THE COMING OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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THE COMING OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

A Study in the European Balance
1878—1914

by

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To

PHILIP, DAPHNE and MARTIN

"And the way of peace have they not known."
—Psalm xiv.

"O whither, ere it be fulfilled,
Ere its fierce blast be hushed and stilled,
Shall blow the wind of doom?"
AESCHYLUS: *The Libation Bearers.*
(Trans. E. D. A. Morshead.)

FOREWORD

THE period 1878–1914 is one of the great seminal periods in European history. In the events and in the dominant political thought of those momentous years are to be found the origins of two World Wars and of the *malaise* which afflicts society to-day. It is a period of which our knowledge is great, but our understanding by comparison slight. It is a period, like that of the Wars of Religion or of the French Revolution, which each succeeding generation will interpret in the light of its own experience; and none with a more poignant interest or a greater sense of urgency than that which has witnessed two World Wars. This work is essentially such a work of reinterpretation; a review of what seems to be of lasting significance to one who writes under the shadow of the War of 1939–45 and its protracted aftermath. To-day the events of the critical years that lay between the Congress of Berlin and the assassination at Sarajevo are seen through different eyes from those of the historians of the inter-war years, and never has it been of greater importance that their lessons should be rightly understood. To the student of contemporary international relations there is no more enlightening nor fruitful field for study.

It has become a commonplace to describe the period before the First World War as an age of power politics, and to think of it as the time when Europe lapsed into a state of international anarchy. Despite an air of finality these generalizations do not in fact explain very much. In what fundamental sense were international relations transformed after 1870 or 1878? Were they not always determined largely by considerations of power? At what moment was the sense of community between the

nation states of Europe finally submerged leaving the destiny of a continent thenceforward to be decided by the competing interests of acquisitive states and of conflicting national forces, recognizing no moral restraint and no binding law?

No sensible person believes it to be possible to give precise and final answers to such questions. It blew hard, observed George Meredith, when Caesar crossed the Rubicon but the passage of that river is commonly calm. Perhaps that is why the statesmen of Europe, unlike Caesar, were not even aware that they had crossed it. They were not conscious that any decisive or fatal steps had been taken which dissolved what remained of a sense of European community and led directly to war on a scale hitherto unknown. But it is that which makes it all the more important that we should not be satisfied to dismiss the critical years in which Europe crossed the Rubicon with generalizations however apposite or a condemnation however well merited, but should examine in the light of the tragic aftermath when and why the first and the succeeding steps were taken. For it is on the same road that Europe is still travelling.

This book is not a history of Europe from 1878–1914. It is rather an historical commentary on the events which led from the predominance of Germany in Europe, to the formation of two rival systems of alliances which divided the Continent between them and finally to the outbreak of a war in which all the great and many of the small powers in Europe were involved. The book is concerned principally with the relations between the Great Powers for in international as in national affairs power means responsibility. But even in that field it is selective. No one can be more conscious than the author of the many memorable events not mentioned in these pages which rightly find a place in any history of Europe. But it is only by ruthless selection from a vast mass of material that it seems possible to throw into relief the successive and decisive phases in the relations between the Great Powers and the parallel change that was taking place in the whole concept of international relations. "Never pursue the curious" was the advice once given by Gibbon to a young his-

torian; and deep and lasting though our debt must always be to the distinguished scholars who have specialized in this period, the time has perhaps come when profiting from the knowledge they have garnered its history may usefully be reviewed in less specialized studies and in bolder outline.

Of all the great watersheds in history none is more fully documented than that which ushered in the struggle for power between the nation states of Europe. Grateful though the historian of this period must always be for the wealth of evidence at his disposal, the light which it sheds equally upon great things and small, upon decisive issues and trivial diplomatic intrigue, has invited and even lured students further and further into the often fascinating by-ways of diplomatic history. To stray along them is an agreeable pastime, even if not always of much profit. When all have been explored the student is left with the feeling that he knows and understands all that happened. He acquires something of that illusion of understanding which comes so restfully at times to the reader of the poems of Matthew Arnold, so that, if with Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch one may italicize where for once Arnold failed to do so:

> "And then he *thinks* he knows
> The Hills where his life rose,
> And the sea where it goes."

But, if like Arnold's poems the official documents tell a complete and satisfying story, like them too they do not tell the whole story. They lend at times a misleading air of reason to what was in fact wholly irrational: an impression of calculation where all in fact was decided by unforeseen contingencies. The ends which diplomacy seeks to attain are determined by more powerful, more incalculable motive forces. The records of diplomacy explain how crises between the Great Powers arose and how they were resolved; but only rarely the tensions which were their fundamental cause. Yet it is these fundamental forces that give meaning to the manœuvres of diplomatists and the policies of statesmen, and it is these that were responsible for two World Wars.

For the convenience of readers a short list of the more important published collections of official documents is placed in an appendix at the end of the book. Detailed references to other works are to be found in the footnotes which, it is hoped, will be more useful to students who wish to explore the background of any particular topic than a general bibliography. Here, however, I would like to acknowledge gratefully the debt, which, in common with all students of this period, I owe to Dr. G. P. Gooch's pioneer research whose fruits are to be found in many volumes; and to single out from among the many studies of the causes of the First World War, the detailed and masterly survey of Professor S. B. Fay, of Harvard University, whose two volumes on *The Origins of the World War* I found a most stimulating and reliable guide.

Dr. Gooch and Mr. R. B. McCallum, Fellow of Pembroke College, Oxford, have both read this book in proof and I am most grateful to them for their comments and suggestions. To Mr. G. H. Keeton my thanks are due for his help in removing inconsistencies and in preparing the book for publication. Nor should I fail to record here the constant and critical encouragement which I have received from my wife at every stage in its writing.

This book is based on the Lady Ardilaun Lectures delivered at Queen Alexandra College, Dublin, in November-December 1944. I am greatly indebted to the College and to the Trustees, for without the encouragement of their invitation this book would probably not have been written.

N. M.

Little Paddock
Oxted
April, 1947

CONTENTS

ILLUSTRATIONS

Chapter I

THE BACKGROUND TO POWER POLITICS IN EUROPE

IN 1878 there was no balance of power in Europe. The preponderance of Germany was decisive and it was reinforced by her understandings with Austria-Hungary and with Russia. In 1914, a balance of power existed once more, and the balance was so even that it took four years of bitter, protracted warfare to decide on which side the scales would come down. This is a remarkable development and it is all the more remarkable in that it was not the product of deliberate design or nicely calculated policy. None of the Great Powers in Europe had planned to create a balance of power. The aim and the ambition of each was to possess a preponderance of power sufficient to enable it, alone if possible, with the support of its allies if necessary, to secure success for its policy by diplomacy in the first instance, by force in the last resort.

From this generalization one Great Power, England, stands partly though not wholly excepted. Protected from invasion by a narrow sea she could afford to regard with some detachment the fears and rivalries which were the corroding heritage of past Continental conflicts; the heir to a great liberal tradition in foreign policy of which George Canning, a Tory, had been the most notable protagonist, she could look only with mistrust upon a Continent whose policies were dominated by the ambitions of three powerful autocracies; the heart of an Empire whose dominions were scattered far and wide in every continent and across the Seven Seas, she was conscious that a World Power could only at her peril commit all her resources to the demands of power politics in Europe. And yet with these reser-

vations which influenced profoundly her psychological as well as her practical approach to European problems England remained a European State. By tradition, by self-interest, even by instinct she was opposed to the domination of the Continent by a single Power. There lay the one threat to her continued greatness and even to her existence.

After 1870 the balance of power in Europe had broken down because there existed no Continental counterpoise to the military strength of the Central Powers. The counterpoise was to be created only by England's readiness in the last resort to participate in a war to restore the balance. Unlike the great military powers on the Continent of Europe she was not concerned to secure either for herself or for the power-group with which she was later in this period to be associated a preponderance of power in Europe; she was however prepared in the last analysis to challenge the predominance of the Central Powers when it seemed that in no other way could the independence of the several states of Europe be preserved. In their survival she was vitally concerned, for it was the condition of her own. And about her reaction there was nothing new, for Lord John Russell a generation earlier had said that the "Balance of Power in Europe means in effect the independence of its several states".

The classic definition of the phrase "Balance of Power", was that given by Lord Castlereagh, who described it as meaning "the maintenance of such a just equilibrium between the members of the family of nations as should prevent any one of them becoming sufficiently strong to impose its will upon the rest". It was the equilibrium of which he spoke that was destroyed on the Continent by the three short wars culminating in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1. The proved military strength of the German Empire meant that after 1870 the balance could be redressed only by throwing all the resources of the British Empire into the scales on the side of the Dual Alliance. There was no choice left because the margin in power between the Triple Alliance Powers on the one hand and the Dual Alliance Powers on the other had become too wide.

Between 1870 and 1904 England saw no need to restore a state of equilibrium in Europe. She seemed wholly indifferent to the concept of the Balance of Power. She pursued on the contrary an isolationist-opportunist policy which on the whole tended to accentuate the predominance of the Central Powers.[1] The logical justification for this departure from a prudent tradition was that the Central Powers did not, during those years, actively threaten the liberty or the independence of the smaller states. Consequently British statesmen felt no need to try to redress the balance, and they did not recognize that such a need had arisen until uncertainty about the underlying purpose of German policy had created a feeling of insecurity in almost every country in Europe. So it was that the various proposals for an Anglo-German Alliance made between 1899 and 1902—for an alliance, that is, between the greatest military and the greatest naval power in the world—were considered worthy of sympathetic consideration, because the absolute security which such an alliance might afford was reckoned a possible, and, by some, a desirable alternative both to isolation and to a balance of power; and it was only when the course of the negotiations between the two countries revealed the indefinable, ominous character of German ambitions that British statesmen became conscious of the potential menace to the liberties of Europe involved in the military predominance of the German Empire.

That is the logical interpretation of British policy in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, but it is doubtful if at the time reasoning of this kind played much part in its determination. For it was influenced at least in equal measure by the implicit belief, of which Canning had been the most gifted exponent, that a balance of power was in some indefinable sense a fundamental law governing international politics. It was not therefore something to be deliberately created but rather something that came into existence naturally and inevitably through the play of international forces. The threat of domination itself

[1] In the penetrating analysis of British Foreign Policy which Sir Eyre Crowe drafted in January 1906 he spoke of England's opposition to any Power aspiring

created its own counterpoise. In this light Sir Edward Grey's[1] assertion that he never used the phrase "Balance of Power" to describe the aim of his foreign policy may most usefully be considered, for otherwise it is somewhat disconcerting to find the principal architect of the pre-1914 Balance of Power so forward in disclaiming conscious purpose guiding his policy step by step to its predestined goal.

The phrase "Balance of Power" has many different meanings. When an Englishman speaks of the need to maintain a Balance of Power in Europe he means, not the maintenance of an exact scientific balance, but rather the perpetuation of a system in which the weight of England is sufficient to bring down the scales on whichever side it is thrown. In practice that has meant opposition to any Power or group of Powers seeking to dominate the Continent. Between 1727 and 1867 the phrase "the preservation of the Balance of Power in Europe" appeared more often than not in the preamble to the Mutiny Act as one of the principal purposes and justifications for the existence of a standing Army.[2] But if to Englishmen their traditional policy appeared to be a felicitous combination of enlightened self-interest and concern for the liberties of Europe, some Continental critics took a less kindly view of its consequences. "Sir Edward Grey", complained the Kaiser to Sir Edward Goschen in 1913, "is always harping on the Balance of Power. The real matter is that the Balance of Power was upset in Europe when you ranged

to dictatorship in Europe "as assuming almost the form of a law of nature". His memorandum is reprinted in Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, Vol. III, p. 402 *seq.*

[1] Sir E. Grey: *Twenty-five Years*, London 1928, 3 vols, Vol. I, pp. 48–9.

[2] The words disappeared from the Mutiny Act in 1868 but Mr. R. B. McCallum has suggested to me that this was almost certainly not the result of an accident. A Cabinet presided over by Gladstone and including Bright would naturally want to get away from the term; it would not be so much the word "balance" as "power" that would offend. Grey's avoidance of the phrase was very probably under compulsion from pacifist, radical sentiment. Isolationism in England, especially as conceived by the Cobden Club, was a powerful deterrent to Liberal Governments against entering into Continental commitments.

yourselves on the side of France and Russia. It was due to my poor Uncle [King Edward VII], who in a misguided moment was persuaded at Reval to sign the agreement. . . . If England had stayed out the Balance of Power would have been preserved, her joining has upset it."[1] In the following year Sasonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, expressed a precisely opposite view. The Triple Entente of England, France and Russia, "void of all aggressiveness . . . supports the necessary Balance of Power in Europe. . . ."[2] In Vienna it was held to be Count Aerenthal's view[3] that the peace of Europe was more likely to be maintained by the creation of a Balance of Power between the well-armed states of Europe "than by the creation of a confederation of peace made up of disarmed and weakened unities. . . ." For Austria, equilibrium in power was the best state of things that could exist. And it was recognized with satisfaction by Aerenthal's successor as Foreign Minister, Count Berchtold, that "England was more sensitive than any other Power to the slightest displacement of the Balance of Power in Europe".[4] On the whole, therefore, European opinion believed that an equilibrium in power was the most practical means by which peace might be preserved, though inevitably each country desired that the balance should not be exact, but should incline favourably to itself. The Kaiser was clearly thinking of something even more —of that decisive preponderance in German power which disappeared with the emergence of the Triple Entente. There are indeed few phrases which can be so widely and loosely interpreted as the "Balance of Power".

When Castlereagh spoke of the "Balance of Power", the age of the Industrial Revolution was in its infancy. Distance and slowness of transport still imposed restrictions on policy which can scarcely be realized to-day. But by the turn of the century it had become only too apparent that all the ingenuity of inventor and scientist was to be employed in devising weapons of war which would not only bring terrible destruction, but also by

[1] Gooch and Temperley. Vol. X, Part II, p. 701.
[2] Ibid., p. 795.
[3] Ibid., Vol. IX, Part I, p. 173.
[4] Ibid., Vol. X, Part I, p. 91.

transforming the nature of war invalidate many traditional conceptions of national and international policy. It was the technical advances which made possible the development of the submarine and the construction of the dreadnoughts, on which building was begun in England in 1905, that made the challenge of Germany a direct threat to the security of this country. It was Germany's creation of a powerful, modern High Seas fleet that finally outdated the complacent, insular conception of a natural equilibrium of power on the Continent, with this country standing in a secure balancing position outside it.

By the turn of the century the conditions on which a policy of isolation rested were fast disappearing and the Japanese Alliance of 1902, followed by the Anglo-French Entente of 1904, indicated the political recognition of a fact which was far from welcome. By the close of the first decade of the twentieth century it had become an anachronism to speak and to think of Britain as being outside the European political system, though indeed many both spoke and thought in these terms till 1939.

The creation of a Balance of Power in Europe was not a cause of the First World War; it was a symptom of the underlying sense of insecurity which brought it about. It was the outcome of that tension which led in time to the formation of the two systems of alliances, almost equal in strength, which were destined in the last years of peace to divide virtually the whole of the European Continent between them. In analysing the causes and in recording the decisive stages in the growth of this self-destroying offspring of a new concept of power and of its use in the conduct of international relations, it is neither possible nor desirable to lose sight of the tragic sequel. Responsibility must be fixed on those on whom responsibility rightly rests. It is a commonplace still, particularly among the peoples of those smaller states of Europe to whom geography has permitted the luxury of some degree of detachment, to regard the game of power politics with infinite distaste and to condemn indiscriminately the Great Powers who played a part in it as being all equally guilty of its consequences. Such an attitude, understandable though it

may be, is a counsel of despair, and it seems alike wiser and more profitable to subscribe to Lord Acton's firm conviction that in no circumstances should the moral judgment of the historian be abandoned. And the exercise of judgment demands discrimination, not the wholesale condemnation of the old order so popular in 1919.

There is no lack of material available for forming a judgment about the history of the years under review. It is, in fact, more complete than that for any comparable period in history. This is so mainly because of the publication of the official documents and correspondence of all but one of the States most nearly concerned during and after the First World War. In 1917 Chicherin, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, caused the Allied Powers no little embarrassment, by publishing the secret treaties which they had made with Tsarist Russia which revealed that the powers fighting "for peace without annexations" had in fact bribed their Russian, Roumanian and Italian allies with the prospect of substantial territorial acquisitions. After the war the archives at Vienna were opened by a Socialist government anxious to indict its imperial predecessors, and the precedent thus set was followed by the publication of the German, British and French documents in greater or less degree of fullness. The one notable omission is that the Italian archives have not been opened to reveal to the world the shameless shifts and subterfuges of Italian policy. The more important compilations of official documents are for convenience listed at the end of this book. Of outstanding interest are the eleven volumes of British documents, admirably edited by Gooch and Temperley,[1] and the German documents *Die Grosse Politik*,[2] whose fifty-three volumes are a tribute to German industry and German zeal for documentation alike.

[1] *British Documents on the Origin of the War* (1898–1914), 11 vols., London, 1926–36.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette* (1871–1914), Berlin 1921–7.

A selection of these German documents has been translated into English by E. T. S. Dugdale and published in four volumes, the first of which appeared in 1928. To these translations frequent references are made in the following pages.

The official documents available for study by the historian are supplemented by memoirs and biographies of great, though not equal, historical value. Many of them, such as Sir Edward Grey's *Twenty-Five Years*, M. Raymond Poincaré's and Prince von Bülow's *Memoirs*, are well known, but not all are wholly reliable. The total mass of evidence is truly formidable. But so great a mass of material is not always an unmixed asset since it is possible to extract from it conflicting evidence even about incidents in themselves comparatively trivial, with the result that in disputes over minor issues the wood may well be lost for the trees. Moreover, the State papers require to be read with care. Bismarck observed that official records are of little value since the reader so rarely knows and can so rarely rightly surmise what was in the mind of the author. That is a warning not to be under-estimated even if it need not be taken at its face value. What is certainly true is that there are many nice inflexions of meaning in most departmental records and some familiarity with departmental practices and conventions is a help in assessing their relative significance.

The most lasting impression left by the mass of documentary evidence is one of the extraordinary variety and complexity of the issues at stake. These documents make it clear beyond all shadow of doubt that the First World War had no simple and no single cause. Like that rope, symbolizing Eternity, which is carved in stone in King Cormac's Chapel on the Rock of Cashel, the strands are interwoven in a seemingly simple design and it is only after a time that one understands that the rope is without beginning and without end. At a first glance the history of the years before the First World War have something of this misleading simplicity, and it is only on looking closer that one is fully aware of the intricacy of a pattern which renders the more unreal the period within which a historian must confine himself by giving to it a beginning and an ending which are arbitrary and artificial.

So many and so complex are the causes which led to war that it may be helpful to approach their study by deliberately dis-

carding some of the prejudices and partial views which enjoyed so much popularity in the inter-war years, either because they were simple and therefore conveniently disposed of the need for further analysis of the historical evidence or because they fitted nicely into the pattern of contemporary thought about international affairs. But before turning to these particular theories, most of which had this in common—that they presented some particle of the truth as the whole truth—it is necessary to say something of the political and economic interpretation of history all too often placed in a false antithesis. Here the historical evidence justifies one generalization about the period 1870–1914. By far the greater number of disputes which led either to war or to the crises which heralded the coming of war were political. This creates a presupposition in favour of a predominantly political interpretation of the history of these years. It is reinforced negatively by Professor Fay's considered verdict[1] that in pre-war years, economic disputes were on the whole comparatively easily settled. As he rightly observes, economic imperialism is usually exaggerated as one of the underlying causes of the War. As to its immediate cause, that clearly was essentially political. Bismarck had long foreseen war would come from South-Eastern Europe, and it came from there because the retreat of the Turkish Empire from Europe and the approaching disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy presented a series of political problems insoluble without war. The possibility of localizing that inevitable conflict was destroyed by two important political facts; by German dependence on Austria-Hungary for the maintenance of her position in Europe, and on the other, and to a lesser extent, by French dependence on Russia in the event of a war with Germany. But if the tensions in the East and in the West which led to war were primarily political in character, that is not to say that economic competition played no part in bringing about the conflict. On the contrary, its contribution was very considerable even if supplementary.

So many have been the partial explanations and the precon-

[1] *The Origins of the World War*, New York, 1936, Vol. I, p. 46.

ceived theories, which explain one aspect of the causes of the First World War, at the expense of leaving the vast mass of evidence on one side, that it is not possible to consider them all separately here. But of three something needs to be said because their influence is still widespread. It was fashionable at one time to describe the war of 1914–18 as a capitalists' war; at another to say that it was a war brought about by the armaments race; and at yet another that it was a war caused by the evil machinations of secret diplomacy. All these explanations, it will be noted, have some particle of truth in them, but neither individually nor collectively are they sufficient to explain what happened. They are all alike symptoms of a disease; they are not its cause. Of the first, the theory of a capitalists' war, it is not necessary to say much now. It was not a capitalists' war because, apart from anything else, it was not in the interests of capitalists to have a war. "Those who ascribe the alienation of Britain and Germany to trade jealousy", observes Professor Seton-Watson, "are talking the crudest of nonsense, for their beneficial trade was immensely and increasingly profitable."[1] Even though Britain might not like it, "it was not Germany's competition in the World market," observed Count Metternich, German Ambassador to the Court of St. James's in 1909,[2] "which had produced deep dislike, but simply German naval policy". As a class the capitalists could only lose by the abrupt end of normal trading conditions; as a privileged section of each national community their very existence was imperilled by the forces which the upheaval of war would inevitably strengthen. The capitalists would have been blind indeed had they not foreseen the risks which threatened the order of society from which they profited.[3] But they were not blind, and the efforts of Sir Ernest Cassel and M. Albert Ballin to end Anglo-German naval rivalry in 1912 are some evidence of the fears which the capitalist world so rightly entertained. Moreover, though analogies between the causes of the First and of the

[1] *Britain in Europe* 1789–1914, Cambridge London 1937, p. 596.
[1] *Die Grosse Politik:* XXVIII, 168; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 353.
[3] Cf. J. A. Spender: *Men and Things*, London 1937, Part II, Chapter II.

Second World Wars are for the most part to be viewed with some reserve it is significant how few outside the ranks of the Marxist dialecticians believe, or even suggest, that the capitalists were responsible for the later world conflagration.

Of the second once-popular theory it may be said that while an armaments race is virtually bound to end in war, it is quite untrue to deduce from this that an armaments race has caused the war. Armaments are sometimes built up by an aggressor in order to carry out his evil designs, but far more often they are accumulated as a means of defence by a Power which believes itself to be threatened. They are evidence of a feeling of insecurity, and that feeling permeated the whole period from the Congress of Berlin to the assassination at Sarajevo.

There is little doubt that the feeling of insecurity was accentuated by the growth of State Socialism, because it was rightly realized that the war-potential of a State is not to be measured by its armaments alone. "We are all Socialists nowadays," said Sir William Harcourt. "The most notable feature of present-day Europe", said Lord Salisbury, "is that the Great Powers are becoming greater, the small Powers becoming weaker." Lord Salisbury's remark was true because Harcourt's was true. The more the State organized the life of its citizens, the further it extended its control over industry, the greater both actually and comparatively became the potential war strength of a highly industrialized community. In the advanced industrial nations this process has been continued undiminished to the present day, with the result that even States of medium size and population have now no chance of withstanding a war machine based on industrial power. With the coming of total war, there are only great States and small, and the great, providing only that they have industrial resources equal to the strain, are daily becoming greater.

