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Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Tersteegen Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Langbein Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates
Brentano Strachwitz Claudius Schiller Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gleim Vulpius
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Morgenstern Goedicke
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Kleist
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Mörike Musil
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Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
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What Germany Thinks The War as Germans see it

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What Germany Thinks

or the War as Germans see it

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1915

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CHAPTER I

THE CAUSES OF THE WAR

In many quarters of the world, especially in certain sections of the British public, people believed that the German nation was led blindly into the World War by an unscrupulous military clique. Now, however, there is ample evidence to prove that the entire nation was thoroughly well informed of the course which events were taking, and also warned as to the catastrophe to which the national course was certainly leading.

Even to-day, after more than twelve months of devastating warfare, there is no unity of opinion in Germany as to who caused the war. Some writers accuse France, others England, while many lay the guilt at Russia's door. They are only unanimous in charging one or other, or all the powers, of the Triple Entente. We shall see that every power now at war, with the exception of Germany and Italy, has been held responsible for Armageddon, but apparently it has not yet occurred to Germans that the bearer of guilt for this year's bloodshed — is Germany alone!

It is true that the conflict between Austria and Serbia forms the starting point. Whether or not Serbia was seriously in the wrong is a matter of opinion, but it is generally held that Austria dealt with her neighbour with too much heat and too little discretion. Austria kindled the flames of war, but it was Germany's mission to seize a blazing torch and set Europe alight.

When the text of Austria's ultimatum became known, a very serious mood came over Germany. There was not a man who did not realize that a great European War loomed on the horizon. A well-organized, healthy public opinion could at that period have brought the governments of the Germanic Powers to recognize their responsibility. Had the German Press been unanimous, it might have stopped the avalanche. But there were two currents of opinion, the one approving, the other condemning Austria for having thrown down the gauntlet to Serbia and above all to Russia.

One paper exulted over the statement that every sentence in Austria's ultimatum "was a whip-lash across Serbia's face;" a phrase

expressing so aptly the great mass of popular opinion. This expression met with unstinted approval, for it corresponded with German ideals and standards in dealing with an opponent. Yet there was no lack of warnings, and very grave ones too. A glance at German newspapers will suffice to prove this statement.

On July 24th, 1914, Krupp's organ, the *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung*, contained the following: "The Austro-Hungarian ultimatum is nothing but a pretext for war, but this time a dangerous one. It seems that we are standing on the verge of an Austro-Serbian war. It is possible, very possible, that we shall have to extinguish East-European conflagrations with our arms, either because of our treaties or from the compulsion of events. But it is a scandal if the Imperial Government (Berlin) has not required that such a final offer should be submitted to it for approval before its presentation to Serbia. To-day nothing remains for us but to declare: 'We are not bound by any alliance to support wars let loose by the Hapsburg policy of conquest.'"

The *Post* wrote on the same date: "Is that a note? No! it is an ultimatum of the sharpest kind. Within twenty-four hours Austria demands an answer. A reply? No! but an absolute submission, the utter and complete humiliation of Serbia. On former occasions we have (and with justice) made fun of Austria's lack of energy. Now we have a proof of energy which terrifies us. This 'note' represents about the very uttermost which can be said to any government, and such things are only said when the sender of the 'note' has absolutely determined upon war."

The principal organ of Germany's largest political party, the Social Democrats, contained a still more emphatic protest on July 25th. A telegram from the Belgrade correspondent of the *Vorwärts* runs: "Since the presentation of Austria's note, public opinion has become exceedingly serious, although the city is still very calm. The general view held is that Austria's ultimatum is unacceptable for a sovereign State. In Belgrade no one doubts that Russia will stand by Serbia. Everyone is certain that in consequence of Austria's excessively sharp tone, Russia will not remain inactive should Austria resort to armed force. The populace is prepared for war."

In view of the subsequent attitude of Germany's Social Democrats, an official proclamation, published in all their seventy-seven daily papers on July 25th, is of supreme importance. At that date they had apparently no doubt whatever as to the guilty party. The change of front in the Reichstag on August 4th would seem in the light of this proclamation, as nothing other than a betrayal of conscience. Further, the split which has arisen in their ranks during the war leads to the supposition that Liebknecht, Kautsky and Bernstein have been troubled by the inward voice.

This is the full text of the proclamation as it appeared in the *Vorwärts*:

"An Appeal! The Balkan plains are still steaming with the blood of thousands of murdered; the ruins of desolate towns and devastated villages are still smoking after the Balkan War; hungry, workless men, widowed women and orphan children are still wandering through the land, and yet again Austria's Imperialism unchains the War Fury to bring death and destruction over all Europe.

"Even if we condemn the doings of the Greater-Serbian Nationalists, still the wicked war-provocation of the Austro-Hungarian Government calls forth the most stinging protest. The demands made by this government are so brutal, that in the history of the world their like has never been presented to an independent State, and they can only be calculated to provoke war.

