after the German ultimatum to Belgium had become known in London, the British Government had not decided what to do. The demand that Germany respect the neutrality of Belgium was finally made at 9:30 a. m. on August 4; what Great Britain would have done if Germany had agreed to do so, is a question which the documents do not answer, and which is academic.

Perhaps the most impressive feature of the record is the coolness that prevailed in British diplomatic circles. Disappointed or angry as Grey, Nicolson, and Crowe were with the conduct of Germany, they never lost their heads. There were no frantic moments in Downing Street, as there were in St. Petersburg, Berlin and Paris. Though surprised by the suddenness and intensity of the crisis, Sir Edward Grey formulated his policy at once and adhered to it. He warned both Austria and Germany of the probable consequences of their action; he left Russia and France free to take their own decisions; within the limits imposed by the European situation, he worked sincerely and steadfastly for peace; he declined to indicate the attitude of Great Britain until Germany had declared war. He was loyal to friend and foe alike, to the cabinet, to the interests of his country, and as the reviewer believes, to his own conscience. In the light of all

that is now known about the tragic fortnight, some of his actions appear of doubtful wisdom; but he must be judged by what he knew in July, 1914, and by that standard Sir Edward Grey's record is far better than that of any other statesmen who played a part in the great catastrophe.

Austria-Hungary in 1914

By CHARLES SEYMOUR

OF the 677 numbered documents in this collection, 104 are directly related to Austria-Hungary. A large number of others are less directly related. Of the 104, twenty-three were printed in the British White Paper issued soon after the outbreak of war. The papers now printed for the first time, while they add details of interest and clarify the political situation in Austria-Hungary, do not materially alter the impression created by the earlier collection of selected documents. They consist of reports from Ambassador de Bunsen at Vienna, Consul Jones at Serajevo, and Consul Müller at Budapest, telling of the assassination and the funeral of the Archduke, the effect upon public opinion in Austria and Hungary, debates in the Hungarian Chamber, the opinions of de Bunsen's colleagues, details of Austrian mobilization. The information is confirmatory and elucidatory of what is already known from other sources.

More significant, in a certain sense, are the individual passages now printed which were deleted from the published documents in the earlier collections. Of the twenty-three published in 1914, sixteen were "edited." Most of these were paraphrased and in every case with complete honesty and accuracy. Many of the deleted passages were insignificant phrases or references to other documents not included in the first collection; such omissions clearly resulted from the desire to avoid confusion. This was legitimate and praiseworthy editing. Some of the omissions, however, were obviously dictated by policy. Thus the opinions of the Italian Ambassador at Vienna, as quoted by de Bunsen, were consistently omitted in Nos. 150, 166, 175, 248, 287, 307, 676. The omitted passages represented the Italian Ambassador as intensely critical of Austrian policy, and if they had been published would have laid the British open to the charge of fomenting trouble between Italy and her former ally. Several passages were deleted in which de Bunsen quotes his Russian and French colleagues; if printed in 1914 they would certainly have caused political embarrassment. Thus in No. 248 the Russian Ambassador is reported as stating, after Austria's refusal to authorize direct conversations, that the "Russian Minister of War is bellicose and Emperor of Russia already very angry, so that the least thing might precipitate conflict." In Nos. 295 and 307 statements referring (inaccurately) to Russia's mobilization were left out. In No. 676 was omitted the statement of the Russian Ambassador that he would have been willing to approve Austrian occupation of Belgrade or even more Serb territory. Similarly in Nos. 199, 265, statements of the French Ambassador were not printed in 1914.

Certain of these passages, like the remark of the Russian Ambassador cited above, might be interpreted as helping to justify Austria. No. 175 contains a passage (deleted in 1914) in which the Italian Ambassador proposes a formula of compromise; No. 199 refers to a suggestion of the German Ambassador in Paris intimating Germany's willingness to mediate; No. 265 contains the opinion of the French Ambassador that because of the Serb peril to the integrity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Vienna was compelled to reduce Serbia to impotency or to lose her South Slav provinces, and his further opinion that Germany was not anxious for a European war. The passages now printed for the first time thus tend to confirm the conclusions of the moderate revisionist students of the crisis. This does not imply, however, that the British sought in 1914 to cover up facts. If the opinion of the French Ambassador was omitted, that of Ambassador de Bunsen himself, which emphasized the provocation given Austria by the development of Serb chauvinism, was printed in full in 1914. And in No. 307 de Bunsen's report on the restraining influence of Berlin was published without abbreviation. The collection of 1914, if politically discreet, was historically honest.