The period which we are considering ushered in the age of totalitarian warfare, but the successive stages in its development should not be ante-dated. In the great States of Western Europe the armaments race, if it may be judged by budgetary expendi-

ture on armaments and armed forces, was not so rapid as is sometimes supposed, but what was so remarkable was the expansion of civil, administrative and social services which at least kept pace with and sometimes outstripped the growth in armaments. This expansion in the machinery of civil government was in terms of war potential, almost as significant as the actual growth in armaments because in a prolonged war the more efficient and well organized the machinery of civil administration the more easily could it be switched over to serve the warlike purposes. Just because success in war now depends upon effective mobilization of human and material resources, the increased authority of the national State over its citizens in peacetime is an indication of its potential preparedness for war. Between 1878 and 1914 the expansion of State control stood out in ever more dangerous contrast to the continued anarchy, to the continued lack of control in the relations between sovereign States. But in itself it was not a cause of war; it was rather an indication that when war came the destruction it would bring would be increasingly terrible, and for this reason the great armaments controlled by highly organized modern States constituted in themselves a deterrent against, not an inducement to an appeal to the dread arbitrament of force—provided no one Power enjoyed a clear superiority.

The third theory to which reference has been made has more substance. In one form it enjoys the distinguished support of Professor Fay, who states categorically[1] that "the greatest single underlying cause of the war was the system of secret alliances which developed after the Franco-Prussian War". This verdict has behind it not only the historian's judgment, but also the opinion of statesmen. President Wilson, by making "open covenants of peace, openly arrived at" the first of his Fourteen Points, by implication attached a very high degree of responsibility to the system of secret diplomacy and still more to the system of secret alliances which were its most noteworthy or notorious product. Much, of course, depends on the emphasis which one places respectively on adjective and noun; in other

[1] Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 34.

words, whether one attributes responsibility to the fact that Europe was divided into alliances or that the alliances were secret. In the light of later experience the element of secrecy now appears to be of far less importance than once it did. The secrecy of alliances was not, in fact, a major cause of the First World War, and it would be viewed in truer perspective were one to consider it as a well-understood convention for the conduct of international relations which served only too well the ends of power politics. To attribute to the element of secrecy some degree of ultimate responsibility for war is to attach to it a greater significance than it deserves. Moreover, the evidence is not all one way. It is possible that had the precise nature of the Triple Alliance been announced on the morrow of its signature tension would have been relaxed since the French Government would have known that the alliance did not contain any aggressive clauses directed against France. On the other hand, had the provisions of the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894 been made public, particularly those provisions which indicated the exact military contribution to come from each of the signatories in the event of their being attacked by the Central Powers the relations between the Powers would almost certainly have deteriorated. The publication of the Treaty could hardly have had any other result than to accentuate the race in armaments. These are two examples, but their conflicting evidence could easily be paralleled by scores of less notable examples. A clear-cut conclusion about the consequences of secrecy in diplomacy as a cause of war is therefore to be treated with caution, and it is not easy to better Mr. Winston Churchill's[1] verdict: "When one looks at the petty subjects which have led to war between great countries and to so many disputes, it is easy to be misled by the idea that wars arise out of the machinations of secret diplomacy. But, of course, such matters are only the symptoms of a dangerous disease, and are only important for that reason. Behind them lie the interests, the passions and the destiny of mighty races of men, and long antagonisms express themselves in trifles. Great

[1] *The World Crisis*, London 1923, Vol. I, p. 55.

commotions, it was said of old, arise out of small things, but not concerning small things. The old diplomacy did its best to render harmless the small things; it could do no more."

The conduct of the old diplomacy demanded a very high degree of skill and expertise, and no doubt this is one of the reasons why it came to be so much mistrusted. It was an art whose secrets were confined to the very few. It is significant indeed that most of the Continental statesmen who played a decisive role in this period had received their training in diplomacy rather than in statesmanship. Von Bülow, before he became Foreign Secretary, had served five years at the German Embassy in Paris, four years at St. Petersburg, three years at Bucharest and three years at Rome; Von Aerenthal, before he succeeded to the Foreign Office at Vienna, had represented the Dual Monarchy at Paris, St. Petersburg, Bucharest, and again at St. Petersburg. His rival, Alexander Isvolski, had seen service in Turkey, Bulgaria, Roumania, the United States, Tokyo, Belgrade, the Vatican and Copenhagen before he became Russian Foreign Minister. This background of diplomatic tradition, common to European statesmen, was unknown for the most part to those who were responsible for the conduct of foreign affairs in democratic countries. In some respects it placed them at a serious disadvantage. In others, and in more important ways, it enabled them to take a wider view and to relate the issues of the day to the broad background of foreign policy and international relations. Diplomacy was in fact hardly an ideal training for statesmanship, and the most talented diplomatist of these years, M. Paul Cambon, was also the most conscious of the diplomatist's limitations in the wider field of statesmanship. There is a letter from M. Cambon to M. Hanotaux when the latter was at the Quai d'Orsay, commenting on the personality of Prince Lobanoff, who was Russian Foreign Minister in 1895–6. "I shall write you an official despatch when I have time", wrote M. Cambon,[1] "because it is important to portray exactly the figure

[1] Paul Cambon: *Correspondance* 1870–1914, 3 vols., Paris 1940, Vol. I, pp. 415–16.

of Lobanoff who has very wrongly gained the reputation of a statesman. He is nothing more than a diplomatist, that is to say a man clever enough to get out of an awkward situation, but without foresight, generosity or circumspection. . . ." This is a harsh verdict on diplomatists, thrust into positions demanding statesmanship, but it could be applied with justice to many who played a more decisive rôle in international affairs than Lobanoff.

It was the task of these men, trained in an old diplomatic tradition which in greater or lesser degree narrowed their vision, to guide Europe in that new phase of international relations brought into being by the rise of the German Empire. Their despatches show that they had almost without exception no interest in economic or social conditions and no sympathetic understanding of the aspirations of ordinary men and women towards a more just and equitable ordering of society. Perhaps partly because of this restricted field of interest the diplomatists of the old school observed and interpreted events with a perspicacity that commands profound respect. All their intellectual faculties were absorbed in the fascinating game of power politics. Every move was scrutinized with an intense and anxious gaze; every shift in the balance of forces was analysed and, if possible, countered; every statement or comment examined in all its possible implications. All-pervasive was the atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust, for all in greater or lesser degree viewed one another as rivals or potential rivals in a struggle for power which by its very nature could have no foreseeable end. If there was inevitably much that was barren and negative, passivity was not one of the failings of the old diplomacy, however much some of its most gifted exponents may have wished to conceal their tireless energies behind a façade of indolent inertia. For the most part the published documents of the Great Powers are a lasting monument to ceaseless exertion in a doubtful cause. Of none may this be said more truly than of the German State papers. There is revealed the undisguised pursuit of power stimulated by an industrious, purposeful, often exuberant diplomacy sometimes led into reckless manœuvres or spectacular and imprudent

gestures as much by an apparently insatiable urge for action as for any carefully considered end. The virtues traditionally associated with the German character, almost as much as its vices, drove it forward along the path that led to war. But for all the heritage was an uneasy one well calculated to strain to breaking point the resources of diplomacy. The relations between the Great Powers in this new and more assertive phase of nationalism were not static, for none of them were entirely satisfied with the *status quo*, and yet all lived in perpetual dread that any change might operate to their disadvantage or even to their peril. Recurrent wars were regarded as inevitable since in the last resort it was assumed that every issue must be decided by force either potential or actual. But if war was considered the legitimate instrument of policy, it was an adventure not to be lightly undertaken. Pre-war statesmen were for the most part reluctant to lead their countries into war; what they aimed at was to achieve their objectives by finesse or failing that by the threat of force. This was the dominant fact that made the period from 1878–1914 a period of armed peace. Since diplomatic success could not be achieved unless backed by that final sanction, each of the great nations, with interests to guard and prestige to maintain, poured forth the wealth of its people to build up armaments, and to organize for war. It was the business of diplomacy to create a situation in which victory seemed assured, and since no one nation, with the possible exception of Germany, was strong enough to withstand a hostile combination of the great European Powers, each was feverishly employed in building up not a balance of power but a predominance for one group.[1]

This game of power politics demanded by its very nature that the nations should pursue objectives whose value was negligible in comparison with the risks involved simply because inaction might be interpreted as weakness, weakness in turn might involve loss of allies and might indeed lead to that dread fate of

[1] Cf. Sir A. Salter, London, 1937: Intro. to *The International Anarchy*, by G. Lowes Dickinson, p.v.

isolation, from which France, an outcast among the nations, suffered from 1871 to 1894. There is one respect however in which the statesmen of pre-war Europe who played this game of power politics have been unfairly judged. It is true that they played the game without scruple, but it is idle to blame them for this or that act of duplicity except in relation to the then accepted standard of international conduct. War remained a recognized instrument of national policy largely or at least partly because its terrible dangers under modern conditions were but dimly understood. Unlike the statesmen of to-day, the statesmen of the old Europe had no conception of the suffering entailed by war under modern conditions. Their experience was of localized war, of the Prusso-Austrian War of 1866 which lasted six weeks, of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 which lasted less than a year, and it is only just to remember that what was envisaged right up to 1914 was not a World War lasting four years, but a quick "knock-out" blow. It was not realized that every crisis, with its latent threat to one or another of the Great Powers, had so strengthened the ties within each rival group that diplomacy at the last had achieved so even a balance of power that only a long war of endurance entailing suffering unparalleled in history could decide the issue. That was the great miscalculation of the pre-war world.

CHAPTER II

THE PREDOMINANCE OF GERMANY (1878–1894)

THE Europe of 1878 was very different from the Europe of to-day. Five countries—Germany, France, Austria-Hungary, Russia and Great Britain—dominated the Continent, and indeed the greater part of the world. Italy, united only since 1870, was not quite a Great Power and throughout the period she was concerned to compensate for her comparative lack of power by diplomatic finesse. In Western Europe Germany's strength was reinforced by the possession of the mineral wealth of Alsace-Lorraine; in Eastern Europe there was no *cordon sanitaire* of smaller States of the kind that existed between 1919 and 1939, and which was designed to act as a buffer between the Great Powers on the international frontier of the East. Outside Europe, the domination of the Big Five was challenged only by the United States of America and the sudden, ominous rise of Japan in the Far East. Asia, slowly awakening from the quiescence of centuries, was subject to their influence; Africa was on the eve of partition among them. The menace to their security and to their greatness came therefore not from without but from within; from the rivalries between them.

The fact that there were five Great Powers in Europe dictated the pattern of European diplomacy. As Bismarck said to Sabouroff, the Russian Ambassador: "You forget the importance of being a party of three on the European chess-board. That is the object of all the Cabinets, and above all of mine. Nobody wishes to be in a minority. All politics reduce themselves to this formula: try to be *à trois* in a world governed by Five Powers." The history of the years that elapsed between the Congress of Berlin and the Franco-Russian Alliance is the history of Bis-

marck's endeavours to place Germany in the happy position of being *à trois* in a world controlled by five Great Powers.

From the Franco-Prussian War Germany had inherited one lasting liability—the unalterable hostility of France. Decisively crushed in 1870–1, France had none the less neither forgotten nor forgiven the humiliations heaped upon her in the hour of defeat and the German seizure of Alsace-Lorraine. To approaches from Germany for friendlier relations, to endeavours to distract her interest or her attention from the lost provinces, she remained almost wholly impervious. Whatever the changes, and they were many, in the internal political scene, France as a nation remained proudly irreconcilable and any suggestion from Germany that even implicitly she should recognize either the justice or the finality of the cession of the lost provinces in return for compensation in Africa was treated with cold disdain. General Boulanger was for once wholly representative of French opinion when he said: "We remember that they are waiting for us in Alsace-Lorraine." And in the Place de la Concorde the statues of Strasbourg and Metz remained veiled in black to remind Parisians of injustice and humiliation alike. It was only in retrospect that it was seen that Germany in 1871 had committed a political blunder of the magnitude that brings about an empire's downfall, though it is fair to record that Bismarck realized something of the risks involved. Against his own better judgment he had allowed himself to be overruled by the ambitions of the German militarists, particularly of Von Moltke whose arguments for a defensive Western frontier cloaked more far-reaching aims. Responsibility, however, must rest with the Chancellor, for at that time his influence with the Emperor and in Germany was supreme, and it is his reputation as a statesman that is tarnished by what was certainly one of the major psychological mistakes of modern times.

The Aftermath of Berlin

In 1878 when the Congress of Berlin assembled the shadow of retribution lay very lightly across the scene. Nothing indeed was

more significant about the Congress than the fact that it met in Berlin. This was the outward and visible sign that for the first time since the reign of the Emperor Charles V the predominant Power in Europe was Germany. As always, power and prestige carried with them heavy responsibilities and the fact that the Congress of Berlin broke up leaving so many of those who had taken part in it dissatisfied reacted not altogether favourably on Germany's newly acquired position in Europe. It was because of a sense of *malaise* that after the deliberations of the Congress were concluded German diplomacy exploited every device to consolidate the predominant position she had so lately won and which she no longer felt to be wholly impregnable.

The background to the Congress of Berlin is to be found in the Near East. In 1875 there was a rising in the Turkish provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Isolated from the main Balkan trade routes, these two provinces which by a matter of curious coincidence were destined three times to play a decisive rôle in the history of Europe in the succeeding forty years, were ruled by Moslem feudal chieftains but deeply divided in religion between Orthodox, Catholic and Moslem. The aim of the insurgents was union with Serbia and Montenegro and the Serbs according to the contemporary report of a Hungarian diplomatic agent in Belgrade already saw "in Bosnia the natural complement of their territory", and "count one day on possessing it".[1] After events were to reveal the full significance of Serbian aspirations for the two provinces, but at the time the Powers, other than Austria-Hungary, displayed little interest; and Lord Derby, speaking to the Russian Ambassador, dismissed the agitation in Serbia and Montenegro—"*petit peuple à demi barbare*"—as artificial.[2] But as so often happened when the perennial Eastern Question erupted from below its smouldering surface, events of great magnitude soon followed and all the Great Powers were in greater or less degree involved.

In the summer of 1875 Montenegro and Serbia declared war

[1] Quoted in R. W. Seton Watson: *Britain in Europe* 1789–1914, p. 512.
[2] Ibid., p. 513.

on Turkey. Russia and Austria, as the Great Powers most nearly concerned, concluded the Reichstadt agreement by which it was arranged that from almost any conceivable eventuality both Powers should profit in the Balkans. There was however then, as later, a dualism in Russian policy. On the one hand there was the official St. Petersburg policy of understanding with Austria to advance by agreement in the Balkans; on the other there was a powerful Pan-Slav sentiment deriving its strength from Orthodox mysticism whose centre was in Moscow, and which had only contempt for the "rotten West".[1] In the early days of the crisis the Pan-Slavs incited the Balkan people to rise against Turkey; and then when the Serbs were defeated they urged the Tsar to intervene to settle the Eastern Question once for all in the interest of Russia.

In 1877 Russia declared war on Turkey. Sentiment and calculation combined to recommend intervention. Under the Treaty of Paris, 1856, which ended the Crimean War, Russia had been compelled to agree to the neutralization of the Black Sea and the cession of Southern Bessarabia. These "two nightmares", of the Tsar Alexander II, provided an ever present inducement to Russia to escape, by consent if possible, by unilateral action if necessary, from the humiliating conditions imposed upon her at the nadir of her fortunes. The impossibility of maintaining a veto on a Russian Fleet in the Black Sea indefinitely was evident, and Prince Gorchakov, Russian Chancellor from 1856 to 1882, had secured Bismarck's assent to its unilateral abrogation as a condition of Russian neutrality in the Franco-Prussian War. The Powers agreed to this *accompli fait* at the London Conference in 1871, but maintained in force the earlier ban on the passage of the Straits by ships of war. The prizes that lay before the Russian armies in the campaigns of 1877–8 were therefore the final solution of the Straits question; the ultimate control of Constantinople and the settlement of the Balkans in Russia's interest by force of arms.

Despite early set-backs and growing indications of mounting

[1] Ibid., p. 513.

English and Austrian anxiety, culminating in preparations to intervene, decisive victory lay almost within Russia's grasp. At the last the Russian armies, victorious but exhausted, halted, to the indignation of Alexander II, on the outskirts of Constantinople.[1] For months tension ran high, with the possibility of war looming near. England had already sent a fleet through the Dardanelles to check and to discourage any further Russian advance, but in the face of gathering opposition, Russia showed no inclination to embark on fresh adventures.

The Russians dictated to Turkey the Treaty of San Stefano. This treaty is memorable chiefly for the creation of a Greater Bulgaria. The Pan-Slav Press, after Serbia's early reverses in 1876, had transferred their allegiance to the Bulgars and the new, inflated Bulgaria, stretching from the Black Sea to a long coastline on the Aegean, was an attempt, by creating a vassal State more powerful than any of its neighbours, to build in the Balkans a stronghold of Russian influence. It is significant, however, that owing to Gorchakov's insistence no unilateral settlement of the Straits question was imposed on Turkey. Reluctantly the prudent conclusion was reached that this issue must be left to international settlement.

San Stefano, apart from the intrinsic defects of the settlement embodied in it, flouted the principle that the problems created by the progressive dissolution of the Sick Man of Europe, and by Turkish oppression and misrule in the Balkans, were questions not for unilateral action but for consideration by the Concert of Europe. Therein it had long been believed lay the only hope of averting a European War. It was Austria who was most insistent in her demand for a conference. Prince Gorchakov stated categorically that "if Vienna or London is chosen we shall not take part". But Russia, he added, had "no objection at all to Berlin".[2] But if it was comparatively easy to reach agreement about the place of the conference it was a formidable task to reconcile the views of Austria and England on the one hand with those of

[1] Cf. B. H. Sumner: *Survey of Russian History*, London 1944, p. 283.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, II, p. 175; Dugdale, Vol. I, p. 61.

Russia on the other about the scope of the discussions. In the end, most reluctantly, Bismarck felt impelled to act the part of an honest broker. Only in this way could war be averted. The Chancellor accordingly put pressure on Russia to submit the Treaty of San Stefano to the scrutiny of the Powers. Russia yielded. The Tsar expressed his complete confidence in Germany's equity and in her friendly mediation.[1] Bismarck remained, however, watchful and somewhat uneasy, for the conference in Berlin had been called to discuss issues which were of secondary concern to Germany and she might not find it easy to avoid becoming embroiled in their consequences. It was Bismarck's assertion that the whole Eastern Question had no "interest for Germany which would be worth the healthy bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier".

Before the Congress assembled Russia agreed under pressure to withdraw her designs for a Greater Bulgaria. This unwilling retraction meant that the atmosphere at Berlin was far from cordial and that the negotiations proceeded on a note of thinly veiled asperity. Of all those who went there, Disraeli alone returned outwardly content. With Cyprus acquired, with Russian ambitions checked, with the flatteries of the great Chancellor, he at least could talk of peace with honour. But none could entertain the illusion that the Eastern Question was settled. The Balkan States were ominously and uniformly dissatisfied with the settlement. Roumania, who had assisted Russia in the war against Turkey, resented bitterly the transfer of Bessarabia to her ally, Russia, and rightly viewed the desolate Dobrudja in the Danubian Delta as very indifferent compensation. Bulgaria still dreamed of those spacious frontiers which San Stefano had conferred upon her a year earlier, whilst Serbia lamented the transfer of the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the dying hand of Turkey to the stronger control of the Dual Monarchy. Austria-Hungary had indeed some reason for satisfaction. She was a beneficiary in a war in which she

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, II, p. 209; Dugdale, Vol. I, p. 71.

had remained ingloriously neutral.[1] But the satisfaction was somewhat marred by well justified misgivings. Her Foreign Minister, Count Andrassy in particular, entertained doubts about the wisdom of assuming suzerainty over the two Slav provinces on the ground that their incorporation in the Dual Monarchy, by increasing the majority of the several subject nationalities over its two ruling races would thereby weaken still more its foundations. The Emperor Francis Joseph felt there was something unsatisfactory, even unworthy, in territorial aggrandisement based purely on international law.[2] But in the end the temptation proved too great.

Italy left the Congress her hands clean but empty, as her Prime Minister sadly remarked, whilst Russia, and this was the most lasting and most significant consequence of the Congress, felt that her interests had been betrayed by Germany. Unjust this conclusion may have been, but that is of small importance by comparison with the fact that it was formed. Bismarck had done much to advance Russia's claims, but that weighed little in the balance with a Power who, having dictated her own peace at San Stefano, had seen the settlement it imposed undone with German connivance. Was it reasonable to expect Russia to be satisfied with a peace, sanctioned by the Concert of Europe, and thereby acquiring an unpleasing air of permanence, which afforded her so little compensation for the sacrifices she had incurred in the war against Turkey? The memory of the Greater Bulgaria loomed large, and however just the revision might be in principle, in practice it notably weakened Russian influence in the Balkans. Gorchakov from the time of the Congress of Berlin became the bitter enemy of Bismarck, while the Pan-Slav Press took up the ominous cry that Russia had been betrayed and that some day a final settlement with the Teutonic world must come. That cry was to be intoned in succeeding years with ever deepening insistence.

[1] Cf. G. P. Gooch: *History of Europe* 1878–1919, 5th edition, London 1937, pp. 2–4.

[2] Joseph Redlich: *The Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria*, London 1929, p. 394.

The Austro-German Alliance 1879

On the morrow of Berlin, Bismarck felt that it would be a wise precaution to buttress Germany's position in Europe by alliances with as many of the Great Powers as possible. "The failure of our attempts to consolidate our position with Russia", wrote Count Herbert Bismarck in August 1879,[1] "obliged us to use more caution in our relations with other Powers than we had used formerly when we were assured of Russia's 'friendship'". In that atmosphere of growing estrangement from Russia the Chancellor felt with reluctance, which we may judge to have been sincere, that the first necessity was a temporary choice which might prove final between Russia and Austria since their conflicting interests in the Balkans could not be wholly reconciled. He chose Austria. His choice was dictated positively partly by personal reasons, for he felt that Count Andrassy's imminent departure from office might make an alliance more difficult to negotiate, partly by broad considerations of strategy and policy, and partly by a sentimental feeling for the unity of the Germanic peoples. These were reinforced by negative considerations which probably weighed the more heavily in the balance. The outbursts of the Pan-Slavs outraged by the imposition of the Treaty of Berlin and directed at "the European coalition against Russia under the leadership of Prince Bismarck"; his bitter antipathy to Gorchakov epitomized in the phrase "the War of the two Chancellors"; the unpredictable character of Russian policy dependent as it was on Court rivalries and internal tensions, all contributed to the decision that for the time being at least Germany must insure herself by a pact with Austria.[2] The outcome was the Austro-German Alliance of 1879. The terms of this Alliance which remained strictly secret until after the war, stated that reasonable aid was to be given in the event of either of the parties to it being attacked by Russia. If on the other hand Germany were attacked by France, Austria undertook no more than to remain a benevolent neutral. Bismarck was dissatisfied

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, III, pp. 7–8.

[2] *Vide* Sumner, op. cit., p. 421.

with this limitation but Andrassy was resolute, and his son's account of a dramatic scene records perhaps too sympathetically how Andrassy's resolution won the day.[1]

The Alliance of 1879 afforded Austria protection against Russia's Pan-Slav ambitions, and it gave Germany a secure southern frontier in the event of her being involved in a war with Russia or with France, though it did not guarantee her active Austrian assistance in the latter eventuality. The Treaty was indeed essentially defensive in character and in intention. It is perhaps the most important of all the treaties negotiated by Bismarck and it remained the corner-stone of German foreign policy till 1918. Its signature underlined the wisdom of Bismarck's policy of restraint after the Six Weeks' War which allowed so complete a reconciliation to take place so soon.

The Three Empires in Alliance

To isolate Russia was not the aim of Bismarck's policy. On the contrary he feared she might in such circumstances seek to strengthen her position by an alliance with France. His anxiety to restore better relations was shared by influential circles in Russia. A favourable opportunity occurred in the reaction against Pan-Slav sentiment which followed the assassination of the Tsar Alexander II in 1881. It was seized, and two years after the Austro-German Alliance there followed the Alliance of the Three Emperors. This was a revival of the *Dreikaiserbund* which had been allowed to lapse in 1878. It was the outward sign of the existence of the feeling of community among the three autocrats of Eastern Europe. Bismarck was its architect, for, haunted by the nightmare of a Franco-Russian Alliance, he felt that German security could be guaranteed only by bringing Russia into his system of alliances even if she were prepared to undertake none but defensive obligations.