"Germany's proletariat, conscious of its mission, raises herewith, in the name of humanity and civilization, the most fervent protest against this criminal action of the war party (*Kriegshetzer*). It (the Social Democratic Party) demands imperatively that the German Government should exercise all its influence on the Austrian Government to preserve peace, and in case this infamous war cannot be prevented then to abstain from any warlike interference. No single drop of blood of a single German soldier may be sacrificed to gratify the lust for power of the Austrian autocracy, the Imperial profit-interests.

"Comrades! we call upon you to give expression to the working-classes' unshakable will for peace in mass meetings. This is a serious moment, more solemn than any in the last few decades. There is danger in delay. A world war threatens us. The ruling classes who

enslave, despise and exploit you in times of peace desire now to misuse you as cannon-fodder. From all sides the cry must ring in the ears of those in authority: We don't want war! Down with war!

"Long live international brotherhood!

"Berlin, July 25th, 1914.

"*The Leaders of the Party.*"

Two days later the *Leipziger Tageblatt* announced that the Public Prosecutor had commenced proceedings against the editors of *Vorwärts* for having distributed the above appeal in pamphlet form in the streets of Berlin. From this fact we may conclude that the charges thrown out by the Social Democratic Party were by no means congenial to the plans of the German Government.

The Liberal *Berliner Tageblatt* (July 24th), gave its unreserved support to Austria's action. "The Austrian Government has voiced its demands in a calm and serious tone which contains nothing offensive to the Serbian monarchy. Everyone who has considered the results of the inquiry into the tragedy of Serajewo, and the burrowing of Serbian propagandists in Austria, must give his absolute sanction to the latter's demands. Much as every right-thinking man must desire that peace should be preserved, still he must admit that Austria could not have acted otherwise."

Even the *Vossische Zeitung*, the organ of army circles, was more conservative in its judgment. In the issue for July 24th a leading article runs: "It cannot be denied that nearly every point raised by Austria in her note is an encroachment on Serbia's sovereign rights. Austria appears as the policeman, who undertakes to create order in Serbia, because the Serbian Government, according to Austria's claim, is unable to hold in check those 'subversive elements' within its frontiers, which disturb Austria's peace. But only in this manner can Austria protect herself against the criminals who are sent from Serbia to the territories of the Hapsburg monarchy. No consideration whatever can be shown to Serbia, as Austria's first duty is self-defence."

In the German Press two widely-differing opinions found expression with regard to the equity of Austria's demands, but the Press and people were unanimous in believing that if these demands

were ruthlessly pressed home they could only lead to a European conflagration.

In view of this latter danger, national opinion was again divided into two camps: the first against war, the second determined to support Austria and pursue the path chosen by the Berlin Government, no matter what the consequences might be. The latter party included the vast bulk of the nation; and Chauvinism dominated in the Press, theatres, concert-halls, churches and music-halls. "Patriotic" demonstrations were held before Austrian consulates, in restaurants and coffee-houses. The Berlin Government was overwhelmed with telegrams from all kinds of bodies—especially those with a military colouring, such as veterans' clubs, societies of one-year volunteers, university societies, etc.—calling upon it to defend Germany's honour against Slavonic murder and intrigue. In short, all Germany gave itself up to a veritable *Kriegsrausch* (war intoxication) which found expression in the wildest attacks on Russia and a perfervid determination to see the matter through, should Russia venture to intervene in any way to protect Serbia from whatever measures Austria thought proper to take.

It is little to be wondered at that Russia in face of this spontaneous outbreak did take military precautions, for all Germany made it perfectly clear that no kind of intervention on Russia's part in the Austro-Serbian dispute would be tolerated by Germany. It is true that, late in the day, Austria avowed that she had no intention of annexing Serbian territory, a declaration which Germans did not believe, and certainly one which Russia had no reason to accept after Austria's annexion of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908.

Furthermore, Austria gave Russia every reason to cherish suspicion as to her intentions. On July 25th Austria issued official orders for the mobilization of eight of her sixteen army corps, in addition to which a part of the *Landsturm* was called up. The corps mobilized were: one each in Upper and Lower Austria, Dalmatia, Buda-Pest, Croatia and Bosnia and two Bohemian corps. Three-eighths of the forces called up were thus placed very near to the Russian frontier.

Vienna was wild with war-enthusiasm which found expression in demonstrations lasting all through the night, July 25-26th. Austrian officers, who have always been hated by the populace, were

cheered, embraced and carried shoulder-high wherever they were met. The effect which this had in Berlin may be seen from the *Berliner Tageblatt* of July 26th: "An enormous mass of people gathered before the Russian Embassy last night between the hours of twelve and one. The crowd howled and hissed, and cries were raised: 'Down with Russia! Long live Austria! Down with Serbia!' Gradually the police cleared the masses away."