The new documents throw interesting light on

certain moot points. De Bunsen refers to the complaints that the funeral of the Archduke was not befitting his station, but minimizes any political significance that might be attached to the simplicity of the ceremonies. "It is difficult to believe that there could have been any intention to conduct the proceedings in a manner unbefitting the exalted rank of the victims. . . . I am informed that the ceremonies followed closely the traditional 'Spanish' rites of the Imperial Court." His picture of Tschirschky, that of a man determined to push Austria to firm measures, is entirely out of tune with the good-natured eulogies delivered before the German Parliamentary investigating committee. "Tschirschky, I feel sure," he wrote to Nicolson on July 17, "is doing nothing to restrain this country. He confessed to me lately that he did not believe in the possibility of improved relations between Austria and Serbia, and the German Military Attaché does not conceal his belief that the hour of condign punishment for Serbia is approaching." This of course was after the German Kaiser had expressed his displeasure at Tschirschky's intimation of restraint upon Austria, which, as Renouvin suggests, was doubtless passed on to the German Ambassador and encouraged him in the attitude de Bunsen describes. The whole tenor of the new documents is opposed to Montgelas's conclusion that "the possibility that the Austro-Serbian war like others . . . might lead to further complications, was well weighed, but the risk was thought very small, in view of the slight provocation."

De Bunsen, it is true, recognizes fully, as do all serious historians, the extent of the provocation, but his despatches emphasize equally the general impression that an Austrian attack upon Serbia must lead to the intervention of Russia. Apart from the warning (or threat) given Szapary by Poincaré, Schebeko at Vienna made no secret of his conviction that "Russia would inevitably be drawn in" if Austria pushed the war against Serbia. If Berchtold failed to realize this, he stands convicted of criminal myopia. The documents also weaken Montgelas's misleading conclusion that "Austria-Hungary's only aim was to maintain the *status quo*." This was true of the Hapsburg Empire, but by no means true of the Balkans. De Bunsen did not know of Berchtold's Balkan program, drafted before the murder of the Archduke, but his despatches leave no doubt of the conviction of the Italian, French, and Russian Ambassadors that if Austria were permitted to proceed against Serbia it would result in a revolution in the Balkan balance.

On the other hand, de Bunsen's despatches confirm the fact that while the direct Russo-Austrian conversations were proceeding, the Russian mobilization, as Montgelas avers with the acquiescence of Gooch, "suddenly tore the threads asunder," by forcing German mobilization. "Unfortunately," wrote de Bunsen, "these conversations at St. Petersburg and Vienna were cut short by the transfer of the dispute to the more dangerous ground of a direct conflict between Germany and Russia." It should be observed, however, that de Bunsen knew nothing of the discussions in secret Austria councils, now known to us, which lead even such careful historians as Renouvin and Gooch to reject the possibility of any sincere concession on the part of Austria. A telegram signed by Francis Joseph and sent at 1:06 P. M. July 31, before the news of the Russian mobilization had reached Vienna, betrays the determination of the Hapsburg Government: "A rescue of Serbia by Russian intervention at the present time would bring about the most serious consequences for my territories and and therefore it is impossible for me to permit such an intervention. I am aware of the full meaning and extent of my decision." This determination, illustrated by the hastening of the declaration of war on Serbia, July 28, so as to present Europe with a *fait accompli*, may be read all through the crisis, in the Goos and Hoyos papers as well as in the despatches of de Bunsen. It justifies Renouvin's conclusion that if, in formulating a precise judgment we ought to emphasize the decisions thoughtfully arrived at by the Chancelleries before the military seized control, major responsibilities rest upon Vienna. It is true that Russian mobilization forced the intervention of Germany. But it is certain that long before technical military factors entered the situation, and no matter how great her provocation, Austria-Hungary in cold blood decided upon violent action against Serbia and that on July 31 when faced with the imminence of Russian intervention, she held to this decision.