The Alliance of the Three Emperors rested broadly upon a common interest in defending the monarchical principle. The

[1] Cf. *Bismarck, Andrassy and their Successors*, by Count Julius Andrassy, English translation, p. 18 *et seq.*

many difficulties which delayed its successful negotiation were due almost wholly to the personal antipathy of the Tsar for the Emperor Francis Joseph. This animosity was the legacy of the Crimean War. The Tsar had never forgiven Austrian neutrality in this war fought only six years after Russian support had been so freely forthcoming for the suppression of the Magyar revolt in 1849; nor had he forgotten the cool cynicism with which Prince Schwarzenberg had enunciated his policy of "astonishing the world by our ingratitude". Reconciliation was at the last brought about by Bismarck's untiring efforts, and the alliance was negotiated on the basis that if any of the three high contracting parties should find itself at war with a fourth Power, the other two would preserve a benevolent neutrality towards it and would devote their efforts towards localizing the conflict. This was satisfactory from the Chancellor's point of view, for it meant that if Germany were attacked by France, not only Austria but also Russia would remain neutral.

The alliance recommended itself to Austria because it provided that if she were attacked by Italy, she need not fear intervention from Germany or Russia, and Russia gained a comparable safeguard if she were involved in further adventures in the Balkans.

The Alliance of the Three Emperors carried by implication some assurance of progress by agreement in South Eastern Europe. Bismarck believed that a statesmanlike demarcation line between the spheres of influence of two empires would leave Serbia on the Austrian side, Bulgaria and the Straits on the Russian, and that the condition of European peace was that each should keep strictly to its own sphere. But, as Mr. Sumner has written,[1] their mutual rivalries proved too deep and intertwined for any such apparently simple solution. To Austria, Bismarck gave what was in such circumstances the soundest advice: "The Eastern Question is a game of patience; he wins who waits."

The Triple Alliance

The Austro-German Alliance and the Alliance of the Three

[1] Op. cit., p. 422.

Emperors might well have been thought to have safeguarded sufficiently Germany's newly-acquired predominance in Europe and indeed it is probably true that Bismarck himself was now reasonably satisfied, afflicted though he was to be to the end of his days by the "nightmare" of a hostile coalition. And it was not in fact his initiative but Italy's which led to the making of the Triple Alliance in 1882, an alliance which for the first time brought Italy as an equal partner into the Concert of the Powers. At first the initiative of the Italian Government received a contemptuous welcome. Bismarck thought little of his future Latin partner. "You do not need to run after Italy," he said once, "and moreover her promise will have no value if it is not in her interest to keep it." And on another occasion he commented unfavourably on "the restless arrogant character of Italian policy" which "may easily involve her friends in trouble".[1]

Since the wars which culminated in the liberation of Italy, Austro-Italian relations had been distant. The reconciliation of Italy to Austria was prescribed by Bismarck as the indispensable preliminary to any negotiations with Germany. He told the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, with a display of cool indifference in which discouragement is also to be detected, that "the key to the door which leads to us must be found in Vienna".[2] That key was sought by a Royal visit to the Austrian capital, and after prolonged conversations not gratifying to Italian *amour propre*, as Signor Croce remarks,[3] the door was opened and the way made clear for the signature of the Triple Alliance in 1882. The purpose of the Alliance was stated in a preamble, reactionary in tone and mistrusted by the Italians, which said that it was intended to 'augment the guarantees of peace in general and to strengthen the monarchical principle". The Alliance provided mutual support for its partners if they were attacked by other Powers, with the one important reservation that Austrian sup-

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, III, pp. 185, 198; cf. also, Fay: op. cit., Vol. I, p. 81.
[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, III, pp. 205–6; Dugdale, Vol. I, pp. 112–13.
[3] Benedetto Croce: *History of Italy*, trans. C. M. Ady, Oxford, 1929, p. 109.

port for Germany was to be forthcoming only if she were attacked by *two* Great Powers. On the suggestion of Italy it was also made a condition that the attack must be "without direct provocation" if the Treaty were to come into force. This saving clause was used by Italy in 1914 as an argument justifying her non-participation in the war on the side of her allies. At the time the Treaty was signed its intention was defensive. The value of Italian participation was summed up in Bismarck's comment that "it would spare the Austrian forces rather than win the Italians to our side". An Italian *bersagliere* in the Alps to divert part of the French forces from the Eastern Frontier would suffice for his own needs.[1]

The Treaty, like the other treaties of the Bismarckian period, was secret, and perhaps this, as has already been suggested, was a disadvantage since it gave rise to serious but in fact unfounded misgivings in Paris. Bismarck spoke of the Triple Alliance as "our League of Peace"; he termed it an Insurance Society, and made it abundantly clear that it was not his intention to use the Alliance for purposes of aggression. But that does not mean that it was not a potential instrument of indirect aggression or that Bismarck did not have such ultimate possibilities in mind. This restrictive, defensive interpretation in any case was never wholly satisfying to the Italians, who felt that partnership with the Great Powers should yield more positive dividends than security. From time to time Italian statesmen brought pressure on Berlin asking for support at one time against Turkey, at another against the French in North Africa. An approach on these familiar lines by Mancini drew from Bismarck the acid comment: "I observe in this request of Mancini's a dilettante—confidentially I would even say a banausic—ignorance of what is possible in high diplomacy. There is again manifest in this incident, to put it mildly, that lack of unselfishness which has already so often betrayed the Italians into sending other people into the water for the sake of Italian interests without their even getting a finger

[1] *Vide* Croce, op. cit., p. 110.

wet."[1] In time Italian dissatisfaction was destined to drift into disloyalty. But making due allowance for German tactlessness it is not easy to agree with Signor Croce that the Treaty, drawn up under unfavourable circumstances owing to Italy's anxiety to secure an alliance, "bound her, to the benefit of the other two partners, far more strictly than it bound Germany and Austria to her advantage".[2] After all, the proof of the pudding was in the eating.

The Triple Alliance was enlarged in 1883 by the adherence of Roumania. In this case also Bismarck had no little difficulty in persuading the Roumanian Prime Minister, M. Bratianu, who entertained wild, expansionist ambitions, beginning with the reincorporation of Bessarabia, that the Alliance was defensive in purpose. But despite protest Bismarck remained firm. He opposed any adventures and was resolute in his determination to maintain the defensive character of the Alliance. Germany was a satiated Power whatever might be the position of Italy or Roumania.

The Reinsurance Treaty

Even with the signature of the Triple Alliance the Bismarckian system was not complete and the ever resourceful Chancellor of the German Reich now resolved to place the keystone on the elaborately constructed arch on which rested German security and her newly-won predominance in Europe. Always fearful lest his country should on some pretext become involved in a war on two fronts, against Russia and France, he decided to guard against so unpleasant an eventuality by the negotiation of a Reinsurance Treaty with Russia. What made such action seem imperative to him was the melancholy fate of the League of the Three Emperors. Reconstituted, as we have seen, with such care in 1881 it foundered in the Bulgarian crisis of 1885. Under the

[1] Quoted in Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 86. Professor Fay lays much emphasis on the defensive character of the Triple Alliance and seems to accept Bismarck's descriptions of it at their face value.

[2] Op. cit., p. 110.

Treaty of Berlin, Eastern Roumelia had been separated from Bulgaria, and though granted autonomous government remained nominally under the suzerainty of the Sultan. National pressure for reunion was great, and in 1885 Bulgaria without consulting Russia reincorporated the province. Britain, Austria-Hungary and Italy supported the Bulgars and Russian efforts to maintain their influence in Sofia signally failed. The crisis provoked new and violent tension between Russia and Austria, each struggling to acquire a predominant position in the Balkans. And behind it lay even greater issues correctly diagnosed by the Austrian Foreign Minister at the height of the crisis when he attributed the "chief causes of the hostile intentions entertained by Russia" as dislike and mistrust of "the predominant position of Germany and the Austro-German Alliance".[1]

The method chosen for the negotiation of the Reinsurance Treaty was instructive. Bismarck with characteristic bluntness confronted Schuvalov, the Russian Foreign Minister, with the text of the secret 1879 Treaty with Austria. This Treaty, of course, made it clear that Germany's position was already safeguarded to the South East were she to be attacked by France or Russia. Bismarck in the light of this revelation explained his desire for a similar safeguard in the East in the event of an attack from the West. This was successfully secured from Schuvalov in return for a promise of neutrality in a war provoked by Austria.

The Reinsurance Treaty of 1887 could be reconciled with the Austro-German Treaty of 1879 only by placing an unwarranted emphasis on the defensive character of each. Its negotiation displayed at once Bismarck's lack of principle, his realism and his masterly grasp of diplomatic possibilities. The Austrian refusal to give an unlimited guarantee in 1879 was converted from a liability into a qualified asset by using it to secure an assurance that a French attack would not find Russia a potential or even actual enemy. From successive Balkan crises which broke up the Alliance of the Three Emperors, and indeed which even brought Austria and Russia to the brink of war, the Chancellor's genius

[1] Quoted in Sumner, op. cit., p. 423.

extracted security for the German Empire, "purchasing the neutrality of Russia in a war provoked by France by promising neutrality to Russia in a war provoked by Austria".[1]

1887 witnessed the zenith of Bismarck's power, both in Germany and in Europe. The death of the Emperor William in the following year and the accession, after the brief interlude of the Emperor Frederick's tragic reign, of his grandson portended the close of the Chancellor's long, unchallenged period of office. On the eve of his downfall a new generation was heard in Berlin challenging the wisdom of Bismarck's foreign policy. It is a matter of surprise and of significance alike that within the German Foreign Office the achievement of Bismarck most critically scrutinized was the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia. When, after Bismarck's retirement that Treaty came up for renewal in 1890, many voices were raised against it and the Baron von Holstein, whose sinister eccentricities, whose Machiavellian intrigues made him in life an *éminence grise* in the style that Hollywood delights to depict, used his baneful influence to ensure that the Treaty was not renewed. What were the arguments that influenced Holstein? It was maintained in the first instance that the Treaty was contrary to the spirit of the Triple Alliance and would, especially if known in Vienna, imperil its future harmony.[2] Secondly (and more persistently), he argued that if the existence of the Reinsurance Treaty should become known in London it would estrange England from Germany. Implicit in this, the decisive argument against renewal was Holstein's belief that an Anglo-Russian war lay in the logic of history. Germany should not in her own interests be committed in advance.

Holstein's arguments had a certain speciousness but little else to commend them, and in retrospect there is no doubt that Bismarck's bitter denunciations of his incompetent successors who were responsible for the breaking of the wire to St. Petersburg,

[1] G. P. Gooch: *History of Europe*, p. 140.

[2] Cf. Erich Brandenburg. *From Bismarck to the World War:* English trans., Oxford, 1933, pp. 26–8.

are not unjust. It is true that it is the opinion of many distinguished historians that circumstances in any event would have brought about the lapse of the Reinsurance Treaty. That may well be so on a long view, but from the standpoint of German interests, it was folly to anticipate events, to take the initiative by discouraging Russian overtures, since renewal even for a comparatively short period of three or six years would have eased the tension in Europe and might have permitted negotiations for a more durable and less secret *rapprochement*.

The Franco-Russian Alliance

From the German point of view the sequel to the non-renewal of the Reinsurance Treaty was ominous indeed. The principal purpose of Bismarck's foreign policy since 1878 had been to prevent a Franco-Russian *rapprochement* with its ever-latent threat of a war on two fronts. It would be wrong to suggest that this *rapprochement* which followed so soon after the estrangement between Berlin and St. Petersburg was caused by it, but true to say that the *détente* in Russo-German relations after 1890 underlined the attractions of a French alliance to St. Petersburg and thereby made its negotiation much easier even though it was still far from easy.

From 1870–90 France had been an outcast among the nations; not without friends, as the crisis of 1875 had shown, but politically isolated by the dominant influence of German diplomacy. Her pride, however, was not broken and every German hope even of partial reconciliation foundered on it. Some illusions were entertained even by Bismarck whose realism could not wholly comprehend the sentiments of his defeated enemy. His instructions in 1881 to the German Ambassador in Paris are indicative of the hopes which the Chancellor allowed himself to indulge from time to time: "There is a wide field in the Mediterranean", he wrote, "to which we can leave France a wholly free hand. It is not out of the question that French policy in the end will come to see that a friendly German Empire with 45,000,000 inhabitants is a stronger figure among French assets

than 1,000,000 Alsace-Lorrainers."[1] This was good *real Politik* but poor psychology. Though Bismarck was prepared to encourage French ambitions in North Africa, it became at the last evident to him that neither Tunis nor even Morocco would ever be regarded as compensation for Alsace-Lorraine.[2] To regain the lost provinces was a distant hope, but it coloured and influenced every move in French policy. The first step on a long road had to be the strengthening of France's position in Europe. That could be done only by an alliance and in a Continental war Russia was obviously the right ally. "There was", writes Professor Brogan, "only one ally who could do what France wanted, could reassure timid Frenchmen (and there were millions of them) who were less concerned with avenging 1870 than with preventing the recurrence of another invasion, and could inspire the more ardent souls who dreamed of recovering Alsace-Lorraine by a fortunate war fought with the active support of the countless soldiers of the Tsar."[3]

It was the continuing tension in the Balkans which culminated in the Bulgarian war scare of 1885–7 that made Russia more disposed to an approach from the West than she had been for many years. Though the Republican form of government in Paris was viewed with profound distaste, foreign loans were an essential condition of effective, large-scale Russian rearmament. Since Berlin was discouraging, there was no capital other than Paris in which they could be raised. For the use of financial power for political ends Paris, as Professor Brogan points out, was much better equipped than Berlin, and the German response was an astonishing blunder.[4] And in the sequel finance going hand in hand with policy and sentiment, the loans floated on the Paris Bourse in 1888 and in 1889, at a low rate of interest, were outstandingly successful from the Russian point of view. The friendlier feelings between the two peoples and governments

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, III, p. 401.
[2] *Vide* Chapter III.
[3] *The Development of Modern France*, London 1940, p. 311.
[4] Ibid., p. 314.

received outward expression in 1891 when the French Fleet visited Kronstadt. Their reception was of the utmost cordiality. For the first time the *Marseillaise* was played on an official occasion in the Tsar's dominions, and to underline the significance of the occasion the Autocrat of All the Russias stood bare-headed while the bands played this marching song of the *sansculottes*.[1] Since, till this visit of the French Fleet, it had been a criminal offence in Russia to play the *Marseillaise* even on a piano which might be heard in the street, the change portended in Russian policy was clear to all the world. But while the welcome in Russia at the prospect of a *rapprochement* was cordial, it is not to be compared with that which was forthcoming in France. "Le monde", writes M. Baumont,[2] "s'étonna de la sympathie de badauds anti-cléricaux et revolutionnaires pour la Russie romantique et mystique." M. Poincaré has recorded in his *Memoirs* the enthusiasm of that year when France felt for the first time that she was no longer friendless: "Those of us who reached manhood in 1890 cannot recall without emotion", he wrote, "the prodigious effect produced by the friendliness of the Emperor Alexander III."[3]

It was not till 1893 that the Russian Fleet paid a return visit to Toulon, and not till January the following year that the long-drawn negotiations for a Military Convention reached a positive conclusion. In the intervening period the possibility of a Russo-German *rapprochement* was not overlooked on either side. The Tsar was reluctant to commit himself finally to an alliance with the Third Republic; the Kaiser availed himself of every opportunity and particularly of the Tsarevitch's visit to Berlin in 1893, to play upon Imperial misgivings and to bring the negotiations with France to a fruitless close. But the Russian fears of German intentions in the East were not so easily to be stilled.

Alexander II's premonition that the road to the realization of Russia's historic ambitions in the Straits and Constantinople

[1] Cf. Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 112.

[2] *L'Essor Industriel et l'Imperialisme Coloniale*, Paris 1937, p. 193.

[3] *Les Origines de la Guerre*, p. 55.

might lie through Berlin had only been strengthened with the passage of time, and in the winter of 1892 these fears were echoed in Berlin itself. In a message sent by the German Chancellor to a Committee of the Reichstag is to be found the following instructive analysis of the political scene:[1] "Conditions in France are drifting towards a dictatorship, and this will probably make for war. The Russian and German Governments are on good terms, but public opinion in the two countries is hostile. The Russian tradition demands the advance to the Straits and Constantinople even if the road were through Berlin. Under the circumstances the German Government feels obliged to preserve the position of Austria as a Great Power. We cannot sacrifice Austria to gain temporary concessions from Russia. In these circumstances we must be prepared for a war on two fronts." German preparations in the form of proposals for a large increase and reorganization of the army submitted to the Reichstag in 1892–3 were in themselves a factor conducive to the successful outcome of the Franco-Russian negotiations. Both countries felt themselves threatened, though both equally remained firmly resolved that any pact between them must be purely defensive.

During the visit of the Russian Fleet to Toulon in 1893 the Tsar admonished the French Ambassador against the entertaining of any ideas of revenge. "You would not be Frenchmen", he observed "if you did not cherish the belief that the day would come when you might regain possession of your lost provinces; but between that very natural sentiment and the idea of a provocation to effect its realization, the idea of *revanche*, in a word, there is a great difference and you have frequently proved . . . that you desire peace above all and that you will know how to wait with dignity."

The terms of the Convention between France and Russia, later to be duly embodied in the Franco-Russian Alliance, were realistic and precise. France and Russia pledged mutual assistance

[1] Quoted in J. A. Spender: *Fifty Years of Europe*, London 1933, pp. 137–8.

if either of them were attacked by Germany or the Central Powers. The exact conditions were that if France were attacked by Germany, or by Italy supported by Germany, Russia should come to her aid: if Russia were attacked by Germany or by Austria supported by Germany, France should deploy all her available forces against Germany. The forces to be made available were indicated in the provisions of the Treaty. France was to provide 1,300,000 men and Russia to provide 700,000 to 800,000 men. These forces were to be concentrated against Germany as the principal enemy.

The Franco-Russian Alliance was defensive in form, the preamble stating that it had been signed because of a "common desire to preserve the peace". M. Baumont[1] comments, not unjustly, that it was fundamentally conservative; "une alliance non de réparations, mais de résignation". Its defensive character was underlined by the declaration that it had the same duration as the Triple Alliance. Its terms implied an anxiety to readjust the European balance, but it is noteworthy in view of later events that the Treaty contained no suggestion of mutual support for the realization of any positive ambitions. There was no mention, for example, of French support for Russian ambitions in the Balkans or of Russian support for French ambitions in North Africa, and indeed the whole tenor of the Treaty and of the negotiations which preceded it was contrary to any such interpretation of its aims.

The fact that a Franco-Russian Treaty had been signed soon became known, but its terms remained absolutely secret. On this the Tsar was most insistent. Early in the negotiations he had asked that its terms should be made known only to the President of the Third Republic and his Prime Minister. "I fear", he said, "if they discuss it in Cabinet it will have the fatal result of becoming public. . . ." M. René Viviani, then Prime Minister, brought the text of the Treaty into the Chamber of Deputies in 1914 expecting to be asked to elucidate precisely the obligations it had placed upon France. But there was no question asked

[1] Op. cit., p. 194.

and M. Viviani kept the Treaty prudently in his portfolio.[1]

The Franco-Russian Pact of 1894 should not be regarded so much as a potential check to German ambitions as an insurance against them by the two Powers who felt themselves threatened. The Alliance in fact provided no adequate counterpoise to the Triplice. Both partners, but more particularly Russia, regarded the agreement as strengthening their position against England. The danger that both alliances might co-operate against her was not, M. Baumont[2] observes, chimerical. This was the more significant in that England while consistently maintaining her policy of isolation tended, if anything, towards friendliness with Germany and with the Triple Alliance. When Sir Edward Grey accepted minor office in 1892 he recorded that "the traditional policy which the new government took up was that of distinct friendship with the Triple Alliance". "There was", he recalls, "no engagement, no promise, no definite agreement: it was a policy that could be changed at any moment. . . . On the other hand, there was something that in practice manifested itself as a working arrangement; so manifest and well known was it that French newspapers when particularly provoked would write wrathfully not of the Triple but of the Quadruple Alliance."[3] And this indifference to considerations of the need of a European balance was underlined by the misgivings with which the Franco-Russian Alliance was received in certain influential circles in London. Joseph Chamberlain gave expression to them in the House of Commons, pointing out that the formation of this Alliance constituted a grave threat to our naval supremacy in the Mediterranean. With the Russian Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean and the French in the West, the safety of our lines of communication seemed to Chamberlain to have been gravely jeopardized. These fears tended to estrange Britain even further from the Dual Alliance. It was not only Holstein who thought that an Anglo-Russian war might lie in the logic of history!

[1] Professor Fay records this instructive incident in his *Origins of the World War*, Vol. I, p. 117.

[2] Op. cit., p. 197.

[3] Op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 47–8.

But, from the point of view of Germany, the international situation had unmistakably deteriorated in the last decade of the century. The Franco-Russian Alliance in itself constituted no serious threat since the Central Powers, provided they had a friendly understanding with Britain, could easily accept any challenge that might be given. Indeed, for Germany, its implications would not have been disturbing had her statesmen continued to accept Bismarck's view that Germany was a satiated Power. But that was the outlook that they abandoned. It had been a condition of Bismarck's policy that Germany was satisfied with the *status quo*, and it followed therefore that her policy should be one of limited liability. This meant in practice that if Germany were on bad or even indifferent terms with Russia she should take every precaution to maintain good relations with Britain. And, on the other hand, if her relations with Britain deteriorated, she should make haste to repair relations with St. Petersburg. This in Bismarck's view was a prudent and essential precaution in a world dominated by five Great Powers, one of whom, France, was consistently hostile. It was only when these precepts were neglected; when Germany, not perhaps wholly conscious of the fears which she inspired, followed a showy forward policy that a balance of power became the major preoccupation of European statesmen.

The Legacy of Bismarck to Europe

The German Empire was founded by power. Bismarck was fully conscious of that all-important fact and understood its implications. He knew that an empire raised on power could survive by the use of power alone. He knew that great though his achievement in uniting Germany had been, a heavy price had to be paid for unification achieved in war. He learnt, as none other, that France would never forgive nor forget; that Austria-Hungary, deprived of her historic rôle as a Germanic power in the West, must direct her policy to the East; that there the retreat of Turkey would bring her, sooner or later, face to face with the fierce, unbridled nationalism of the liberated Slav peoples; and that in

the ensuing conflict sentiment and self-interest would combine to involve the German Empire. That meant a war with Russia, the traditional protector of the Slavs, and in a war with Russia, France could be found only on the Russian side. It was because Bismarck saw the danger so clearly that he took infinite precautions to avert it. But he could not rely either on the skill of his successors or, even more important, on their possession of a saving sense of limitation. He had preached the gospel of power, and of the many who listened, few understood that even the apparently invulnerable strength of the German Empire might be overstrained so that her position as the predominant nation in Europe would be imperilled.

It is difficult not to feel some sympathy with Bismarck's successors, Caprivi and Prince Hohenlohe, heirs to a heritage which they had not the wisdom nor the stature to administer. Bismarck, as Caprivi complained, could keep five balls in the air at once, but with his successors this was a task beyond their capacity. And their difficulties were accentuated by a personal problem with which Bismarck until his closing days had not been confronted. In this respect he had indeed been fortunate. For, as Sir Charles Grant Robertson has written, the Kaiser Wilhelm II, born and bred in the militarist atmosphere of the Hohenzollern Court, schooled by no one more than Bismarck himself to believe that the monarch who wore the Prussian Crown did not only rule but also govern, introduced a new and dangerous factor into European politics. "If a lion knew its own strength", Cardinal Wolsey remarked of King Henry VIII, "hard it were to rule him."[1] As Bismarck learned in the unhappy closing days of his long reign as Chancellor, the new German Emperor, self-confident and self-willed, had his own views and was determined to choose his own advisers both in home and foreign policy. It was partly because Bismarck so clearly understood the dangers of the new policy, and partly because the love of power had become so deeply ingrained, that he lacked that dignity which might well have graced so great a figure in retirement. Never an easy associ-

[1] Cf. Sir Charles Grant Robertson: *Bismarck*, London, p. 462.

ate, he was in these closing years a man whose behaviour was apt at times to be singularly unpleasant.