Russia ignored the incident, but when about a hundred Frenchmen demonstrated before the Austrian Embassy in Paris at exactly the same time, the Ambassador at once protested at the Quai d'Orsay and the Director of the French Foreign Office immediately apologized.

On the whole the reports of excesses in various parts of Germany against any and all who dared to show any anti-war sympathies proves clearly that the blood-lust aroused by the German Government's policy had already passed beyond the control of the authorities. In Munich one of the most modern coffee-houses (Café Fahrig) was completely gutted because the proprietor endeavoured to keep the demonstrators within reasonable bounds. Serbs and Russians were attacked and ill-treated. One such incident occurred at mid-day, Sunday, July 26th, in Munich, of which a full description is given in the *München-Augsburger Abendzeitung* for the following day.

A few days later (August 2nd) the Princess Café, Berlin, was demolished because the guests believed that there were Russians in the band. In Hamburg on the following day a newly-opened restaurant was completely destroyed because a young Dane had failed to stand up when the national hymn was being played. "Yesterday a young Dane remained sitting during the singing of the national hymn, for which reason the persons in the hall became greatly excited. 'Russian, stand up!' was shouted to him. In the same moment blows began to rain down upon him, so that, streaming with blood, he was carried out." (*Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*, August 4th.)

These are only a selection of many such incidents which show that the national brutishness was appearing through the veneer. In the light of such events where, on German soil, Germans murderously attacked their fellow-countrymen on such ridiculous pretexts,

it requires little imagination to explain the outburst of brutality against Belgians who dared to defend hearth and home.

Meanwhile the smaller party which desired peace had not been entirely idle. On July 28th the Social Democrats held thirty-two mass meetings in Berlin to protest against war. "The attendance was in every case enormous, but the meetings were all orderly and calm. The police had taken extensive precautionary measures. The speakers were mostly members of the Reichstag or the Berlin Town Council. Throughout they were guilty of the most fiery and tactless attacks on Austria, *to whom alone they ascribed the guilt for the warlike developments*. Each meeting adopted a resolution against war. The chief of police had forbidden all processions or demonstrations to take place after the day before. In spite of this, many of the Socialists who had attended these meetings tried to form processions, especially in Unter den Linden. As large bodies of troops had closed the streets, small parties of the Socialists managed to reach the Linden by means of trams and omnibuses. At about 10 p.m. hisses and cries of 'Down with the war party!' were heard before the Cafi Kranzler. In a moment the number of Democrats swelled to large proportions and the workmen's Marseillaise was struck up, followed by a short, sharp order. The mounted police advanced with drawn swords against the rioters; the air was filled with shouts and cries of *Pfui!* (Shame!). On the other side of the road the crowd sang the national hymn. The masses clashed together, and the police advanced again and again till the street was cleared. At the corner, however, the Socialists formed up again, and began to demonstrate anew, so that the police were compelled to attack them without any consideration in order to preserve the peace. They cleared the pavements and galloped up the promenade. Again the cry echoed 'Down with war!' and as answer came 'die Wacht am Rhein.' But it was some considerable time before the struggle ceased to surge to and fro." (*München-Augsburger Abendzeitung*, July 29th.)

Thus the great Socialist-International-Pacifist movement, with four and a quarter million German voters behind it, fizzled out on the pavements of Unter den Linden. Probably there were demonstrations in other parts of Germany, but this much is certain, that the members of Catholic and Protestant *Arbeiterverbände* (Workmen's Societies) held meetings and demonstrated in favour of war.

On the other hand the Women's Union of the German Peace Society in Stuttgart sent a telegram to the Kaiser, begging him in the name of "millions of German mothers" to preserve the peace.

The most interesting protest against the war movement is undoubtedly the following: "This, then, is the cultural height to which we have attained. Hundreds of thousands of the healthiest, finest, most valuable forces in the nation are trembling from anxiety that chance, or a nod of Europe's rulers, malevolence, or a fit of Sadism, a Caesar-madness or a business speculation, an empty word or a vague conception of honour, will drive them to-morrow out of their homes, from wife and child, from all that which they treasure and have built up with so much pain and trouble—into death. The mad coincidence may arise to-day, may call them to-morrow, or at any minute, and all, all of them will go—obeying damnable necessity, but still obeying. At first they will whine on seeing their bit of earthly happiness snatched away, but soon, however—although their consciences may not be quite clean—they will be possessed by the general frenzy to murder and be murdered." Franz Pfemfert in *die Aktion*.

Although this article appeared on August 1st, it had evidently been written before the proclamation of martial law. It was one of the last political articles which the paper published, for the next number but one contains the announcement that "the *Aktion* will in future only publish articles on art and literature." The reasons are not far to seek.