Morose and embittered, living on his estates in Friedrichsruhe and Varzin, the fallen Chancellor brooded over his wrongs. In the newspapers which he controlled, and particularly in the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, he denounced with venom the ignorance and the mistakes of his successors. These embittered revilings of the fallen Chancellor represent almost certainly in part the misgivings of a man far-sighted enough to know that the Empire which he had founded on force could survive only by the methods which had brought it into being. The elaborate diplomatic precautions which he had taken to buttress German predominance in Europe, and which seem at first sight to imply an underestimate of her power, were really the proof of his insight into the long-term underlying political realities of the European scene. It was almost as though he were conscious in his closing years of the shadow of the future falling across the scene, conscious of that day when Russian armies would trample across the estates which he loved so well, and when the thunder of Russian guns would shatter the city he had made the capital of the German Empire. Perhaps also that instinctive belief in tradition, which he so greatly cherished, warned him that the inexorable justice, of which the Greek tragedians told, would fall in this world on nations as well as on men who transgressed the unwritten laws:

> "List, the immemorial word;
> Whosoe'er shall take the sword
> Shall perish by the sword."

Chapter III

IMPERIALIST EXPANSION (1878–1901)

AN age which has lost its faith is ill-fitted to pass judgment upon the age of Imperialist expansion. The sordid lure of easy wealth, the struggle for power, the lust for domination are motive forces well understood to-day, but the faith, the idealism, the passionate zeal to bring justice and civilization to the darkest corners of Africa, whose wretched inhabitants were the victims of Arab slavers, of pest and disease, are things of which little is now understood. Yet those easy phrases about the "Scramble for Africa" suggest only one part of the story, that part that does so little credit to the continent which claimed to be in the vanguard of civilization. The other is to be found in the lives of the missionaries, the early administrators and most memorably in the heroic journeys of the great explorers. In the pages of Livingstone's private *Journal* there is scarcely a page which does not betray his unshakeable belief that, wherever he went, he was watched and guided by his Maker.[1] "You know", he wrote to a friend after the discovery of the Shiré Highlands, "how I have been led on from one step to another by the over-ruling Providence of the great Parent, as I believe, in order to achieve a great good for Africa." In the Chancelleries of Europe a constant preoccupation with the struggle for power left men little time or inclination to think of achieving "a great good for Africa", so it is as well for the reputation of European peoples in the dark continent that so many of the explorers were so profoundly concerned with the welfare of the native races. The imprint of their work rests indelibly upon the African continent to-day.

[1] Professor R. C. Coupland: *Livingstone's Last Journey*, London 1945, p. 14, where the following quotation is reprinted.

The opening up of Africa was the work not of governments but of individuals possessed of great courage and remarkable powers of endurance. There is something very revealing in that description by a companion, of Livingstone "tramping along with the steady, heavy tread which kept one in mind that he had walked across Africa".[1] But where individuals had pioneered, governments soon intervened, and it is only with the motives that prompted their intervention that this book is concerned. The political and economic importance of Africa was popularly overestimated. In Western Europe it was commonly believed that the acquisition of colonies was the high road to rapid economic development. Many writers, principally, though not only, German, failed, as Mr. Taylor has written, "to grasp the truth about the British Empire—that it had come into being as the result of British commercial enterprise and industrial success; and they asserted the reverse, that the prosperity and wealth of Great Britain were due to the existence of her Empire. The German campaign for colonies rested on the simple dogma—give Germany colonies and the Germans will then be as prosperous as the English."[2] Such popular beliefs may have influenced the minds even of autocratic governments, but they were not the directing force in overseas colonial expansion. The rulers of Europe thought primarily in terms of political not economic advantage and it was on the struggle for power in Europe that their eyes were always fixed. Expansion overseas was for the Continental States, not an end, but a means to an end.

Bismarck was a late and always a sceptical convert to "colonialism". His indifference was a source of strength. In the colonial field he could play the hand that best suited his purpose in Europe. For it was on the European scene that his eye was always riveted. And not his alone. "If you were to bring me all the empires of Asia and Africa . . .", said General Garnier des Garets, "they wouldn't in my eyes be worth an acre of the earth where I fought in 1870, and where the *Cuirassiers* of Reichshoffen and

[1] Quoted ibid., p. 17.

[2] A. J. P. Taylor: *Germany's First Bid for Colonies* 1884–5, London 1938, p. 4.

the Zouaves of Froeschwiller lie."[1] But the balance of forces in Europe left France after 1870 with the alternatives of enlarging her Empire overseas or a policy of resignation. Alsace-Lorraine could only be a question "reserved for the future". In the meantime, was it not folly to sit by idly nursing wrongs while other Powers extended their control over large parts of Africa and Asia? "Au nom d'un chauvinisme exalté et à courtes vues", exclaimed Jules Ferry, the protagonist of Republican imperialism, "devrions-nous acculer la politique française dans une impasse et, les yeux fixés sur la ligne bleue des Vosges, laisser tout faire, tout s'engager, tout se résoudre, sans nous, autour de nous, contre nous?" This was the reasoning produced by the psychological reaction to defeat and reinforced by a revival of France's traditional belief in mercantilist economics that led her, a country with a declining population, to embark, with direct encouragement from Bismarck, on an active policy of colonial expansion in North and Central Africa, in Madagascar and in Indo-China.

Bismarck's sympathetic interest in French imperialism was an experiment on his side, in the possibilities of Franco-German reconciliation. That France should remain ostracized in Europe was his settled policy, but clearly it was not in the interests of Germany that she should be driven to despair. An outlet for her energies, preoccupation in colonial fields in which Germany had no interest, except for bargaining purposes, had everything to recommend it. The fact that, incidentally, French expansion in North Africa, and particularly in Tunis, would bring her into conflict with Italy, enhanced the attractions of this policy, even if it were not its primary purpose. To the French Ambassador, in January 1879, the Chancellor gave effusive encouragement. "Now indeed, I believe", observed Bismarck, "that the Tunisian pear is ripe and that the time has come for you to pluck it. The effrontery of the Bey has been like the August sun for this African fruit, which might very well have been spoilt or stolen by somebody else if you had let it remain too long on the bough. I don't know what you intend to do or whether it tempts you,

[1] *Vide* Brogan, op. cit., p. 217.

but I take the opportunity of repeating . . . my desire to give you proofs of my good will on questions which concern you and in which there are no German interests in opposition to yours."[1] That Italy had already received German encouragement to seize Tunis must have heightened the Chancellor's satisfaction with French reactions. For his advice was heeded, and by the end of 1881 this former province of the Turkish Empire was securely French and Italy estranged.

Not only France and Italy but also England had traditional interests in North Africa. If it was the anxiety of the Third Republic to restore French self-respect after 1870; of a united Italy to raise herself to the level of a first-class Power by the acquisition of colonies on the southern shore of the Mediterranean; it was England's concern for imperial communications that led her with some reluctance to intervene in Egypt and so come into conflict with France. The Suez Canal of which control had been dramatically acquired by Disraeli was, as Bismarck admitted, "of vital importance" to her Empire being "like the spinal cord which connects the backbone with the brain". It was that fact that left England no freedom of choice. After "Dual Control" had been established in Egypt in the interests of British and French bond-holders in 1876, Lord Salisbury summed up the alternatives before his country. "You may", he said, "renounce, or monopolize or share. Renouncing would have been to place France across our road to India. Monopolizing would have been very near the risk of war. So we resolved to share."[2] But it was not to prove as simple as that. Egyptian nationalist sentiment found a leader in Colonel Arabi Pasha, against whom no resolute action could be taken without provoking a popular outcry in France. Gambetta urged that the greatest sacrifices should be made to continue co-operation with England, but the Chamber was not prepared to heed his advice. So when nationalist riots broke out in Alexandria in June 1882, France withdrew and England acted alone. The forts at Alexandria were

[1] *Documents Diplomatiques Françaises*, Vol. I (II), p. 411 seq.

[2] Cf. Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 551.

bombarded; and General Wolseley gained a decisive and final victory over Arabi Pasha at Tel el Kebir in September. British rule in the name of the Khedive was now assured, and in 1883 Sir Evelyn Baring was appointed British agent and Consul-General in Cairo. No easy task awaited him, for the revolt of the Dervishes in the Sudan, their annihilation of the Khedive's forces under Hicks Pasha, led to the decision to evacuate the whole of the Sudan south of the Wady Halfa. Despite the misgivings of Baring, General Gordon was sent out from London as Governor-General with secret orders to carry out this evacuation, whose sorry sequel is a page in the history of England rather than of Europe.[1]

England's task in Egypt was undertaken with German goodwill, which soon evaporated. Where Bismarck had once acknowledged comparative German indifference in the affairs of Egypt, he felt by the end of 1883 that the time had come when a less passive attitude would better serve his ends. "We are uncommonly grateful to Prince Bismarck," Lord Granville had said to Count Herbert Bismarck in January 1883, "for the friendly attitude of German policy this summer was of great service to us. Our being left with a free hand in Egypt we owe, when all is said, to Germany's goodwill. We are all aware that at a particular moment Prince Bismarck could have upset the coach if he had chosen to, and we realize with much thankfulness that he refrained from doing so."[2] The price however had still to be paid, and in Egypt pressure was easy to apply. For the Gladstone Government, reluctant to contemplate annexation on principle, were left with no practicable alternative to acting as the nominal mandatory of the Powers. That left Britain in a weak and vulnerable position, for, of the Powers, France burned with resentment at her exclusion from Egypt, and Russia, without any direct interest in the Nile Valley, was hostile to the consolidation of Britain's position in the Eastern Mediterranean.

[1] For an excellent short account, see R. C. K. Ensor, *England*, 1870–1914, Oxford, 1936, p. 80 seq.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, IV, 47; Dugdale, Vol. I, pp. 167–8.

This was a situation from which Bismarck was not slow to profit. The situation in Egypt made England, as Baring frankly recognized, dependent on German goodwill.

It seems clear now that Bismarck's colonial policy was more the incidental offshoot of tactical moves in Europe than a departure undertaken on its own merits. The price that Bismarck was most concerned to exact from England in return for German goodwill in Egypt, was some form of guarantee in Europe which would reinsure Germany in the West against French aggression. When it was made plain that this was a price that England was not prepared to pay he decided to explore again the possibility of friendship with France, founded on Franco-German hostility to England in the colonial field. That he was also influenced by internal political considerations is hardly to be denied. A forward colonial policy was well calculated to enhance the Chancellor's popularity at home.

While early in 1884 the German Ambassador in London, Count Münster, was happily contemplating[1] the friendly acquisition of Heligoland, encouraged at once by the Chancellor's interest, and the remark of the Colonial Secretary, Lord Derby, who said "this perfectly useless piece of rock in the North Sea, the smallest of our Colonies, gives me the most trouble of any", a far-ranging area of Anglo-German colonial friction loomed on the horizon. The Chancellor took up the grievances of German traders in Fiji; he then turned a more formidable gaze on South-West Africa. The Ambassador was instructed "to cease to mention the question of Heligoland" because it might make German colonial claims seem of secondary importance.[2] If Germany failed to obtain satisfaction for her claims overseas, the Chancellor declared that "she must try to gain closer touch with seafaring Powers, France included".[3] But in actual fact the colonial grievances had been put forward largely because they might make closer co-operation with France possible. It was on the

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, IV, p. 63; Dugdale, Vol. I, p. 177.
[2] Ibid., IV, p. 56.
[3] Ibid., IV, p. 58.

foundation of joint hostility to Great Britain overseas that Bismarck hoped to build up friendship with France.

From 1883 to 1885 the new policy was put into practice. The weak but well-meaning Foreign Secretary, Lord Granville, noticed with dismay the abrupt change in the temper of Anglo-German relations. An atmosphere of friendly co-operation was transformed by a recital of German grievances in many parts of the world, which lost nothing in the telling by the Chancellor's arrogant son, Count Herbert Bismarck. Of all the disputes which followed, the most protracted was concerned with the fate of Angra Pequeña on the west coast of Africa some 200 miles north of the frontier of the Cape Province.[1] There a German trader, named Luderitz, established himself and asked for protection. Could the British Government give protection? inquired Herbert Bismarck, for "if not, the German Government will do their best to extend to it the same measure of protection which they could give to their subjects in remote parts of the world—but without having the least desire to establish any footing in South Africa". In replying to his inquiry there was unpardonable delay due partly, as Lord Granville explained, to the need of consulting the Cape. "We cannot", he observed, "act except in agreement with the Government of the Colony which has an independent Ministry and Parliament."[2] To Bismarck this sounded singularly unconvincing. But there was a difference of view between London and the Cape. To a German settlement in South-West Africa, London might be comparatively indifferent, but the Cape was resolutely opposed. And in the event, what began as an inquiry about protection at Angra Pequeña developed, against their wishes, into German South-West Africa. The reasons are to be found in the weakness of the British position in Egypt, which made dependence on German goodwill inevitable, and strained relations with Russia which made the more desirable friendly co-operation with the Triple Alliance.

By the end of 1885 Bismarck's new policy had laid the foun-

[1] For a detailed account *vide* Taylor, op. cit., chapters II and III.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, IV, p. 63; Dugdale, Vol. I, p. 177.

dation of the German Colonial Empire, for by then she had secured her position in the Cameroons and in New Guinea as well as in South-West Africa together with a foothold in East Africa. Where the British Colonial Empire had been founded largely by the private enterprise of the chartered companies, Germany's was created through the impetus of a deliberate policy of state. If that policy met a weak and dilatory response in London, that was due to misunderstanding of its aim and not to unfriendliness. For it was generally accepted that it was right and just that Germany should have her "place in the Sun". Owing to earlier indifference and her late start, her African territories compared unfavourably with those of France or of the Belgians in the Congo Basin, or of the British. But, judged by her subsequent policy, her interest in colonial expansion remained very secondary to her interests in Europe. By 1914 the total number of German colonial settlers was no more than 23,000.[1] While the number of European emigrants is in itself no criterion of the quality of colonial government, these trifling numbers are at least an indication that colonies did not serve as an outlet for surplus population in Germany.

While Germany was acquiring a Colonial Empire in Africa and the Pacific, France, assured of German goodwill, extended her empire chiefly in North and West Africa but also by the acquisition of Madagascar, a convenient stepping-stone to Indo-China, between 1883 and 1885, and after a protracted struggle in Tonkin and Annam. It was the losses and set-backs in Tonkin that brought about the fall of the second Ferry Ministry, and with it the end of an active imperialist policy leaning on German goodwill. "The patronage of Bismarck", noted Lord Lyons, British Ambassador in Paris, "overthrew the Freycinet Cabinet; it is not strengthening Jules Ferry. . . . The *revanche* is still at the bottom of every French heart." With the fall of Ferry, that was no longer to be disguised. Bismarck's colonial policy, in so far as it was an experiment in Franco-German reconciliation, had failed.

The years 1885–89 witnessed the height of the scramble for

[1] Cf. Baumont, op. cit., p. 90.

Africa. But unlike the preceding years they were marked by a revival of Anglo-German co-operation under the aegis of Bismarck and Salisbury. If Bismarck, in laying the foundations of a German Colonial Empire, had not effected a reconciliation with France, he had at least succeeded in his other objectives. France and Italy were estranged over Tunis and Italy was compelled to seek alliance with the Central Powers: England and France were divided by Egypt; and England, partly because of her concern for the security of the Nile Valley, which was the cardinal consideration in determining her colonial policy in Africa, and partly because of the advance of Russia to the Afghan frontier, was also impelled towards more friendly relations with the Central Powers. This had two consequences. The first was the Mediterranean Agreement of 1887 by which England reached an understanding first with Italy later extended to Austria, to preserve the *status quo* in the Mediterranean. Highly satisfying to Bismarck, under whose auspices it was negotiated, the agreement brought England, even if loosely, into the orbit of the Triple Alliance Powers. The other consequence was to be found in the general Anglo-German colonial settlement in Africa, concluded in 1890 after Bismarck's fall, and made possible by the cession of Heligoland. In the first instance it was hoped by the Germans that South-West Africa might be surrendered for Heligoland. Count Herbert Bismarck, very unfavourably impressed by a visit to South-West Africa, sponsored this proposal. "I think", he wrote on 27th March 1889, "the deal would be very advantageous to us and enormously popular in Germany. Our South-West African Company is stagnant, bankrupt and hopeless.... In the colonial area we have not in fact a single soul who would qualify as a German citizen."[1] But the negotiations proceeded slowly, largely because Bismarck was once more concerned with the possibility of negotiating a wider agreement with England which would carry European commitments, and partly because he felt it was the course of prudence to go slow lest it might be suspected in London how much importance Germany attached

[1] Quoted in Taylor, op. cit., p. 56.

to an island which commanded the entrance to the Kiel Canal, then being built. When agreement was finally reached, the *quid pro quo* for England was not in South-West but mainly in East Africa. The Sultanate of Zanzibar became a British Protectorate and German penetration in East Africa was barred by the delineation of the boundaries of British East Africa.

Russian Expansion in Asia

If German support for French imperial ambitions was an experiment which was tried, failed and abandoned, there was a remarkable consistency about Germany's attitude to Russian expansion in Asia. It was something to be encouraged. About that there were no doubts. It had almost everything to recommend it. It would distract Russia's attention from Europe, thereby lessening the risk of an Austro-Russian conflict in the Balkans; it would keep Russian forces harmlessly occupied; it would, above all, keep alive Anglo-Russian tension by playing on English fears of a Russian invasion of India. "Germany", Bismarck advised his Emperor,[1] "has no interest in preventing Russia if she looks for the occupation which is necessary for her army in Asia rather than in Europe. If the Russian Army is unoccupied it becomes a danger to the internal security of the Empire and the dynasty, and if occupation fails in Asia it must necessarily be sought on the Western front. . . . It is therefore an aim of German policy to-day to bring about hostile rather than too intimate relations between Russia and England." With the Penjdeh incident in 1885, hostility nearly brought the two countries to war, much to Germany's satisfaction, before a settlement of the Afghan frontier was reached. In more flamboyant language and by more direct methods the Kaiser Wilhelm II pursued in this respect at least, the same policies as the Chancellor he had deposed from office. "Clearly", he wrote to the Tsar Nicholas II in April 1895,[2] "it is the great task of the future for Russia to cultivate the Asian continent and to defend

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, IX, p. 124.
[2] Ibid., IX, p. 359; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 1.

Europa from the inroads of the great Yellow Race. In this you will always find me ready to help you as best I can. You have well understood the call of Providence. . . ." But though German policy was consistent, Russia, unlike France, was not a defeated country and her expansion in Central Asia owed little or nothing to German encouragement or German goodwill. Like the British in India, the frontiers of the Russian Empire in Central Asia moved steadily forward because the vacuum in power that existed in the Trans-Caspian regions left her with little alternative. In 1868 Russia had occupied Samarkand and in the next two decades her influence steadily extended eastwards. Southern Turkestan was under her control by 1881 and early in 1884 first Merv was occupied and then Sarakhs on the Persian-Afghan frontier. Russian power henceforward loomed mysterious and menacing close to the frontiers of India.

In 1889, at the time of transition between the old order of the wild Tartar Khanates and the newer rule of Russia, George Curzon visited Central Asia, conscious that this was the moment when the era of "The Thousand and One Nights" with its strange mixture of savagery and splendour, of coma and excitement, was fast fading, before "the rude shock and unfeeling Philistinism of nineteenth-century civilization", though still in the cities of Alp Arslan, and Timur and Abdullah Khan were to be seen a stage "upon which is yet being enacted that expiring drama of realistic romance".[1] But the future Viceroy of India, who in his own day was to be so profoundly concerned with the building up of the Indian Empire into a continental power capable of withstanding a Russian attack from the north, frankly recognized that Russian rule was firmly and fairly established, and loyally accepted by the conquered races. This he attributed to many factors—the ferocious severity of the original blow; the powerlessness of resistance against the tight military grip of Russia, above all the certainty "which a long course of Russian conduct has reasonably inspired that she will

[1] *Russia in Central Asia*, by Hon. G. Curzon, M.P., London 1889, p. xii.

never retreat".[1] The last was the fundamental factor. Tsarist or Communist, the Russian Empire does not retreat in Asia. An apologetic advance in the Gladstonian manner coupled with assurances of an early retreat is a practice it has never adopted. When the British Empire in India passed away, the Central Asian Republics of the Soviet Union were only at the dawn of their material development. It is that which in the long run will make Russian expansion in Asia of at least equal significance to the contemporary colonization of Africa by the powers of Western Europe.

If the more enduring achievements of Russian Imperialism are to be found in Central Asia, that has never been the limit of its ambitions. It had also a traditional interest in the Far East. But there it was not a case of bringing "civilization" to nomadic ill-disciplined herdsmen, but of exacting concessions from the disintegrating Chinese Empire. As early as 1885 Russia planned the building of the trans-Siberian railway, and by 1895 the line was completed from the Urals as far as Lake Baikal. Its construction was the condition of effective Russian intervention in the Far East. Alone of the Great Powers, Russia had direct entry into Asia by land, and was therefore in a position to act independently of England's sea power in a way that was possible to none of her rivals. It was a recognition of her advantages that fostered in Russia the dream of an expanding empire in the Far East. Its fascination diverted Russian energies from Europe from 1895 to 1905, much to the dismay of her French allies, and only defeat by Japan, of whose rising power little account had at first been taken, turned her eyes once again to the Balkans.[2]

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–5 over the fate of Korea, a tributary state of China from which Japan had extracted unilateral concessions, afforded the pretext for European intervention in the Far East on a large scale. Indifferent to appeals for aid from China during the war Russia intervened when Japan had

[1] Ibid., chapter X.

[2] Cf. G. F. Hudson: *The Far East in World Politics*, Oxford 1937, chapter V.

secured by the Treaty of Shimonoseki, in April 1895, the Liaotung Peninsula with Port Arthur at its extremity. To back her intervention she enlisted the support of her ally France and of a Germany concerned to deflect Russian ambitions to the Far East. The Triple Intervention, from which England wisely remained aloof, acting on the principle that "no Power be allowed to increase its territorial possessions at China's expense", compelled Japan to evacuate Port Arthur.[1] The way now seemed open for the fulfilment of Russian designs in the Far East with Russia assuming the rôle of "protector" of the Chinese Empire.

Russia was the foremost but not the only European Power interested in the Far East. The letter in which the Kaiser had assured the Tsar of his support in missionary enterprises against the Yellow Races had concluded with a candid hope of reward in the form of a coaling station in an area which did not conflict with Russian claims. This elicited no cordial response but none the less, in 1897, the Germans seized Kiao-Chow with many expressions of gratitude for Russian support which had not in

[1] Japanese indignation was all the sharper because of the decisive superiority which had brought her victory. The Chinese were demoralized and incapable of effective resistance. A midshipman serving with the China Squadron of the Royal Navy, who witnessed many of the engagements wrote in November 1894 saying that he had seen "all the Japanese fleet and transports in Ta lien Whan Bay (just to the east of Port Arthur) just after they had taken the place on the evening of the 6th with the loss, as we afterwards found, of three men killed and fifteen wounded. The place has five forts with 24 c.m. Krupp guns; the Chinese had also laid a minefield in the harbour, but for all that they simply bolted out, and when the Japs came in they found the guns all ready to fire and the minefield in perfect order". Of the capture of Port Arthur much the same story is told early in December 1894, "I went round the dockyard and town of Port Arthur. . . . All the hills around simply bristle with guns and forts and if only the Chinese had made a determined stand the Japs would never have got in. But the Chinese seem to have walked out in their usual way, except that this time they took the trouble to take their rifles and ammunition with them".

These extracts are taken from private letters of the author's uncle, Midshipman, later Lieutenant L. C. O. Mansergh, R.N., who lost his life in the A1 submarine disaster in April 1904.

fact been forthcoming. But Russia, unprepared for war or for indulgence in futile complaint, made an effective countermove by wintering her fleet in Port Arthur, and in March 1898 peremptorily demanding its lease from China. For Japan this was the last straw and so far as Germany was concerned there was no question where the balance of advantage lay. Port Arthur was of far greater value than Kiao-Chow. But even with its lease to Russia the story did not end, for Britain, possibly to the satisfaction of China, and certainly not prepared to be left out in the cold, negotiated the lease of Wei-Hai-Wei. For a moment it seemed as though the last years of the century would see the partition of China among the Great Powers.

In 1900 the victim of Western "protection" revolted with outbursts of violence known as the Boxer Rebellion. Soon suppressed it afforded another opportunity for the display of German initiative in the Far East. The murder of German missionaries, the threat to the European legations at Pekin, excited the Kaiser's obsessed imagination and nothing less would suffice than the organization of an international force under German command. To the parting marines on parade their Kaiser cried, "You must know, my men, that you are about to meet a crafty, well armed, cruel foe! Meet him and beat him! Give no quarter! Take no prisoners! Kill him when he falls into your hands! Even as a thousand years ago, the Huns under their King Attila made such a name for themselves as still resounds in terror through legend and fable, so may the name of German resound through Chinese history a thousand years from now. . . ." That Allied troops had taken Pekin before ever the expedition intended to rescue it had sailed, was a trifle disconcerting, but the expeditionary force was not recalled and with little positive purpose remained in China till 1901 exacting indemnities and concessions. The story is one which, like the speech of the Kaiser, reflects ill on Germany and no small discredit on the Western Powers whose preoccupations with an unending struggle for supremacy made them forget all tolerable codes of international behaviour. The "Hun" speech was a portent and a warning of a

declining international morality for which Germany bears a primary, but by no means exclusive, responsibility. It boded ill on the short run for China and it boded ill, too, on the long run for Europe.

The Jameson Raid and the South African War

It was Lord Salisbury who remarked that Gladstone's impassioned fight for Irish Home Rule had aroused the slumbering genius of Imperialism. It is doubtful, however, if the blatant and boastful temper of the *fin de siècle* deserves so kindly a description. One of its most notable consequences was to estrange Britain from Europe at a moment when her isolation placed her in a position whose perils were better understood in retrospect than at the time.

It was in January 1895 that President Kruger, as the guest of the German Club in Pretoria on the Kaiser's birthday, spoke of Germany as "a grown-up power that would stop England from kicking the child Republic". On instructions from London the British Ambassador protested against the German encouragement of Boer hostility to Britain, of which Kruger's speech was regarded as a provocative expression. The Kaiser later maintained that the Ambassador had gone so far as to mention the "astounding word, 'war' ". "For a few square miles full of niggers and palm trees England had threatened her one true friend, the German Emperor, grandson of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland, with war!"[1] According to his own highly coloured narrative the Kaiser retorted with the "clear warning" that England could only escape from her existing isolation "by a frank and outspoken attitude either for or against the Triple Alliance". As things were England's attitude, her policy "of selfishness and bullying" were forcing Germany to make "common cause with France and Russia, each of whom had about a million men ready to pour in over my frontier. . . ." Into this atmosphere of artificial tension came with explosive effect the news of the Jameson Raid. Ill-judged,

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XI, p. 9; Dugdale, Vol. II, p. 368.

ill-considered, wholly indefensible, even in its limited Anglo-South African context, it played straight into the hands of the most dangerous forces at work in Germany. The Kaiser responded with a telegram to President Kruger, dated 3rd January 1896. "I express my sincere congratulations that, supported by your people, without appealing for the help of friendly Powers, you have succeeded by your own energetic action against armed bands which invaded your country as disturbers of the peace, and have thus been enabled to restore peace and safeguard the independence of the country against attacks from the outside." If the telegram was designed to embody every phrase best calculated to inflame sentiment in a country whose first reaction to the news of the Raid was one of profound misgiving, it could not have been better drafted. At once opinion hardened against the Boer Republics. President Kruger was no longer felt to be the much wronged defender of his people's rights, but a collaborator with the Kaiser challenging British rule in South Africa. Self-respect was restored and internal divisions papered over.[1]

To send a telegram was one thing; to intervene effectively in South Africa was another. Germany had no fleet. What course was open to her? Holstein supplied the answer. The Triple Alliance and the Dual Alliance should forget their rivalry and co-operate against Britain. There was a wide field for common action and many colonial ambitions that could be achieved in concert. France should receive the Congo Free State, Germany further concessions in China, Russia, Korea; Italy would become the Protector of Abyssinia. This superficially was a tempting prospect for one and all. But behind it there were subtle reservations, soon suspected. The ultimate German intention was not the final estrangement of Britain but a practical demonstration of the dangers of isolation and of the need to co-operate with the Triple Alliance. That was why there was no mention of Egypt. In the sequel it was in Paris that this grandiose plan received its death sentence. It was Egypt alone by which France

[1] Cf. J. A. Spender: *Life, Journalism and Politics*, Vol. I, pp. 78–9.

might have been momentarily deluded into a dangerous partnership and Egypt was not on offer. Moreover, the immediate background to this continental League lay in the Transvaal, and the Transvaal was of no interest to France, however much its people might sympathize with the Boer cause. There must be, commented *Le Temps*, "no unnatural alliance" arising out of Anglo-German disputes in South Africa.

Holstein's project of European Alliance was stillborn, and it is interesting to notice that when the South African War broke out in 1899, Germany's policy was very different.[1] In 1900 it was Russia who proposed mediation and Germany who declined it, the Kaiser improving the occasion by informing the Queen and the Prince of Wales of his refusal. The Prince paid ironic tribute to this gesture thanking the Kaiser in March 1900 —"You have no idea, my dear William, how all of us in England appreciate the loyal friendship you manifest towards us on every occasion."[2] But if the political response was more judicious the lesson deduced in Berlin from the Raid and the South African War was always the same—sea power is the condition of world power. That was the most significant legacy of the Jameson Raid and the South African War to Europe.

The Fashoda Crisis

In the last decade of the nineteenth century England suffered from the unpopularity that overtakes the Imperialist who outdistances his rivals while explaining conscientiously that new territories are being acquired only with profound reluctance under the inexorable pressure of events. It was not friendliness towards England; it was well-founded mistrust of Germany that induced both France and Russia to disregard Germany's suggestions for a Continental league in 1896, and two years later England and France reached the brink of war on an incident which went far to decide the balance of colonial power in North Africa.

[1] Cf. J. A. Spender: *Fifty Years of Europe*, chapter XIX, appendix.
[2] Sir Sidney Lee: *Edward VII*, 2 vols., London 1925, Vol. I, p. 970.

It was in the summer of 1898 that Captain Marchand with his small, devoted band, after a long and perilous march of some 2,800 miles from the Congo, reached Fashoda on the Upper Nile to lay claim to territory which was part of the Sudan, and therefore in the British view under Egyptian sovereignty. In March 1895 Sir Edward Grey had stated categorically that the advance of a French expedition from the other side of Africa into the Nile Valley "would be an unfriendly act and would be so viewed by England". But despite this solemn warning the French Government persisted in an action involving great international risks, whose only practical end was to stake out a claim for bargaining purposes.[1] But if France acted without due sense of responsibility the meeting between the gallant Marchand and Sir Herbert Kitchener, sent southwards to forestall him, had a quality of heroic drama which may still be sensed from the studied understatement of their conversation, later recorded by Marchand:[2]

"I have come to resume possession of the Khedive's dominions," Kitchener began.

"Mon Général, I, Marchand, am here by order of the French Government. I thank you for your offer of conveyance to Europe, but I must wait here for instructions."

"Major, I will place my boats at your disposal to return to Europe by the Nile."

"Mon Général, I thank you, but I am waiting for orders from my Government."

"I must hoist the Egyptian flag here," Kitchener next said.

"Why I myself will help you to hoist it—over the village."

"Over the fort."

"No, that I shall resist."

"Do you know, Major, that this affair may set France and England at war?"

"I bowed without replying."

Kitchener then gazed slowly round and in particular at his

[1] *Vide* Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 580.

[2] Quoted by A. L. Kennedy: "Fashoda" in *Quarterly Review*, April 1948.

own well-armed escort of gunboats and 2,000 men. "We are the stronger," he observed. He then intimated his intention of hoisting the Egyptian flag over an outlying portion of the fort. Marchand acquiesced, but added that he would not haul down the French flag. Kitchener made no objection and the dispute was left by agreement to the two Governments to settle.

In the Sudan the British Government had no intention of making concessions. Salisbury was unyielding in his claim "that all the territories which were subject to the Khalifa passed to the British and Egyptian Governments by right of conquest". But for the prolongation of the crisis public opinion was at least as much responsible as the actual conflict of interest between Governments though it has to be recorded that at least two members of Salisbury's Cabinet, Chamberlain and Hicks-Beach used language which made compromise for the French doubly difficult. Fashoda was, in any case, an incident of a kind well calculated to provoke chauvinistic passions of the worst kind.

Delcassé, who replaced Hanotaux as Foreign Minister, must be given the principal credit for the avoidance of irrevocable measures and for a settlement, not reached till March 1899, which made the watershed of the Nile and the Congo the dividing line between British and French spheres of influence, Britain agreeing not to seek territory or influence westwards and France abandoning her claims eastwards. In the sequel the convention provided a sound foundation for co-operation.

The exercise of restraint in the Fashoda crisis was a profound disappointment to the Kaiser who was on a cruise in the Eastern Mediterranean when the tension reached its climax. "I have received news from London and Paris", he telegraphed to the Tsar on 28th October 1898, "that both countries are mobilizing their fleets. Paris seems to be preparing for a *coup d'état*. In case a collision between the two countries should occur your position *vis-à-vis* to them would be of the greatest value to me. How do you look at the situation?"[1] The Tsar, or his advisers, looked at

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XIX (ii), p. 382.

it with a more sensible detachment and the Tsar replied that "he had no knowledge of an impending conflict between France and England", adding with pleasant irony that he thought in this case one "might await events before taking any decision, the more so, as it is always awkward to interfere, without being asked, with others' business".

Paradoxically enough it may be that Fashoda had a beneficial effect on Anglo-French relations in a wider field. To England it underlined, on reflection, the dangers of being simultaneously on bad terms with the Powers of the Triple and of the Dual Alliance; to France, and above all to Delcassé, it emphasized the need for a deliberate policy, pursued if need be by the sacrifice of interests in Egypt very close to the French heart, if her position in Europe were to be re-established. The Alliance with Russia was in itself not enough, especially in the light of Russian preoccupation in Asia. But it needed both courage and foresight to draw such conclusions while passions were inflamed. As late as October 1899 M. Paul Cambon,[1] newly appointed French Ambassador to London, observed sadly, "ici on est odieux pour nous. . . . La rage impérialiste tourne toutes les têtes et je ne suis pas sans inquiétude pour un avenir prochain." The Kaiser's final comment on Fashoda struck a familiar note, "Poor France! She acknowledges herself beaten without a shot having been fired! That is abdication on the sea. They have not read Mahan."[2]

The Legacy of Imperial Expansion

Though on more than one occasion colonial rivalries brought the Great Powers within sight of war, it is not for that reason to be concluded that colonial rivalry was a fundamental cause of war. On the contrary the colonial policies of the Continental states were formulated in the light of the European balance of power and designed to serve European ends. When they no longer served those ends the colonial scene slips unobtrusively into the background. From 1900 onwards there were no im-

[1] Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 30.
[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XIV, p. 407.

portant colonial disputes between Germany and England because of the preoccupation of the Powers in the Far East between 1900–1904; and after 1904 because the Anglo-French Entente had removed the possibility of attaining the political ends which German colonial policy in the 'eighties had been designed to promote.[1] But if in general the colonial policies of the Powers were subordinate to their European interests, that is not to say that colonial rivalry had little effect on the course of European history, but merely that its consequences were indirect. Of them, two were of outstanding importance. The first was the conviction created in Germany that a powerful navy was an indispensable means to world power; the second was the decline in international morality fostered by the corroding impact of an unscrupulous scramble for, and subsequent exploitation of, overseas territories.

[1] Cf. Taylor, op. cit., p. 12.

Chapter IV

THE CRITICAL YEARS IN ANGLO-GERMAN RELATIONS (1895–1902)

TO France the alliance with Russia brought liabilities as well as assets. While France saw only Berlin, Russia had her eye fixed on Vienna.[1] Since even then it was from the Balkans that a war was most likely to come, the signature of the Alliance assuredly did not mean that France could thereafter feel secure. Moreover, the deliberate policy which Bismarck had pursued for so many years had accustomed Europe to think of France as an isolated republic in a world dominated by monarchical powers and for this reason in any re-grouping of the Powers she was the most likely to be left in the cold. Eternal vigilance on her part was needed to maintain the letter and still more the spirit of the Alliance.

The long and intimate relationship between the Hohenzollerns and the Romanoffs presented Germany with opportunities, far too good to be neglected, of undermining the Franco-Russian Alliance by personal appeals to the self-interest, to the traditional loyalties and to the fears of the Tsar Nicholas II. Right up to the outbreak of war admonitions followed one another in some profusion from the Kaiser's fertile pen, and the famous "Willy-Nicky" correspondence is enriched by his hysterical warnings of the risks involved by association with a Republic. The note struck in 1895 varied little and one example from that year may suffice to illustrate the Kaiser's theme and his epistolary style. The Kaiser wrote to the Tsar[2]: "It is not the

[1] Cf. Baumont, op. cit., p. 195.

[2] Quoted in Emil Ludwig: *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, English edition, London 1926, pp. 157–8.

friendship of France and Russia that makes me uneasy, but the danger to our principle of monarchism from the lifting up of the Republic on a pedestal. . . . The Republicans are revolutionaries *de natura*. The French Republic has risen from the source of the great revolution and propagates its ideas. The blood of their Majesties is still on that country. Think—has it since then ever been happy or quiet again? Has it not staggered from bloodshed to bloodshed and from war to war, till it soused Europe and Russia in streams of blood? Nicky, take my word, the curse of God has stricken that people for ever. We Christian Kings have one holy duty imposed on us by Heaven—to uphold the principle of the Divine Right of Kings." The wonder is that the Tsar, a weak man, sensitive, alternately repelled and attracted by the Kaiser's self-confident, thrustful personality, continued to resist albeit, with misgivings, the pressure he never ceased to exert. More could not reasonably have been expected by the French Government, but their uneasiness was perennial and not without reason. The appeal to monarchical principles may have been naïve and obviously self-interested, but it was not without some foundation in fact. There were many incidents which lent it colour and substance, and though the Tsar's influence on Russian foreign policy was limited in practice, the risk of the alliance being wrecked by the Kaiser's intervention was not one that could be lightly disregarded in Paris as the sequel at Björkö was to show.

Doubts About Isolation in England.

The signature of the Franco-Russian Alliance changed the pattern of European politics by bringing into existence a power-group in veiled opposition to the Triple Alliance. There was no question of an open challenge but there was an implicit and deliberate restriction imposed on German policy. The predominance enjoyed in the heyday of Bismarck's power had passed away. It was this fact which made English policy in Europe a matter of greater concern to the Continental Powers than it had been at any time since Canning called

the New World into being to redress the balance of the Old.

It was Goschen, when First Lord of the Treasury, who coined the phrase "splendid isolation", but in the last decade of the nineteenth century, few thought the adjective justified. The real risks of such a policy were only dimly discerned but their existence, made known in practice by a series of minor annoyances as much as by major crises, was a continuing source of uneasiness. Grey has recorded that during Gladstone's last administration life was rendered almost intolerable by the diplomatic pressure exerted upon this country sometimes by the Dual Alliance Powers, but far more often by Germany.[1] The liabilities of the policy of aloof detachment from Europe were underlined more sharply to the succeeding Conservative Government of Lord Salisbury by a series of events beginning with the Jameson Raid and the Kaiser's telegram to President Kruger, continuing with the Kaiser's hurried plans for a Continental League, and the Fashoda incident in 1898 bringing this country to the brink of war with France, and culminating two years later in the outbreak of the South African War in which the sentiment of Europe was on the side of the Boers. Even if, thanks to the protection of the Royal Navy, the actual risks of isolation were still not great, the accumulation of minor frictions first with the Triple and then with the Dual Alliance, was mounting alarmingly. The steps from minor friction to tension, to strained relations, to war were not great in a world of Power politics. But on the other hand to depart from a policy of isolation involved a break with a tradition that was a century old, and the wisdom of that break was doubted on many grounds. During the nineteenth century Britain had been the greatest naval Power in the world, pacific in its policy, satiated in its ambitions, and well pleased to be detached from the affairs of Europe. Was it not alarmist to think that that long, prosperous, beneficent epoch was ending? The years of naval supremacy had not been used for any aggressive purpose on the Continent, a fact which underlined to most English people and to many in

[1] Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 53 seq.

Europe the advantages of having one great Power, to whom the traditional rôle of mediator was always welcome, remaining outside the arena of Power politics. Should that position now be lightly abandoned?

In a Foreign Office memorandum reprinted in the British Documents, Lord Salisbury justified England's policy of isolation from Continental alliances on historical grounds. In this memorandum he wrote:[1] "Count Hatzfeld[2] speaks of our isolation as constituting a serious danger for us. *Have we ever felt that danger practically?* If we had succumbed during the revolutionary war our fall would not have been due to isolation. We had many allies, but they would not have saved us if the French Emperor had been able to command the Channel. . . . Except during his reign we have never been in danger; and therefore it is impossible for us to judge whether the isolation from which we are supposed to suffer does or does not contain in it any elements of peril. It would hardly be wise to incur novel and most onerous obligations in order to guard against a danger in whose existence we have no historical reason for believing."

Here Lord Salisbury weighed the advantages and disadvantages of a Continental alliance on the assumption that the political and strategic situation of this country was fundamentally unaffected by the industrial revolution and by the increase in the range and effectiveness of modern armaments. The younger members of his Cabinet, notably Joseph Chamberlain, more conscious of impending change, were not prepared to accept the Prime Minister's agnostic conservatism in international relations. Colonial friction in Africa and Asia and, above all, the Boer War, had taught a lesson from which Chamberlain, looking out on the world from the somewhat narrow window of the Colonial Office, deduced that isolation in Europe produced an unpleasant, at times dangerous, and always hampering background for colonial development. The achievement of a successful colonial policy demanded some understanding with one at

[1] Gooch and Temperley, Vol. II, No. 86, p. 68.

[2] The German Ambassador in London.

least of the two groups of Powers in Europe. To give this conclusion practical effect Chamberlain, self-confident, practical, impetuous, but perhaps lacking, as Mr. Ensor has suggested,[1] some "final felicity of judgment", came forward as the sponsor of a Continental alliance. Two things about Chamberlain's initiative are notable: (1) he advocated an alliance with Germany, thereby displaying complete indifference to all considerations of a balance of power; and (2) that it was primarily disputes in the colonial field that induced a Colonial Secretary to champion so radical a departure in foreign policy. The latter undoubtedly influenced the former. Sir Edward Grey, writing of the years 1890–1900, says:[2] "There was constant friction rising on the slightest provocation to quarrels between Great Britain and France or Russia. The ground swell of ill will never ceased. British (colonial) interests touched those of France and Russia in many parts of the world and where interests touch an atmosphere of ill will is always dangerous. The blackest suspicion thrives on it like noxious growth under darkest sky in murky air." If the prospect seemed so dark to Grey because of never-ending friction with the Dual Alliance Powers on colonial issues it is not surprising that Chamberlain felt that the initial approach must be made to the principal partner in the Triple Alliance. But if, in principle, Chamberlain's belief that isolation was no longer a sensible policy was justified, the reasons which prompted him to recommend the new departure were altogether too restricted. In the last analysis it was not colonial friction, it was the military predominance of the Central Powers that demanded a reconsideration of England's policy of isolation. Proceeding from a faulty premise Chamberlain reached a wrong conclusion which disregarded all those factors which in the past had determined British foreign policy.

German Policy After Bismarck

At this turning point in Britain's history the control of foreign policy in Berlin did not lie in the hands of a statesman aware

[1] Op. cit., p. 389. [2] Op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 56–7.

of the importance to Germany of Britain's impending decision. It was in June 1897 that von Bülow succeeded Marschall von Bieberstein as Foreign Minister. He was not conscious of any uneasy heritage from the past and surveyed the European scene with a measure of assurance, even of complacency. For this there was, at least, superficial justification. At the time of Bülow's accession to office German predominance in Europe was not seriously challenged. Italy and the Austro-Hungarian Empire were loyal allies, relations with France and Russia remained correct while those with England had been repaired since the Jameson Raid of the previous year. Russia, preoccupied with her expansion in the Far East, had by the Pact with Austria, signed at Mürzeg in 1896, placed the Balkan problem, most dangerous of all European questions, in cold storage. Bülow, conscious therefore only of the strength of Germany's position, declared in his first speech to the Reichstag that "the times are past when the German left the land to one of his neighbours, the sea to another, and reserved the sky for himself". Could he have pierced the veil of the future and seen how changed was the European balance of power when he resigned the Chancellorship twelve years later, he might well have noted, more carefully, the limits to the well-nigh invincible strength of the German Empire buttressed by the Bismarckian system of alliances, and have considered how Germany herself, powerful though she was both in men and material resources, might have her strength overtaxed by being asked in the succeeding two decades to shoulder a burden too heavy even for her to bear.)

Bismarck had two principles to guide him in the conduct of foreign affairs—the isolation of France and a policy of limited liability. While the former, clearly impossible of realization for an indefinite period, broke down with the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894, the latter thereby acquired only added significance. Since the hostility of France was the one unchanging factor, common sense suggested that Russia and England should not be estranged at the same time. This did not imply a negative foreign policy. It implied merely a limited objective. Bülow

interpreted the feelings of his countrymen accurately when he decided that Germany should pursue the forward policy which her strength made possible. But, as Dr. Gooch observes,[1] if *Weltpolitik* was to be the order of the day two reasonable alternatives lay before Bülow in 1897—expansion towards the south-east involving the exploitation of Asiatic Turkey and the permanent estrangement of Russia, or the construction of a first class navy and the estrangement of Britain. The principal criticism of Bülow's foreign policy is that during the long years of power he did not realize that these two possibilities were *alternative*. To pursue both simultaneously was to court disaster, to risk the estrangement both of Russia and of England.

Bülow shared Holstein's conviction that an Anglo-Russian Alliance was beyond the pale of practical politics. This was a not altogether unreasonable assumption, for Grey himself admitted later that nothing but the threat to British naval supremacy could have brought these two traditionally antagonistic Powers together. What is significant is that it was Bülow's and his master's departure from a policy of limited liability that was directly responsible for the Anglo-Russian Convention.

Bülow records in his Memoirs[2] that he took office with the conviction that Germany had little to gain and much to lose by war. A localized war was even then almost unthinkable and a world war a gamble. Moreover every year of peace meant an increase in the population and the industrial power of the Empire. But the years of peace were diminished and the prospects of a localized war almost deliberately dispelled when, in 1897, a few months after Bülow took office, Tirpitz introduced his first Navy Bill in the Reichstag.

The German Navy Bills

The long term influence of the Navy Bill of 1897 on Euro-

[1] Cf. G. P. Gooch: *Before the War: Studies in Diplomacy*, London 1936, Vol. I, p. 190.