In justice to the pacifist elements it must be stated that they were up against bayonets. The only pity is that British public opinion, or any section of it, had been led to believe that it could ever have been otherwise. Austria had committed an unpardonable act of provocation, which at first reasonable opinion in Germany openly condemned. Simultaneously the German Government set in motion an avalanche of racial feeling to play off against the just and moderate measures taken by other powers to checkmate Austrian aggression. In addition to the racial hostility, which had been lashed into bitterness during the spring of 1914, came Germany's morbid conception of national and personal honour. Lastly the fear of a Russian invasion was astutely inoculated into the nation.

It is the author's firm conviction, and the military events in Poland and Galicia have only strengthened this opinion, that from the very beginning Germany could have prevented any Russian invasion of her territory, but she did not desire that end, but rather that the fear of Russia should complete the "Kriegsrausch" of the German nation. After frightening the people the Berlin Government struck its blow in the direction of their political ambitions—to the West, and after the Russians had been allowed to penetrate German territories they were hurled over the Eastern frontiers at the end of August. While the Kaiser was sending peaceful telegrams to Petrograd and Vienna, the Press was full of horrible pictures of Cossack barbarism and the dread terrors of the Russian knout, both of which—the public was led to believe—were about to strike Germany.

In this manner the Kaiser and his advisers created a national psychology which left open only two alternatives: the absolute humiliation of Russia and the consequent hegemony of Germany in Europe—or war.

CHAPTER II

ON THE LEASH

Russia gave the world to understand by an official declaration, issued on Friday, July 24th, 1914, that she was not an indifferent, but a keenly interested spectator to the Austro-Serbian conflict. On the following day Russia's declaration was published in almost the entire German Press, and from that moment the same Press was flooded with all kinds of attacks directed against the Eastern neighbour. Russia was frankly told to mind her own business – the quarrel did not concern her.

The German public immediately accepted this point of view, so that every subsequent move on Russia's part appeared in the light of an unwarrantable offensive. Undoubtedly the Bismarckian tactics of publishing inspired articles in all parts of Germany were employed, and their colouring left no doubt on the public mind that the much-talked-of Slavonic danger had assumed an acute form.

A request on Russia's part, made on July 25th, that the space of time (forty-eight hours) allowed to Serbia for an answer should be extended, only increased popular irritation in the Germanic Empires. This irritation was accompanied by an unmistakable bellicose spirit which called forth its natural counterpart in Petrograd.

Nevertheless the fact remains that up till July 25th Russia had only asked for time, and the reply given by the Berlin mob (?) during the following night, was echoed throughout Germany. The view that Russia had no right to interest herself on behalf of Serbia (passing over Russia's right to preserve the newly-established balance of power in the Balkans) is untenable. If Canada had a quarrel – just or unjust – with the United States, it would be ridiculous to assert that England had no right to intervene.

This was, however, not the first occasion on which Germany had advanced so preposterous a claim. During the tariff conflict between Germany and Canada some years ago, a wave of indignant anger went over the whole Fatherland, because England ventured to interfere.

In any case, during the last week before war broke out, the German Government succeeded in imposing upon public opinion the feeling that the quarrel was a racial one; together with the conviction that Russia was interfering in order to protect a band of murderers from just punishment, and had neither rights nor interests at stake in the quarrel. This conspiracy succeeded, but the whole German nation must still be held responsible for the outbreak of war, because, as has been shown in the preceding chapter, the nation had already been warned by newspapers of various political parties. They had been plainly told that Austria had exceeded the limits of all diplomatic dealings between two sovereign States, and that Austria's provocation could easily kindle a world war.

Warnings and truths were alike forgotten, and the voices which uttered them were now raising another hue and cry.[1] Racial hatred was ablaze; the warlike instincts of a military people were calling for action, and a diseased conception of national honour was asking why Berlin did not act against the Russian barbarians. In one paper the author remembers reading a violent demand for action against Russia before the national ardour had time to cool down.

[Footnote 1: The last mention of Austria as the guilty party is the account of the Social Democratic demonstrations in Berlin on July 28th; reported in the papers of the following day.]

On July 26th Austrian mobilization was in full swing, and Russia admittedly took precautions of a similar nature soon after that date. We may be sure that Russia understands her neighbours better than the inhabitants of the British Isles understand them. In 1909 she had suffered a severe diplomatic defeat and corresponding loss of prestige, because she could only use words in dealing with Germany and Austria.[2] Now she was faced with the alternative of withdrawing from her declared attitude (July 24th) or taking measures of a military character. In order not to sacrifice her position as a European power and her special position as the leader of the Slavonic peoples, Russia chose the latter course, the only honourable one open to her. German papers and public speakers retorted that Russia is the patron and protector of assassins—a calculated distortion of the facts intended to have due effect on public opinion. On all sides it was said that Russia had given Serbia secret assurances