[2] *Prince von Bülow: Memoirs*, English trans., London 1931, 4 vols., Vol. II, pp. 25–9.

pean politics was far reaching. The plan contained in the Bill had two notable features. It assured a consecutive period of as long as seven years for planned naval construction and it proposed a High Seas Fleet instead of the earlier and more modest plans centred on a defensive Home Seas Fleet. The programme outlined, consisted of 12 battleships, 8 armoured vessels for coastal defence, 10 large and 23 small cruisers. Tirpitz assured the Reichstag that with the completion of this programme in 1904 the German Navy would no longer be a negligible factor. Prince Hohenlohe, the Chancellor, defended these new, elaborate proposals as the inevitable "result of the political development of Germany", and Tirpitz secured the support even of Bismarck. When the former Chancellor saw the building at Hamburg, he said: "I am stirred and moved. Yes, this is a new age, a new world."

The Navy Law of 1898 was followed by that of 1900 which made it clear that the new departure was to be adopted as a permanent feature of German policy. The Reichstag could be persuaded to approve the enormous cost only by propaganda for the Navy, and that meant an admission of direct competition with Britain. "Our fleet", said Bülow,[1] "must be built with our eyes on English policy!"

With the international reactions to the naval programme Bülow and not von Tirpitz was concerned. It is clear he did not understand the long-term political implications of the new departure; that he did not comprehend that when, in September 1898, the Kaiser uttered the fateful words "our future lies on the water", Germany had abandoned the policy of limited liability. In his attitude to the German naval expansion Bülow was influenced, though to a far lesser extent than the Kaiser, by Germany's inability to intervene in South Africa after the Jameson Raid. The powerlessness of Germany, at the height of its military predominance in Europe, to contemplate any positive action in Southern Africa in support of its diplomacy, was indeed

[1] Quoted in E. L. Woodward: *Great Britain and the German Navy*, Oxford 1935, p. 29.

an object lesson in the importance of sea-power. It was a lesson the Kaiser heeded all too well. At the beginning of the Boer War he wrote to Bülow saying, "I am not in a position to go beyond the strictest neutrality, and I must first get for myself a fleet. In twenty years' time when the fleet is ready I can use another language."[1] To Tirpitz it gave just the propaganda he required. Germany must build, he said, "unless she is prepared hereafter to go the way of renunciation"; to leave the colonial field "to the Anglo-Saxons and to the sons of Jehovah" and "to allow the German competitor to be struck down at the first convenient opportunity".[2] The long-term influence of the South African War on European politics is a subject that merits more careful examination than it has hitherto received.

The failure of negotiations between Germany and England between 1899 and 1902, to whose course reference will be made in the following pages, was due to factors not directly related to the German naval programme. But the breakdown of those negotiations, even coupled with the Anglo-French Entente which followed in 1904, was a quite insufficient cause for the lasting alienation of England and Germany. That estrangement as a long-term factor in European politics was due to Britain's fear of the German Fleet, to her fear that the greatest military power in Europe would not aspire to become a great naval power as well unless she wished to dominate the world. Had its intentions been pacific the German Government might reasonably have been expected to have taken these reactions into fuller account in determining its foreign policy; had they been more prudent they would have endeavoured at all costs to counterbalance their effect by bringing Russia within the German orbit. But the Russo-Japanese War came to confirm Bülow's belief both that Anglo-Russian reconciliation was impossible and that Germany could continue to enjoy a balancing position in Europe. "Partly from inward uncertainty," comments Professor Brandenburg, the German

[1] Ibid., p. 27.

[2] Von Tirpitz: *My Memoirs*, English trans., London 1919, Vol. I, p. 67.

historian,[1] "partly from subtle calculations, the Kaiser and Bülow pursued their policy of 'tacking', of two irons in the fire 'balance and counter-balance . . .' without ever clearly realizing the dangers inseparable from it, though a suspicion may occasionally have flashed across their consciousness."

Anglo-German Negotiations

But this is a digression though it is profitless to consider the background to the Anglo-German discussions about an alliance between 1899 and 1902 without keeping in mind the new atmosphere engendered by the introduction of the two Navy Bills. The possibility of an alliance was publicized by Chamberlain in a speech at Leicester on 29th November 1899. It had been explored earlier in a series of rather desultory conversations in which Lord Salisbury had engaged in the 'eighties, and in both cases the end in view was the same—a pact designed to ensure the peace of the world by bringing into existence a partnership between its greatest military and its greatest naval power. In his ill-judged speech at Leicester, Chamberlain, after emphasizing that England could no longer remain isolated, expressed his personal opinion "that the most natural alliance is that between us and the German Empire". Impulsive as always, he reinforced this proposal with the idea that the United States should be associated in this partnership thereby forming a new Triple Alliance which would be "a still more momentous factor in the future of the world". The reaction to the speech in Germany was violently hostile and its character suggested that any such alliance would be a *mariage de convenance* and not an association of peoples brought together by common ideals and fundamental friendship. At home it was clear that Chamberlain had gone too far and too fast.[2]

In the abstract the conception which Chamberlain pro-

[1] *From Bismarck to the World War*, p. 207.

[2] There is a full and interesting account of the negotiations from the English side in Spender, *Fifty Years of Europe*, chapter XIX. Cf. also Ensor, op. cit., pp. 260–1.

pounded had its attractions on the simple ground that such a combination of powers could guarantee that peace would be maintained without fear of a challenge. But when one looks a little closer into the motives which induced each party to explore the possibilities of an alliance this ideal purpose acquires an unreal, and even ominous aspect.

Germany, it is clear, would have welcomed an alliance on certain well-defined conditions. It was essential from the German point of view that Alsace-Lorraine be regarded as an integral part of German territory if the Treaty was to have any value against France, and that it should contain a guarantee of the integrity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire if it were to have much value against Russia. In 1901 the most likely cause of war for Germany was a conflict starting between Austria and Russia over their rival Balkan interests into which sooner or later Germany would be drawn on the side of Austria. None of the proposals which Chamberlain tentatively put forward covered such an eventuality and it is certain that Parliament would not have ratified a Treaty containing a precise or even a general guarantee to Austria of this kind. Why then, it may be asked, did not Germany throw over her Austrian ally to gain the alliance? Simply because in a Continental war she rated Austrian support higher than England's. "The British Navy", as M. Rouvier was later to complain, "does not run on wheels"; and Germany, fearful even then of Russia's unlimited resources in man-power, was not prepared to fight alone on two fronts. In other words no proposals which London was prepared to contemplate covered, or could cover, the risk which Berlin considered most likely to materialize, that is a war begun by Austria to preserve her position in the Balkans. A reason for this omission was the prevalence of the belief voiced by Lord Lansdowne to Count Hatzfeld, in 1901, that the Habsburg Monarchy "to human calculation cannot survive the death of the Emperor Francis Joseph". For this reason even that section of English public opinion which favoured an alliance with Germany as a powerful kindred people was not prepared for any entanglement with a

semi-Slav Empire which was believed to be foredoomed to disintegration at no very distant date. Here there was agreement with Lord Salisbury. "The liability of having to defend the German and Austrian frontiers against Russia", Lord Salisbury had noted, was "heavier than that of having to defend the British Isles against France. Even, therefore, in its most naked aspect the bargain would be a bad one for this country."[1] Behind this specific and formidable difficulty was profound mistrust on the German side. "The great objection", said Holstein, "to any understanding with the English is that the Russians would vent all their rage and disappointment on us and the English would take advantage of this to improve their position with Russia, in spite of the alliance and to treat us harshly on colonial questions."

The positive objections to a German alliance loomed as large in England as the negative difficulties. Such a pact would destroy even the semblance of a European balance; it would incur the bitter hostility of France even if the unpopular idea of a guarantee of Alsace-Lorraine to Germany could be evaded; it would place England in the position of a junior partner to the Triple Alliance; it would mean above all a long-term commitment in Europe since Germany insisted on a definitive Treaty. Each of these objections, to which must always be added the crucial problem of relations with the Dual Monarchy, was formidable, and cumulatively they placed it outside the range of possibility that a Cabinet, some of whose members (notably the Foreign Secretary Lansdowne) had strong pro-French sympathies, should recommend an agreement of this kind to the Commons—let alone that the House should sanction it. Besides these formidable and particular difficulties Salisbury's oft-quoted remark that this country could enter into no long-term alliance since a Treaty sanctioned by one Parliament might easily be rescinded by its successor need not be treated with too much solemnity.[2] It afforded indeed a most convenient pretext

[1] Gooch and Temperley, Vol. II, No. 86, p. 68.

[2] E.g., ibid p. 69.

for delaying tactics with just sufficient substance to make it plausible. Behind it lay the fact that Lord Salisbury remained "strongly averse to entangling this country in alliances with European countries".[1]

Lord Lansdowne's biographer speaks of the failure of the Anglo-German negotiations of 1901 as a turning-point in the history of the world.[2] This estimate is valid only if there was at any time the prospect of a successful outcome. The obvious superficial attraction of an alliance to both sides could not blind either to the less apparent but more fundamental divergences of interest. Was there in fact at any time a prospect of a successful conclusion to the protracted, informal negotiations which might indeed more accurately be termed an exchange of view? To answer this it is necessary first to put the question in another way, why did the conversations fail? On the one hand Professor Brandenburg claims that the alliance was not declined by Bülow. It fell through, he maintains, because England was not prepared to acquiesce in two conditions—incorporation in the Triple Alliance and immediate sanction by Parliament.[3] Germany insisted on the conditions instead of modifying them when failure seemed likely because she was confident both of her own strength and of the impossibility of a *rapprochement* between England and the Dual Alliance. "We ought not", said Bülow in 1901, "to show any uneasiness nor anxious haste but just leave hope shimmering on the horizon. In this hope lies our surest protection against England capitulating to Russia".[4] Faith in the wisdom of these tactics was reinforced by his belief that so long as the position between England and Germany was not clear, France would venture on no serious step in Morocco. "We must await developments with absolute reserve and maintain a sphinx-like demeanour." But events did not stay on Bülow and in retrospect his "belief in waiting" with "calm nerves and sealed lips" reduces

[1] Lord Newton: *Life of Lord Lansdowne*, London 1929, p. 207.
[2] Ibid., p. 208.
[3] Op. cit., p. 173.
[4] Quoted Brandenburg, op. cit., p. 181.

to something like ineptitude his conduct of Anglo-German relations and reveals at the last an alarming lack of a sense of proportion. He concentrated too much of the time on trifles, on minor concessions in Africa, and on tactics, seemingly unaware that there was any danger in delay and apparently unconscious of the magnitude of the choice before him. Germany, to quote Professor Brandenburg.[1] once more "acted in the negotiations like some peddling tradesman who before concluding arrangements for the transfer of his business to a large firm thinks it his duty to ask for a small sum in advance, a precaution which the world-wide firm of Great Britain regarded as an insult and as a sign that their prospective partner was not their equal". The long-term result of German concentration on trifles was merely to confuse the issue in the minds of statesmen in the two countries.

Apart from the formidable practical difficulties in reaching agreement on the terms of an alliance the negotiations proved fruitless because of a failure in psychological insight. German insistence on a carefully drafted treaty requiring formal parliamentary sanction showed not only an over-cautious approach but a failure in understanding. The friendly co-operation between England and France after 1904 did not depend upon the refinements of well-drafted formulae. In great political alliances there must be a certain width of outlook which enables an *entente* to develop into a friendship. But Germany's rigid insistence on a treaty with clauses designed to meet every possible contingency awakened no response in England, where this manifestation of German pedantry was mistrusted as much as the rigid obligations it involved were disliked. It would be fair therefore to conclude that while the breakdown of Anglo-German negotiations marked the end of a most significant episode in international relations, it was not a turning-point in the history of the world because for a variety of reasons both practical and psychological the negotiations had no chance of success. Some degree of mutual understanding is the condition of success in negotiation. That minimal measure did not in this case exist.

[1] Op. cit., p. 175–6.

Throughout the negotiations there was an unmistakable lack of candour on the German side and it accentuated a growing feeling of mistrust about Germany's ultimate intentions. This resulted not in a turning from a settled policy because there was no settled policy; but it did mean that an experiment which had been tried and failed was not to be tried again. There followed a crystallization of forces.

What would have been the outcome had Chamberlain's initiative been received in Berlin with the cordiality and broad-mindedness whose absence Professor Brandenburg so profoundly laments? It may be that there would have been timely and very proper misgivings in Parliament and the country. To the German people Chamberlain remained "the bloodhound of the Transvaal"; to the English people the Kaiser remained the author of the telegram to Kruger. But in the event of all obstacles being overcome and agreement reached in the form of an alliance or an *entente* what would have been the future course of history? It is idle perhaps to speculate, but from what we now know of the mind of the Wilhelmstrasse one far from remote possibility is that von Schlieffen's advice would have been accepted in 1905. As he then rightly advised Bülow the moment of Russia's defeat in the Far East was most favourable for the crushing of France. Russia could not sustain a war on two fronts. The result of acting on his advice was a foregone conclusion. France would have been quickly crushed; Russia defeated, without allies, threatened with revolution, left powerless and the Continent organized against Britain as the Kaiser had contemplated ten years earlier. If there is any justification in this line of thought Joseph Chamberlain's intervention in foreign politics was singularly ill-advised. The instinctive British inclination towards a balance in power is not to be so lightly disregarded as he supposed.

Personal and Psychological Mistrust

Personalities played a part in the breakdown of negotiations as well as principles and policies. That is not to say that responsi-

bility lies with von Bülow alone. At this time he was to a very real extent dependent upon the humours, the indiscretions and the eloquent flourishes of his Imperial master, and even later his liberty of action was not greatly increased, for the growing dependence of the Kaiser on his Chancellor was to some extent counterpoised by the increasing independence of von Tirpitz. But certainly in the early years of the century Bülow was the directing force in German foreign policy, not only because of his official position but also because of his unrivalled ability. He knew Europe in a way that even Lord Lansdowne, a Secretary of State, with unusually wide cosmopolitan interests, did not, for he had served (as has already been noted) in the German embassies at Petrograd, Bucharest and Rome before becoming Foreign Minister. Bülow did not, however, use his wide knowledge to give a firm, statesmanlike direction to German policy but preferred—and it suggests his diplomatic expertise was a liability not an asset—to win showy diplomatic triumphs rather than to improve relations with Germany's neighbours. He was a man of wide culture as may be seen from his Memoirs where a malicious wit enlivens the fascinating, complacent and even unctuous pages, and a brilliant debater seen to great advantage in the Reichstag. He possessed every talent short of greatness, and every political gift except the power to concentrate on ends as well as means. Emil Ludwig[1] has not been unfair in his rather flamboyant character sketch: "Bülow's brilliant talents", he writes, "none of which seemed typically German—rather for the most part Latin—made him appear like some fabulous many-coloured bird in the drab Prussian aviary, the more so because even his weaknesses were un-Prussian. Unprejudiced and unsystematic, always making new friends, nobody's enemy, captivating, something of a graceful cynic"—such was the man of whom the Kaiser said, "Bülow is to be my Bismarck". But the Kaiser was destined to have no Bismarck.

At the same time Bülow's powers of penetration are not to be underestimated, and the impressions which he recorded of

[1] *Kaiser Wilhelm II*, p. 200.

English statesmen, formed during his visit to London in 1899, are a testimony to his insight and will always retain their interest. "British politicians", he wrote,[1] "know little of the Continent. They do not know much more of Continental conditions than we do of those in Peru or Siam. To our ideas they are rather naïve. They are naïve in their candid self-seeking and again in the easy way in which they give their confidence. They believe with difficulty that others have bad motives. They are very calm, very easy-going, very optimistic. The South African War excites the Berliners more than it does political circles here. It is only mentioned when someone's relative has been shot." Balfour, attracted by science and philosophy, reminded Bülow of a German statesman of the 'fifties; Chamberlain impressed him as "the modern merchant, very shy, very decided, very scrupulous, very much aware of his own advantages and yet sincere, for he knows that without sincerity there can be no big business"; the Duke of Devonshire as the typically calm and distinguished *grand seigneur* to whom his sport and horses are more important than any political question, and "who deals with political issues with good sense but always on the assumption that England is superior to all other Powers and has nothing serious to fear". Rather patronizing praise was bestowed on Goschen, the First Lord of the Admiralty. "He has", remarked Bülow, "all the intelligent industry of a German official; he ought to do more for the navy than any of his predecessors."

The building of the naval base at Rosyth, planned while Goschen was still at the Admiralty, is perhaps the most fitting epilogue to this phase in Anglo-German relations. In 1903, Parliament sanctioned the formation of a North Sea Fleet, based on Rosyth. Thus for the first time English naval dispositions faced towards Germany and not towards France or Russia. This was a far-reaching development which did not spring from the breakdown in the alliance negotiations between England and Germany alone, for their failure did not necessarily involve the estrangement of the two countries. But it had left inevitably

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XV, p. 413; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 113–4.

a certain uneasiness in the minds of English statesmen, which taken in conjunction with the naval propaganda of the Kaiser and von Tirpitz suggested to them the possibility that "others might have bad motives". Naïve British statesmen may possibly have been, judged by the standards of an accomplished European diplomatist, but they did, perhaps because of the very limitations in their knowledge, incline towards a wide view; and a reconciliation with the Dual Alliance, which seemed so impracticable in Berlin—despite the warnings which were received from Eckardstein the German Ambassador in London—did not appear impossible to them. It was indeed not long before that understanding with the Dual Alliance which Bülow dismissed so lightly "as a hideous spectre invented to terrify us"[1] began to assume reality.

[1] *Vide* Brandenburg, op. cit., p. 157.

Chapter V

THE END OF ENGLAND'S ISOLATION

IT was Mussolini who said with a wisdom that he later neglected that "there is no such thing as originality in foreign policy". It is in fact true that the foreign policy of a state is almost wholly determined by the unchanging facts of its history and geographical position. The personality of a Foreign Minister is certainly a matter of importance, but as Dr. Gooch has observed,[1] the main element in his policy must be in the national tradition, based as it always is on the foundations of geography. It was this national tradition which drove Russia, after the failure of her Far Eastern policy, towards Constantinople and the warmer waters of the Mediterranean. It was this tradition which impelled France to seek to regain her lost provinces on the Rhineland frontier, and it was this tradition which drove England into association with France and Russia once the naval supremacy, upon which her security traditionally depended, was challenged. It was the determining factor in ending England's isolation and in the consequent creation of a counterpoise to the predominance of the Central Powers. Lord Lansdowne and Sir Edward Grey influenced the application of this policy, but it was the tradition of centuries which determined its adoption.

The Franco-Italian Rapprochement *of* 1902

The year 1902, which saw the end of England's isolation brought about by the signature of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (to which we will return shortly), is also noteworthy in that it marked in Europe a shift in the balance of power from the side

[1] *Before the War*, Vol. I, p. v.

of the Triple to the side of the Dual Alliance. There was nothing final and explicit about the change in the direction of Italian policy, but it was made unmistakably clear in 1902 that her loyalty to the Triple Alliance was becoming doubtful. Already, by the Mediterranean Agreement concluded with Britain in 1887, she had indicated to her partners that she would not participate in a war in which England was on the opposing side, and in 1902 this reservation was paralleled by a secret understanding reached with France. The negotiation of this secret agreement was preceded by the settlement in 1900 of the Franco-Italian colonial feud of some twenty years standing about spheres of interest in North Africa. As was the case in many other colonial disputes, compromise was comparatively easy because there still remained in Africa ground for manœuvre sufficient to allow for the adjustment of rival claims. In the Franco-Italian colonial settlement recourse was made to the familiar expedient of satisfying both parties by granting to each a reversionary interest in the redistribution of the territory of the Sublime Porte. Italy's reversionary claim to Tripoli was recognized by France—though this had necessarily to remain secret since Tripoli was a Turkish province—in return for the recognition by Italy of France's paramount interest in Morocco.

The Franco-Italian colonial settlement had its importance, as the sequel was to show, but to France a North African agreement was not enough. Her Foreign Minister, Delcassé, deeply mistrusted the implications of that clause in the Triple Alliance which obliged Italy to fight if Germany were attacked by France. In form the obligation was purely defensive, but in Paris it was felt that France might easily be provoked to aggression on the 1870 model, in order to ensure Italian support for Germany. This was a fear which could be removed only by an understanding with Italy about the interpretation to be placed upon this particular provision.

Agreement between France and Italy with a view to removing all reasonable French misgivings about Italian obligations to the Central Powers was finally reached in 1902, the year in which the

Triple Alliance was renewed. Each country undertook to maintain neutrality not only in the case of direct or indirect aggression, but also if the other "as a result of direct provocation, should find itself compelled in defence of its honour or security to take the initiative of a declaration of war".

The agreement was destined to have a decisive influence on the direction of Italian foreign policy. It marked her first significant departure from strict loyalty to the Central Powers and it indicated also her anxiety, as a State that was not quite a Great Power, to reinsure with the rival Power group in Europe. For France it was almost equally significant in that it was the first step in a carefully considered policy of strengthening her position *vis-à-vis* the Central Powers. By it Delcassé had taken the prudent precaution of eliminating the possibilities of Franco-Italian conflict in the Mediterranean and of Italian participation in a war provoked by Germany, before embarking upon the more ambitious policy of effecting a major readjustment of the balance of power by initiating negotiations with England.

From the standpoint of Power politics in Europe the *rapprochement* between the two Latin peoples was fraught with far-reaching implications, which however low might be the contemporary estimate of Italian military strength were undeniably favourable to the Dual Alliance. And it is worth noting that while credit for this readjustment in the European balance of power must be attributed principally to Delcassé as the Foreign Minister, the first stage in whose policy was thereby accomplished, it is doubtful whether the negotiations would have been crowned with success had it not been for the pertinacity and the skill of M. Barrère, the French Ambassador at Rome, whose work is to be compared with that of the other great French ambassador of this period, M. Paul Cambon. Barrère was confronted by the more formidable task since he had, unlike Cambon, to detach a country from a rival political group. Its successful achievement was a tribute to the skill of one of the great masters of the old diplomacy.

The text of the Italian declaration of 1902 remained a secret

till 1920. Curiously enough, its content was not communicated to the Chief of the French General Staff, as General (later Marshal) Joffre has recorded, till 10th June 1909, with the result that "an important and useless army" was kept in the Alps in the intervening seven years.[1] The visit of President Loubet to Rome in 1904—the first visit of the head of a Catholic nation since the downfall of the Temporal Power—however made clear at the time its real character. Bülow gave no expression to German anxiety and confined himself to remarking in the Reichstag, where so complacent a view was not universally shared, that "in a happy marriage the husband does not mind the wife indulging in an innocent extra dance. The main thing is that she should not elope." Privately he took a less light-hearted view though observing "the Treaty with Italy was no matter of life and death to us".[2] But Rouvier's comment at the Cabinet which decreed Delcassé's fall three years later sums up more accurately what Germany really felt, but considered it imprudent to disclose. "L'Allemagne", he said, "vous reproche d'avoir débauché l'Italie."

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 has its lasting place in European history because it was the first sign that England was wavering in her allegiance to a policy of isolation. It is true, of course, that the conclusion of this Treaty only indirectly affects the European balance, but certain points about it should be none the less recorded here. The Alliance was in the first instance a Treaty of limited liability. It covered British interests in China and Japanese interests in China and Korea. As Lord Lansdowne recorded, after a vital conversation with Baron Hayashi, the Japanese Minister in London: "Japan's real concern was for Corea. It could not stand alone and the Japanese were prepared

[1] *The Memoirs of Marshal Joffre*, trans. London 1932, 2 vols., Vol. I, p. 37.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XVIII, p. 523; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 167.

to fight rather than let it fall into Russian hands."[1] But only in the event of either party being attacked by more than one Power did the Treaty engage the other to come to its assistance. For a single-handed conflict with Russia the Japanese had been prepared throughout these negotiations. In all other contingencies the observance of strict neutrality and "efforts to prevent other Powers joining in hostilities" against its ally was the limit of what was pledged. In 1905 the agreement became technically an offensive and defensive alliance when its scope was extended to cover India and Eastern Asia generally, but in the years which were to prove of critical importance its operation was restricted to the Far East alone. This meant that the Treaty was in practice for this period more favourable to Japan than this country. The only vital threat to Japan's security at that time lay in the expansion of Russia in the Far East, whereas Britain's interests in China were only of incidental importance to her. And indeed the momentous consequence of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, as Mr. Spender suggests,[2] was not that it provided security for British interests in China but that by isolating Russia it paved the way for the single-handed duel between her and Japan, in which the Russian defeat ended for just forty years her dreams of expansion in China. By defeat in the Far East, Russia inevitably turned her eyes once more upon the Balkans. It is not too much to say that the Bosnian crisis of 1908 and the Balkan wars of 1912–13, are the European consequences of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

Its final consequences in Asia are still working themselves out. At the first Inter-Asian Conference, held in New Delhi in the spring of 1947, the opinion was recorded that the Japanese defeat of Russia more than forty years earlier had been one of the events that had changed first the outlook and then the history of a continent. The victory of Japan over a great European empire had stirred the political consciousness of Asia's "myriad-peopled lands". No longer were they prepared to acquiesce with easy

[1] Gooch and Temperley, Vol. II, p. 91. Cf. also Lord Newton, op. cit. pp. 220–1.

[2] *Fifty Years of Europe:* p. 207.

fatalism in the White Man's predominance and in his right to rule the East. After 1905 they dreamed and they worked for the day when both might be successfully challenged. In Asia it is forgotten that the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902 was the condition of Japan's victory three years later. That is as it should be. But we, at least, have cause to remember, for it is no exaggeration to say that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was instrumental in bringing about a series of events which undermined the all-important psychological foundation of British rule in India.

The conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance provoked certain immediate, even if incidental, reactions in Europe. In Paris the Treaty aimed at France's Russian ally was interpreted, so M. Cambon told Lord Lansdowne, as a check to Delcassé's policy of an Anglo-French *rapprochement*. And as a corollary in Germany the alliance was welcomed as widening still further the gulf between England and the Dual Alliance, and was even described as "the one gleam of light" in the situation because it seemed to confirm German forecasts of an Anglo-Russian War.[1] "At last", remarked the Kaiser commenting on this new departure in English foreign policy, "at last the noodles have had a lucid interval."[2]

In defending the Treaty in the Lords against Lord Spencer's criticism that strong reasons indeed were needed to justify a departure from a policy of isolation, Lord Lansdowne made what is generally recognized as an implicit answer to Lord Salisbury's defence of that policy which has already been quoted.[3] "I do not think", he said, "that anyone can have watched the recent course of events . . . without realizing that many of the arguments which a generation ago might have been adduced in support of a policy of isolation have ceased to be entitled to the same consideration now. What do we see on all sides? We observe a tendency to ever-increasing naval and military armaments

[1] Brandenburg, op. cit., p. 184.

[2] For Bülow's comments, see *Die Grosse Politik*, XVII, p. 49; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 15.

[3] *Vide* p. 66.

involving ever-increasing burdens upon the people for the defence of whose countries their armaments were accumulated. There is this also—that in these days war breaks out with a suddenness which was unknown in former days when nations were not as they are now, armed to the teeth. When we consider these features of the international situation we must surely feel that a country would indeed be endowed with an extraordinary amount of self-sufficiency which took upon itself to say that it would accept without question, without reservation, the doctrine that all foreign alliances were to be avoided as necessarily embarrassing and objectionable. Therefore I would entreat you . . . to look at the matter strictly on its merits and not to allow your judgment to be swayed by musty formulae and old-fashioned superstitions as to the desirability of pursuing a policy of isolation for this country. . . . *Prima facie* if there be no countervailing objections, the country which has the good fortune to possess allies is more to be envied than the country which is without them." With that speech and the signature of the Alliance the age of isolation came to an end.

The Anglo-French Entente

While it is true that a *rapprochement* between England and France was regarded as practical politics in London (in contrast to Berlin) that is not to say that in 1902 such a *rapprochement* was contemplated as part of a settled British policy. It was not for the simple reason that there was *no* settled British policy. There is a note, dated January 1902, written by Sir Thomas Sanderson, then Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in which he says: "It has happened, not infrequently, that in the last few years Count Hatzfeld has come to me and complained, 'Voilà une chose que j'ai causé avec Lord Salisbury et que le diable me prenne si je comprends la politique de votre gouvernement!' To which I had to reply that he ought to know that we had not yet a policy and worked from hand to mouth."[1] This was two years after Lansdowne's accession to the Foreign Office, but it suggests at least

[1] Gooch and Temperley, Vol. II, No. 98, p. 88.

that it was not till after Lord Salisbury's resignation in 1902 that the Foreign Secretary was able to give a firmer and more definite direction to English policy and that even then improvization, characteristically enough, remained its predominant feature.

A former Governor-General of Canada, and Viceroy of India, Lord Lansdowne had exceptional experience of Imperial affairs; to which was added the cosmopolitan interests inherited from a great Whig family and accentuated, in his case, by the influence of a French mother. In later life he spoke of his years at the Foreign Office as incomparably the most interesting period of his life.[1] Lord Lansdowne, more sceptical than his predecessor of the value of isolation, was likewise more impressed than his successor, Sir Edward Grey, with the need for the maintenance of a European balance of power.[2] For this reason, if for no other, he inclined towards the Dual Alliance and was receptive when sounded by M. Cambon, French Ambassador to the Court of St. James, on behalf of Delcassé.

After his visit of 1899 Bülow observed that if the British public realized how sharp and deep was the German dislike of England they would change their view of the possibility of an Anglo-German *rapprochement*.[3] In France, especially after Fashoda, anti-British feeling was almost as marked as in Germany. "I can only say", reported Lord Dufferin, then Ambassador in Paris, "that the feeling of all classes in this country towards us is one of bitter and unmitigated dislike." How was it that this antipathy had no lasting consequences? There are many answers, but one of them is certainly—because Delcassé was at that time French Foreign Minister. After serving an apprenticeship in law and journalism, Delcassé had entered politics as a consistent advocate of the tightening of the Dual Alliance. Happily for the future of Anglo-French relations, Delcassé was in office during the Fashoda crisis; and even in that hour of extreme provocation he told the British Ambassador that an alliance with this country was the ultimate

[1] Newton, op. cit., p. 195.
[2] Cf. Gooch: *Before the War*, Vol. I, pp. 5–6.
[3] *Die Grosse Politik*, XV, p. 413.

aim of his policy. And Fashoda had convinced him of the very important fact that the easing of the interminable friction between the two countries in North Africa, and especially in Egypt, was an essential preliminary to any wider political understanding. But the question that must be asked is: Was Delcassé's anxiety for Anglo-French co-operation an end in itself or merely a means to the greater end of reasserting France's position in Europe and thereby giving an opportunity of avenging 1870? Of the answer there is little doubt.

Delcassé proceeded towards his objective by stages. He reached, as we have seen, an understanding with Italy in 1902, and he approached Madrid, to try to secure Spanish agreement to his policy in North Africa, without much success, before embarking on wider discussions in London at the end of the same year. The exchange of visits between King Edward and President Loubet in 1903 furthered his policy by leading to a marked improvement in relations, though when King Edward spoke in London of "the true friendship, indeed I will say the affection which my country feels for France", he was indulging in diplomatic over-statement.

The negotiations between the British and French governments were concerned exclusively with colonial questions where once again, however formidable the conflict of interest might seem, there was at least room for manœuvre and for compromise. The whole approach was modest and practical by comparison with that adopted in the earlier Anglo-German conversations. There was again, by contrast, a limited objective in view. Taken in conjunction these differences explain in some measure why Anglo-French reconciliation was brought about while Anglo-German negotiations failed. The aim of the Anglo-French talks was the ending of colonial friction. Both sides were prepared for sacrifices provided they could secure fair compensation. France wanted a free hand in Morocco, England a free hand in Egypt. Lansdowne's maxim throughout the discussions was firmness in Egypt, pliability elsewhere.[1] He would not, for

[1] G. P. Gooch: *Before the War*, Vol. I, p. 45.

example, agree to defer the surrender of France's rights in the financial control of Egypt till she was in effective control of the finances of Morocco. When, however, the future of French fishing rights in Newfoundland constituted a source of friction, Lord Cromer, learning that "the danger of a breakdown of the negotiations is serious", telegraphed from Cairo advising concessions to avoid this "calamity". Lansdowne thereupon modified his demands. The fruits of compromise were soon to be harvested, and by 14th March 1904, Lansdowne could write to Cromer:[1] "The French negotiations after sticking in all sorts of ignoble ruts suddenly began to travel with the speed of an express train. I attribute Delcassé's desire to get on quickly partly to doubts as to the stability of his own government and partly to similar suspicions of the stability of ours."

What contributed most to the success of the Anglo-French negotiations was the steady determination of both sides to see the negotiations through to the end whatever the difficulties. Lansdowne and Declassé knew what they wanted, and both were prepared to make concessions in order to remove the formidable difficulties which stood in the way of its realization. M. Delcassé, remarked Cambon on one occasion to Lord Lansdowne, is a man who sincerely desires to liquidate all our differences and who is courageous enough to ignore clamour. "But even he would require a lot *d'estomac* to assume responsibility for a settlement of the Egyptian question." "Do you not think", retorted Lansdowne, "that we need *d'estomac* to give you Morocco?"[2] It was what Bülow, for all his subtlety, lacked.

The Anglo-French Entente was announced to the world as a purely colonial settlement. Its most important provision gave France a free hand in Morocco in return for the cession to England of her rights and of her historic position in Egypt. In other parts of the world it liquidated outstanding points of friction. To the Foreign Secretary it was a colonial agreement, nothing more

[1] Lord Zetland: *Life of Lord Cromer*, London 1932, p. 281.
[2] Quoted Gooch: *Before the War*, Vol. I, p. 149.

—a fitting crown to a career spent in the service of the Empire. But it was not so to the French Foreign Minister. To Lansdowne "one step's enough for me", but Delcassé saw "the distant scene". Early in 1904 he remarked: "If Russia keeps her hands free in Europe, and if I conclude my agreements with England, Italy and Spain, you will see Morocco fall into our garden like a ripe fruit." And later he went on expansively saying that he would not be content merely with a liquidation of colonial grievances. "This liquidation should lead us, and I desire that it shall lead us, to a political alliance with England. Ah, my dear friend, what beautiful horizons would open before us. Just think! If we could lean both on Russia and on England how strong we should be in relation to Germany. A Franco-British Alliance has always been my dream even during the Fashoda crisis. Now I can believe I'm near my goal." After a moment's pause he added: "It would be difficult to combine with the Russian Alliance. But each day has its task."[1] Such thoughts were far from the mind of Lansdowne. His country had no vulnerable frontier on the Rhineland and no lost provinces in Europe. He was more than content to be the signatory of a far-reaching colonial agreement. But Delcassé, ever mindful of the draped statues in the Place de la Concorde, aspired to be, what in truth he was, the architect of the Triple Entente. And it was Delcassé's interpretation of the Entente that was to be justified by history. But on the short-term view no judgment was more sound than that of Kühlmann, who, in a memorandum to Bülow drafted at Tangier on 1st October 1904, said: "The Egyptian question is dead, the Moroccan question very much alive."[2]

German Reactions to the Entente

German reactions to the Anglo-French Entente must be studied in relation to the general European situation. In March 1903 Bülow, with reference to the early stages in the Anglo-French negotiations, advised Holstein that they "could hardly

[1] Cf. ibid., p. 153.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XX, p. 31; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 198.

take things too coolly".[1] By the spring of 1904 Russia had already suffered severe defeats in the Japanese War, and her preoccupation there provided an opportunity which Austria was expected to seize of settling the problems of the Near East in her own favour. Only the candid admission of the Austrian Ambassador that the Dual Monarchy had not enough confidence in herself to risk such an adventure reassured Berlin on this score. Germany, however, had confidence, and her interest lay not in the Balkans but in the West. The predicament of France, her ally bogged down in the Far East, and England, her new friend, the ally of Japan, made a forward policy more than tempting. General von Schlieffen, the Chief of the General Staff, interrogated by Bülow, declared that Russia could not possibly wage a war on two fronts, and added: "if the necessity of war with France should present itself the present moment would undoubtedly be favourable." In that he was surely right. No more favourable moment for the Central Powers was destined to occur. The strategic situation was therefore most reassuring for Bülow. While he did not want war, he was determined to use the "favourable" moment to break up the Anglo-French Entente and if possible to detach Russia from France as well. He was not prepared to see the European balance of power readjusted to Germany's disadvantage without a challenge. The twin assumptions on which he framed his policy were that under pressure the Entente would collapse and that once rid of Delcassé Anglo-French relations would deteriorate. Delcassé he described many years later, in his Memoirs, as[2] "the one sinister figure on the European chess-board" whose "overthrow was the right aim to pursue".[2]

Bülow elected to test the Entente in Morocco, and that is why from 1904 onwards Morocco moved suddenly into the forefront of the picture, rivalling Alsace-Lorraine as an apple of Franco-German discord. The development of the dispute into critical proportions was rapid. In April 1904 the Chancellor told the Reichstag that "we have no reason to suppose that this

[1] See Brandenburg, op. cit., p. 193.

[2] *Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 82.

agreement is directed against us in any way whatever. From the point of view of Germany we have nothing to complain of. But we must protect our interests in Morocco and we shall protect them." This was reasonable, indeed better than France was entitled to expect, for on one point Germany had just cause for complaint. The secret articles of the Entente to which Sir Edward Grey, who succeeded Lansdowne in 1905, later, lightly and misleadingly, referred to as "a clause or two of no importance", in fact contemplated the ultimate partition of Morocco, the larger part to come under French control. Delcassé, who had consulted Spain, who had secured the agreement of Italy in 1900 and of England in 1904, had neglected to secure the prior assent of Germany. On this point his conduct is open to severe criticism, for he had thereby given Germany a legitimate cause for grievance which indeed she could scarcely be expected wholly to overlook. Proximity of frontiers, argued Holstein, is an insufficient justification for preferential political treatment and "if we let our toes be trodden on in Morocco without saying a word we encourage others to do the same elsewhere".[1] Bülow was not reluctant to accept this reasoning and to act upon it. The next step was clear. Germany demanded the open door in Morocco. She came forward as the champion of international rights against French designs for exclusive control. Germany had a good case. With glee the Chancellor reported to the Kaiser that the American Minister, on the express instructions of President Roosevelt, said of this "open door" policy: "That is just exactly what we also want."[2]

Had Bülow entertained no ulterior motives it would have been reasonable for him to have submitted the German case to the French Government. He did not do this. Instead he persuaded a for once reluctant Kaiser to intervene with dramatic effect. The gesture considered appropriate was a landing at Tangier on 31st March 1905. At the last moment the Kaiser, prompted partly by very proper misgivings about reactions in other countries and

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XX, p. 207.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XX, p. 301; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 224.

partly by not ill-founded fears about the tempting target that an emperor on a restive Arab steed might provide to exiled anarchists in North Africa, expressed an anxiety to withdraw. But Bülow was insistent, and to ensure against any last-minute change of plan arranged for the news of the impending landing to be announced in the *Nord-Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* and informed the Kaiser of his action.[1] So at the last the Kaiser had no choice.

The ostensible purpose of this well-staged, dramatic incident was to affirm Germany's interest in the future disposition of the disintegrating Moroccan State. While the aim was reasonable, the manner selected for its announcement was alarmingly flamboyant. The impression produced in Europe was that Germany, which had hitherto shown no interest in Morocco, was using it as a pretext to force war on France. The impression was not entirely unfounded, for Bülow admitted that he wished to see whether France would dare to mobilize. His real intentions, in ascending order of importance, were, to secure compensation for Germany elsewhere in Africa, to force the resignation of Delcassé from the French Government and to rupture the newly-formed Anglo-French Entente. These intentions had to be disguised, and there is no doubt that the resulting veil of secrecy which surrounded German policy produced the most disturbing effect. "If foreign diplomatists inquire about the purpose of the landing at Tangier give no information," Bülow instructed the Foreign Office, "but emulate the Sphinx who, surrounded by inquisitive tourists, gives nothing away." Ominous silence was well calculated to increase the fears of France.

Bülow was in fact successful in one of his more important aims. He secured the dismissal of Delcassé. The latter's position was indeed desperately weak. He had pursued a forward policy in Morocco without consulting Germany. France's ally, Russia, was in no position to give any effective support, and France could not withstand Germany single-handed. Everything, therefore, depended upon whether England would both fight on the

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XX, p. 262; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 223.

French side and would prove an ally, capable of halting the German military machine, without having made any preparations to meet such an eventuality. On both these points there was a difference of opinion between M. Rouvier, a Premier prudent to the point of timidity, and his Foreign Minister. Delcassé interpreted the cordial messages he had received from Lansdowne as proof that Britain was prepared to conclude an immediate military alliance against Germany. On this point Delcassé was mistaken. The furthest Lansdowne had gone was to say that the two governments "should discuss any contingencies by which they might in the course of events find themselves confronted". This was not in any sense a promise of military co-operation, and Lansdowne never supposed that he had offered an alliance. Later sensational articles by Stephane Lauzanne,[1] in *Le Matin*, which purported to give Delcassé's point of view, helped to propagate rumours even of a contemplated British expeditionary force to the Elbe. The British documents show that such rumours had no foundation, though Delcassé had convinced himself that the offer of an alliance had been made. In any event, M. Rouvier was not impressed, for the British Army was negligible and the Royal Navy, he observed, "cannot run on wheels". The Cabinet unanimously followed Rouvier, and Delcassé fell on 1st June 1905. France had sacrificed her Foreign Minister in an attempt, almost wholly vain, to placate Germany. In Berlin Bülow watched the French Cabinet crisis with cynical satisfaction, confident of its outcome and of the wisdom of German policy.[2]

Delcassé was indeed bitterly criticized at home. Clemenceau later charged him with having inflicted on France the greatest humiliation in her history; Jaurès detected "dans les tortueuses ténèbres du delcassisme" the spectre of war.[3] It is certainly true

[1] For a second and a sadder moment Lauzanne was destined to cross the page of history. An old man, he was condemned in 1944 to twenty years' solitary confinement for collaboration with the Germans during the Second World War.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XX, p. 368; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 227.

[3] Baumont, op. cit., p. 360.

that French policy in Morocco had been allowed to outpace the military strength that backed it, and equally true that Delcassé had been ill-advised in not trying to secure, in advance, German acquiescence in that policy. But in the last analysis Delcassé had to go because France was not ready to fight Germany alone and he had neglected to draw the proper conclusions from that all too evident fact. His achievements, however, remained, and as Dr. Gooch has said, despite the humiliations of his exit he left his country incomparably stronger than he found her on his accession to office.[1]

The Conference at Algeciras

Having secured the dismissal of the hated Foreign Minister, Bülow pushed towards his third objective, the breaking of the Entente. A Conference proposed by the Sultan of Morocco and backed by Germany was accepted by France with great reluctance and only on pain of war, because it wholly undermined her pretensions to an exclusive reversionary interest in the Sultan's territory. The subjects to be discussed at the Conference were drafted in accordance with German wishes. Considerable though Germany's diplomatic successes had therefore been, it was not because of them but because Germany's ulterior aim was understood in London, that a major crisis was provoked. Count Metternich, the German Ambassador to the Court of St. James, whose reports faithfully reflected opinion in London, informed Bülow[2] "that the Moroccan question was regarded by everyone here as a trial of strength with the Anglo-French Entente and our Moroccan policy as an attempt to smash it up. Hence the determined opposition." The Kaiser, who rewarded Bülow with the title of Prince on the morrow of Delcassé's fall, and who proclaimed that the lesson to be learnt from recent events was: "Hurrah! for dry powder and well-sharpened swords", underlined by characteristic over-emphasis the nature of German policy. Sphinx-like silence was an art he never acquired. But Bü-

[1] *Before the War*, Vol. I, p. 183.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXI, p. 52, and Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 237.

low admitted later, in his Memoirs, that he had not hesitated to confront France with war though he relied upon his finesse and the unlikelihood that a challenge would be risked to avert it. The impression this policy produced on outside observers may be judged by a letter from Grey to Haldane, dated 8th January 1906, in which he wrote: "Persistent reports and little indications are reaching me that Germany means to attack France in the spring. . . . These are not to be altogether disregarded."[1]

This atmosphere of crisis and of continuing tension served Germany ill, and the outcome of the Conference, which assembled at Algeciras in January 1906, showed that Bülow would have been wiser to have halted with the fall of Delcassé. Instead of effecting a breach in the Entente, the insistence on a Conference welded it. It was Sir Edward Grey's opinion that "the French were humiliated because of an agreement we had made with them", and he interpreted Bülow's policy as a warning to France. The reaction in England generally was marked. Campbell-Bannerman, in his first official statement after the Liberal victory at the polls, emphatically reaffirmed the solidarity of the Entente Cordiale. When Cambon discussed the eventuality of war, Grey gave it as his "personal opinion" that in the event of a German attack on France in consequence of an agreement with Britain, public opinion "would be strongly moved in favour of France."[2] That hardly sounds substantial as an assurance, but it was a significant statement the force of which was enhanced by its coming from the new Liberal Foreign Secretary. Moreover, Grey took a considerable further step in assenting to "unofficial conversations" between the respective war offices and admiralties, even though he was at great pains to make it clear that these contacts did not commit either government. Owing to the exigencies of the elections it was difficult to secure prior Cabinet sanction for these military conversations, and only Campbell-Bannerman, Haldane, Asquith and Ripon were con-

[1] Quoted Sir Frederick Maurice: *Haldane*, London 1938, Vol. I, pp. 172–3.

[2] *Vide* letter to Sir F. Bertie, 10th January 1906, reprinted in Grey, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 133–6.

sulted before the decision, momentous as it was destined to prove, was reached.[1] The Foreign Secretary was firmly of the opinion that the hand of the Government and of Parliament remained absolutely free in the event of war and he persisted in that view till the end. But in fact the seeds of a defensive alliance had been sown early in 1906. It was this that Grey did not wholly understand.[2]

Informal military conversations, the opinion of Grey that English military aid would be forthcoming in the event of war over Morocco, consistent diplomatic support for France at Algeciras—these were the British reactions to Bülow's policy. The reactions to it elsewhere were scarcely more encouraging. At Algeciras the open support of two great European Powers, of Russia and of England, to which must be added the secret support of the United States, indicated a readjustment of the European balance in favour of France. Germany, on the other hand, though she championed the principle of the "open door", received wavering support from her allies. Italy, tied by her secret understanding with France about Tripoli and Morocco, gave further evidence of her now lukewarm attachment to the Triplice, whilst Austria, her gaze fixed on the south-east, was determined not to quarrel with France. On the other hand, it is not to be denied that Bülow achieved a measure of success. He had secured recognition for his main public contention, that the Moroccan question was the concern of all the Powers. It was his ulterior aims that had been frustrated, and it was because their character was generally understood that the measure of the rebuff which German policy had received could not be disguised. In these circumstances and in the light of the part America had played at Algeciras it is hardly surprising that President Roose-

[1] G. M. Trevelyan maintains in his biography of Grey, *Grey of Fallodon* (London 1937), pp. 133–6, that an equal share of the responsibility for not calling a Cabinet rests with the Prime Minister, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman. There is even some doubt about whether Asquith knew of the conversations till 1908.

[2] Ibid., chapter VI.

velt's request to the German Ambassador in Washington to send his telegraphic congratulations to the Kaiser "on his epoch-making success at Algeciras"; with the tribute that "His Majesty's policy has been masterly from beginning to end"; was received a trifle dubiously by the Ambassador, who observed cautiously, "that it did not seem to agree with the facts", though he was convinced that the President was speaking "entirely from the heart."[1] The Kaiser, however, was not.

In the Reichstag Bülow defended his Moroccan policy, saying that while concessions had been made at Algeciras for peace there had been no surrender of the two governing principles of the open door and the maintenance of German prestige. But no speech could cloak the fact that Germany had been rebuffed in her wider aims; that her position in Europe had been weakened; and only the opportune faint of the Chancellor in the course of the Reichstag debate moderated damaging criticism at home. Such was Von Bülow's reputation that even historians have affected to believe, on no solid evidence, that so timely a collapse must have been deliberate.[2] The Kaiser's contribution was a telegram to Count Goluchowski, the prudent and pacific Pole, who was Foreign Minister of the Dual Monarchy, congratulating him on his part as "the brilliant second" on the duelling ground. This tactless, clumsy tribute embarrassed Vienna and signed its recipient's political death warrant.[3]

Harold Nicolson's verdict on the Conference is that at Algeciras Germany lost the confidence of Europe and, what was even more important for her, the confidence of America,[4] but he is perhaps rather too sweeping. What is certain is that Germany had lost the confidence of Western Europe. It remained for German policy in the Bosnian crisis three years later to convince Russia that France's realistic, sombre interpretation of German

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXI, p. 311; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 248.

[2] Cf. Bülow's comments: *Memoirs*, Vol. II, pp. 204–6.

[3] Ibid., pp. 216–17.

[4] H. Nicolson: *Lord Carnock: A Study of the Old Diplomacy*. London 1930, pp. 198–9.

ambitions was the right one. And for this loss of confidence, earned by bullying manners and lack of candour rather than by policy deliberately conceived, there was no adequate compensation. The degree of the consolidation of the Entente was the measure of Bülow's failure. "If", says M. Tardieu, "one wished to define the change that took place, one would say that at Algeciras the Entente passed from a static to a dynamic state. Its force increased from the speed thereby acquired."[1] Count Metternich's verdict from London was much the same: "The Entente Cordiale has stood its diplomatic baptism of fire and emerged strengthened." "Neither King Edward nor his government, nor even the British people", he had reported in July 1905 to Bülow, "wish for a war with Germany. But there are causes which might lead to it. The Moroccan question has brought us a step nearer war with England."[2] So at Algeciras the German Empire was for the first time brought into contact with the probability that England would once again almost instinctively return to her traditional policy of opposition to a military Power which threatened to dominate the Continent. It was a prospect which Berlin could not regard with equanimity. A balance of power in Europe was a spectre which Bismarck's genius had endeavoured to destroy for ever.

[1] Quoted in Nicolson, op. cit., p. 199.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XX, p. 647; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 232–3.

Chapter VI

THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN CONVENTION

IN 1904–5 Bülow had pursued policies for which Morocco afforded a pretext but not a justification. Growing indications of probable failure made the more likely an attempt on the part of Germany to reinsure her position in Eastern Europe. As early as May 1903 Von Eckardstein foresaw an Anglo-French Entente likely to be followed by an attempt to extend the understanding to Russia.[1] Some weeks later Count Bernstorff reported to the Chancellor from London that if there were any idea of a Triple Entente, English opinion would favour a British-French-American combination. This preference for America as against Russia was partly due, in Count Bernstorff's opinion, to the belief that Russia was "a bad investment", especially as every shilling contributed by Britain could be used to reduce British influence in Asia; but still more because in any combination with America there would be "an apparent atmosphere of freedom . . . which would very greatly attract the British Philistine".[2] But the choice was illusory, for America was not prepared to contemplate any commitment in Europe. The fact that the Dual Alliance survived the almost simultaneous strain of the Entente and of the Russo-Japanese War, in which one Entente partner was the ally of Japan and the other the ally of Russia, suggested even more forcibly that Bülow after all might have been mistaken in his once complacent conviction that an Anglo-Russian *rapprochement* was no more than "a spectre" to frighten Germany.

Bismarck by means first of the *Dreikaiserbund* and then by reconciling to himself at least the provisions of the Austro-Ger-

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XVII, p. 570; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 172.
[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XVII, p. 575; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 174.

man Treaty of 1879 with the 1887 Reinsurance Treaty with Russia, had hoped almost against hope to preserve the semblance of concord between the three autocracies of Central and Eastern Europe. That the fundamental rivalry of Austria and Russia in the Balkans should be delayed even if it could not indefinitely be averted had been a governing principle of his policy. But there was no doubt, from the time of the Congress of Berlin, that if a choice had had to be made Bismarck would have come down on the Austrian side. He was astute enough to avoid the dilemma, but his successors were not. The first consequence of their failure was the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894. But the absorption of Russia in the Far East from 1896–1906, and the consequent easing of the perennial Austro-Russian tension in the Balkans, suggests that Bismarck was right in thinking that wise statesmanship could have averted the choice for many years. The interest and the sentiment of the three autocrats, the ideology of absolutism certainly militated strongly at all times in favour of a revival of the *Dreikaiserbund*. While the Tsar was threatened with social revolution, Francis Joseph was faced with the prospect of the disintegration of his dominions, and both understood that the shock and the strain of war would hasten the day of doom. It was a significant indication of Austrian weakness that in 1904 the Austrian Ambassador to Berlin should admit that the Empire did not feel sufficiently confident of its strength or its stability to take advantage of Russian absorption in the Far East to improve its position in the Balkans. For the Russian Empire the omens were dark indeed, for staggering back from defeat in the Far East she was confronted by the challenge of the social and reformist movements at home which reached their first high-water mark in 1905. It was therefore only too evident in Berlin that the self-interest of the reigning dynasties in both empires demanded the maintenance of peace and of the *status quo* in Eastern Europe.

The Kaiser, with an inherited friendship for the Romanoffs, was the principal German sponsor of the revival of the League of the Three Emperors. As he frequently observed to Nicholas

II, the alliance between the upstart French Republic and the Tsar of All the Russias was distressing to him on personal grounds. "Republicans", he warned the Tsar in the early days of the Franco-Russian Alliance, "are by nature revolutionary, logically to be regarded as people who will one day have to be shot or hanged." Against the background of these oft-repeated imperial admonitions the Kaiser laid his designs for the breaking of the Dual Alliance in the hour of Russia's humiliating defeat.

The Treaty of Björkö

It was on 12th October 1903 that Count von Bernstorff, *chargé d'affaires* in London, advised the Chancellor that, so far as could be judged, "if Japan wishes to go to war with Russia the last suitable moment for it seems to have come".[1] The reason was the suspicion that England was becoming more attached "to her newly-acquired French friend than to her ally", and that later on "the British alliance might be found to be entirely illusory". On this the Kaiser commented "Correct", and on the suggestion that a further inducement to Japan to begin hostilities soon was "the fact that Russia's position in the Far East is daily gaining in strength" he minuted "Yes". Whether the Kaiser really believed this is open to question. What is certain is that his influence with the Tsar was used to encourage Russia to declare war. On 3rd January 1904 he wrote to the Tsar urging him to accept no arrangement with Japan and to go to war, though there was no suggestion that Germany would do other than remain neutral. To this the Tsar replied: "I am still in good hopes about a calm and peaceful understanding in the end. . . . Nicky, Adm. of Pacific."[2] (The Kaiser liked to sign himself "Admiral of the Atlantic".) The Kaiser was deeply disappointed. He told Bülow that he hoped the warmth of his letter "would induce the Tsar to turn all his forces against Japan. Instead the Emperor Nicholas's attitude was still a poor-spirited one; he seemed not to want to fight. . . ." To the Chancellor's suggestion that pressure from

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XIX, p. 12; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 197.
[2] Ibid., p. 182.

Berlin would only dissuade Russia from action the Kaiser agreed as a statesman but "felt as a Sovereign" that the Emperor Nicholas "was doing himself a lot of harm, by his flabby way of going on". The Tsar "was compromising all great sovereigns..."[1]

It was on 7th January 1904 that Japan declared war. She was convinced that Russia intended to annex Manchuria and so threaten her interests in China, and above all in Korea, to whose independence Russia declined to give formal recognition. To the Kaiser the war seemed an unrivalled opportunity for detaching Russia from the Dual Alliance. In 1904 the initiative actually came from Russia herself and in August of that year the violent indignation provoked in England by the Russian Fleet's panic-stricken attack upon Hull trawlers off the Dogger Bank further encouraged Russia to make the pace. But always the difficulty emerged—Russia could not reach agreement with Germany without informing France. The Tsar was not prepared to deceive his ally. Since France could not conceivably give her assent, the prospects of a *rapprochement* might therefore have appeared a trifle bleak to anyone of less ebullient temperament than the Kaiser.

But while Bülow was concentrating on Morocco the Kaiser's attention was always drifting back to Eastern Europe. To both the preoccupations and later the defeat of Russia in the Far East seemed an opportunity to restore the European balance, so that once again it came down decisively on the side of the Central Powers. While Bülow tried to break the Entente the Kaiser endeavoured to detach Russia from the French alliance. This dual policy was in principle, though not in timing, the product of a carefully concerted plan. But the choice of the moment at which the Kaiser attempted to seduce Russia was taken on his own initiative. What the Kaiser had in mind once again was first to use his personal influence with Nicholas II to detach Russia from France and then, when that had been successfully accomplished, under threat of Continental isolation, to persuade France to join this new Continental League. It seems that this far-

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XIX, p. 62. Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 180–1.

reaching, specious plot won only partial approval from Bülow. The latter's first concern was to remove all prospect of the emergence of a Triple Entente, but he remained profoundly disturbed lest a Russo-German pact should appreciably increase the possibility of war with England. An inquiry to Count Metternich in London at the end of 1904 had elicited the comment: "There is no danger of war in the existing situation, but from the moment we make Russia's cause our own it would arise. We obtain an ally who has hitherto been defeated and who could not possibly help us in a war with England." This was an opinion that could not be ignored, and by 1905 the Chancellor was not prepared to disregard it.

The annihilation of the Russian Fleet at Tsushima in May 1905 brought peace in the Far East within sight, and this was the moment that seemed most auspicious for the Kaiser's attempt to break up the Dual Alliance. The story of it, told in the Kaiser's excited letter to the Chancellor from Wisby on 25th July 1905, is familiar indeed.[1] The Kaiser's yachting trip; the summons to the Tsar to meet him at Björkö as "simple tourist"; the meeting between the two emperors which, in the Kaiser's view, God had ordained; the "moment" when he suggested "we two should make an agreement"; the happy chance that the Kaiser had a draft agreement in his pocket; his heart beats when Nicholas said in his dreamy voice: "That is quite excellent. I quite agree", and the Kaiser saying casually: "Should you like to sign it, it would be a very nice souvenir of our interview"; and the happy ending with its tears of joy as the Kaiser thought of Frederick William, Queen Louisa, Grandpa and Nicholas I looking down upon them with joyful approval.[2] There it all is in the pages of history, the supreme caricature of the old diplomacy.

Something very important was at stake at Björkö, yet nothing was achieved. In his elation the Kaiser had altered article 14 of the draft treaty which had been prepared by Bülow

[1] The record of the conversations is in English, the language the two emperors used in speaking to each other.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XIX, pp. 458–65.

and Holstein a year earlier and a copy of which he found so providentially in his pocket, by adding the words "in Europe". Thus amended the clause read: "In case one of the two Empires shall be attacked by a European Power its ally will aid it *in Europe* with all its military and moral forces." The addition in Bülow's opinion destroyed the value of the Treaty, for it meant that in the event of war with England, Russia would not be pledged to attack India. What use to us, asked Bülow, are the defeated Russian forces in Europe, but were they to concentrate on India, England would have to fight on two widely distant fronts. His unfavourable criticisms were supplemented by the threat of resignation. This was a stunning blow to his neurotic master, who had claimed so triumphantly that "the work of *rapprochement* has been crowned, the game won". Quickly the exhilaration of diplomatic victory was transformed into undignified despair. "The morning after the arrival of your letter of resignation", he wrote hysterically to his Chancellor, "would no longer find your Emperor alive. Think of my poor wife and children." At this appeal Bülow withdrew his resignation, receiving by wire the Imperial acknowledgment: "Warmest thanks, I feel reborn."[1]

The Tsar on his return to St. Petersburg found Count Lamsdorf, his Minister of Foreign Affairs, equally chilling. Lamsdorf was "aghast"; he "could not believe his eyes or ears". The alliance with France, the corner-stone of Russian policy, he pointed out to the Tsar, could not be thus lightly cast aside, and Russia could not possibly compel her partner to join a Continental league without forfeiting all confidence in her good faith or her value as an ally. If she even suggested such a course she would drive France into the arms of England and leave Russia isolated at the mercy of Germany. The Björkö treaty was stillborn.

The Anglo-Russian Rapprochement

Sir Arthur Nicolson, fresh from his successful diplomatic encounters at Algeciras, proceeded to Moscow where he was

[1] Cf. Bülow: *Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 143.

destined to play a leading part in the negotiation of the Anglo-Russian Convention. His impression on arrival in 1906 was that "if the Emperor and the Russian Government were free from any other obligation, they would gladly form an intimate alliance with Germany. German influence to-day is predominant both in the Court and in Government circles. The alternative hectoring and cajolery which are a distinctive feature of German diplomacy in other countries are not employed here. A suave, conciliatory attitude and a gentle solicitude are the characteristics of German diplomacy in this capital."[1] This verdict of so experienced a diplomatist confirms that the Kaiser was fully justified in counting on a predisposition towards an agreement with Germany; what he neglected to take into consideration were those realistic considerations which in the last resort normally determine the foreign policy of nations.

Sir Arthur Nicolson's later survey of the political scene in Russia in 1906 gives an instructive assessment of the considerations which finally induced a somewhat reluctant government to conclude a Convention, not with Germany but with Britain.

"The position at this epoch (1906) was as follows. Russia needed some years of peace and quietude to recuperate and reorganize; her ally, France, at a critical moment had shown that she was not able to resist German dictation and had only succeeded in regaining some lost ground and in recovering some firmness of character when she felt that she could rely on British assistance. If Russia, therefore, desired that a counterpoise should be created against German domination it was evident that a good understanding with Great Britain was desirable.

"There was no question of encircling Germany. There were no secret agreements with France, and there would certainly be none with Russia which contemplated any combination or menace against Germany. With France, it is true, there had been certain conversations between the General Staffs as to possible measures in the event of a German attack, but these were natural measures of precaution for defence and not for aggression. I do

[1] Gooch and Temperley, Vol. IV, No. 243.

not pretend that it was considered likely that an Anglo-Russian understanding would be pleasing to Germany."[1]

Nicolson had few doubts about the nature and the direction of German policy, and in contrast to some of the higher officials at the Foreign Office, believed implicitly that it was Germany's intention to dominate Europe by force. His analysis may be in some measure coloured by that belief, but it brings out clearly the one essential factor, that an understanding with England was the condition of Russia's freedom from subservience to Germany. It was that fact and not sentimental considerations that determined the course of Russian policy.

An Anglo-Russian understanding was no more popular in London than St. Petersburg. The advent of a Liberal Government to office somewhat delayed a *rapprochement*, whilst Campbell-Bannerman's valedictory flourish: "La Duma est morte. Vive la Duma," when that assembly was dissolved, happily though it expressed the reactions of the British people, was not calculated to appeal to the government of the Tsar. The Liberals indeed could have no sympathy with the Russian absolutist State and the police government by which it was protected from the sentiments of the people. As late as 1908 King Edward's visit to Reval was bitterly denounced by radicals as well as by the Labour Party. A young Member of Parliament went so far as to publish an article entitled: "An Insult to the Country", in which the Tsar was described as a murderer and the King advised to abandon his visit. The author's name was James Ramsay Macdonald. But like Russia, England had little choice. Grey, as Dr. Gooch has said in a memorable phrase, "was chained to Russia by his fear of the German Fleet".

The Anglo-Russian Convention was preceded by what Witte claimed to be the largest foreign loan in the history of modern nations. The loan was rasied mostly in Paris and participation was forbidden by the German Government in consequence of the failure of her Björkö policy. London, however, did participate for the first time since the Crimean War. By means of the

[1] Quoted in H. Nicolson, op. cit., p. 235.

loan the Russian Government was able not only to maintain her gold standard and to repair the losses of war, but also, as Clemenceau had warned his fellow-countrymen, to act independently of the Duma. The dissolution of that assembly was directly related to the success of a loan raised in two countries almost entirely in sympathy with its aspirations.

The Convention was signed in 1907. In principle it was similar to the Entente of 1904. It was equally limited in scope and its professed purpose was merely the elimination of friction between the two countries in Asia and in the Near East. As the future of Morocco had been decided without reference to the wishes of its inhabitants, so the future of Persia was settled without inquiring too closely what opinions the Persians might entertain. The country was divided into a large Russian and a small British sphere of influence with a neutral zone in which the two countries were to have equal opportunities. The bogey of the Russian invasion of India was removed by Russia's consenting to conduct all her political relations with Afghanistan through the British authorities.

The wider implications of the Convention were of far greater significance. Through it the Anglo-French Entente and the Dual Alliance became merged in a Triple Entente and so for the first time there was created an adequate counterpoise to the Triple Alliance. Moreover, the Convention was followed by a *rapprochement* between the allies of the signatory Powers, between Russia and Japan and between France and Japan. As a direct consequence Russia was able henceforward to concentrate her attention on the Balkans.

After the signature of the Convention fears of "encirclement" were expressed in Berlin. They were not well founded. The Convention, it is true, completed the circle of closer political co-operation between England, France and Russia, but the Triple Entente was not a closely-knit partnership and there were no obligations of military and diplomatic support between England and Russia. Bülow, aware of this looseness in the new partnership, did not take the Convention over seriously, feeling

there was no final break in Germany's relations with Russia. But the Convention had one important consequence for Germany. It placed her in ever-increasing dependence on Vienna, where alone she was sure of loyal support. This growing dependence of Berlin upon Vienna; of the great Germanic State upon the polyglot empire of the Habsburgs, was disastrous for Germany. A year later, in 1908, when Aerenthal undermined German policy in Turkey by his annexation of Bosnia, Bülow reaffirmed his support. What else could he do? The German position, he argued, would be dangerous if Austria lost confidence in German policy. "In the present world constellation we must be careful to retain Austria as a true partner," he said, "all the more so since the Viennese Cabinet in recent years has repeatedly given proof of its loyalty." Though the dependence of Germany on Austria was not complete till after 1913, the whole trend of German policy from 1907 onwards was to strengthen the ties that bound her to Vienna. It was a policy disastrous to both and to Europe. It encouraged Austria to undertake adventures which she had not the strength to accomplish; it involved Germany more and more in the Balkans, where the retreat of Turkey from Europe made conflict almost inevitable.

The cardinal British object in the negotiations with Russia was, as Sir Edward Grey has recorded, "to secure ourselves for ever, as far as a treaty could secure us, from further Russian advances in the direction of the Indian frontier".[1] That object was achieved. The Liberal Government was freed from an anxiety that had often preoccupied their predecessors. But the price exacted was no light one. A Liberal Government could not walk hand in hand with Tsarist Imperialism without sacrificing something of its own reputation both at home and overseas. In particular it became alike vulnerable and sensitive about events in Persia, since responsibility for a settlement, which could scarcely be defended on Liberal principles, could not be disowned. The Russian Government were well aware both of the anxiety and of the predicament of the Liberal Government, and Sazonov later,

[1] *Twenty-five Years*, Vol. I, p. 253.

during his period as Foreign Minister, took full advantage of them when he wished to apply pressure in any direction. This was easy to do, for the Russian Government, as Grey so justly observes, "was a despotism without discipline. Different Ministers and different diplomatic agents pursued different politics in Persia. Russian agents were of all sorts; some were able and clever; some were not; some accepted a friendly policy towards Britain, some did not; some meant well, some did not, and some meant nothing at all."[1] But all had their uses as a means of extracting concessions. The surprise indeed is not that there was continual friction between the Russia of the Tsars and the England of the last great Liberal revival, but that after 1907 there was agreement on the fundamental direction of their foreign policy. For that paradoxical fact the ambitions of Germany were responsible.

Sir Edward Grey maintained[2] in after life that the Anglo-Russian Convention was more favourable to this country than to Russia. This was also the view of M. Cambon, who remarked to Hardinge that England had got "much the best of the bargain".[3] Professor Fay claims[4] on the other hand that it was more advantageous to Russia than to this country. To-day its momentous long-term consequences for the balance of power in Europe and in the world as a whole, seem far to transcend in importance these nice calculations of national advantage. In 1907 Britain was aware from the despatches of her Ambassador in St. Petersburg that the days of the Tsarist Empire were numbered. A successful war fought in alliance with the West might prolong them; defeat would certainly precipitate a social revolution, thereby releasing new and powerful elements within Russia. Since the Anglo-Russian Convention tilted the balance in favour of the Entente Powers, the probable result of any major war was an immense strengthening of the Russian position

[1] Ibid., pp. 264–5.
[2] Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 268.
[3] Lord Hardinge: *Old Diplomacy*, London 1947, p. 127.
[4] Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 221.

in Eastern Europe. It was known that the Slav States were her clients; that victory in the East meant the break-up of the Habsburg Empire and a veiled Russian domination over the policies of the successor Slav States. Later, in the crisis of war specific promises were made by the West, including concurrence in the Russian acquisition of Constantinople, which suggested that allied misgivings about the extension of Russian power remained subsidiary. The policy was settled, there was no going back, and the Convention of 1907 marked for England the parting of the ways. Her decision was determined by the belief that in the last resort the expansion of Russian influence was a lesser evil than successful aggression by the Central Powers. That decision was perhaps too much influenced by Russian weakness in 1907, but of its essential wisdom on the short view there can be little doubt, whatever may be the verdict history has yet to pronounce on its more far-reaching consequences.

The British policy of association or partnership with Russia was destined to have an uneasy, chequered career, whose end is not yet. Russian control of Eastern Europe to-day is its direct and, even in 1907, predictable result, partly obscured at the time by an insular belief that Russia would forever remain inefficient. "And though people are slow to realize when they are happy", wrote Professor Butterfield in 1947 of this departure from traditional policy towards Russia and of her resulting predominance in Central and Eastern Europe "it is to be hoped that the present situation in the world will not leave them too restless, for it would be difficult to number in millions of dead what it has cost to make the disposition of forces that now exists."

[1] "Reflections on the Predicament of our Time," *Cambridge Journal*, Vol. I, No. 1. p. 5.

Chapter VII

THE ANNEXATION OF BOSNIA

THERE is always a tendency in looking back to see events in the light of what followed. The Moroccan crisis of 1905–6, followed by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, resulted in the division of Europe into two groups: on the one hand the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria and Italy which had by then lasted for a quarter of a century; on the other the Triple Entente of England, France and Russia, which did not come into being, even informally, till the Anglo-Russian Convention was signed in 1907. The formation of these groups is by far the most significant development in European politics between 1878 and 1914 because it meant that a dispute between any two Powers, between France and Germany in Morocco, or between Austria and Russia in the Balkans, was almost certain to result, not in a localized conflict between the Powers directly concerned, but in a European conflagration. This was the dangerous consequence of that network of alliances, which were the peculiar product of power politics. But while the grouping of the Great Powers was completed by 1907 it was not crystallized till some years later. Triple Entente and Triple Alliance divided Europe, but they did not yet divide it into two armed and hostile camps. Reconciliation with one opponent, remarked Count Metternich of England's Entente with France, does not necessarily imply enmity with another.[1] To use Professor Schmitt's illuminating phrase, in 1907 the two Groups stood side by side, and it was not till later that they stood face to face. What had intervened was the Austrian annexation of Bosnia in the East and the Agadir crisis in the West.

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XVII, p. 591; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 176.

The Problems of Eastern Europe

An agreement between Austria and Russia lasting from 1897 to 1905 provided, as has been noted in an earlier chapter, a rare period of friendly relations between these two empires, whose rivalry was the immediate cause of the World War. The divisions of Western Europe were sharp, but they were not irremovable. Given goodwill and a spirit of compromise, Alsace-Lorraine, Morocco, even Anglo-German naval competition, were problems that might have been liquidated. But in Eastern Europe statesmen were confronted with a problem that appeared, and perhaps was, insoluble by peaceful means. In the West there was comparative stability, in the East there was chronic instability. Disputes were not a matter of prestige as in the West, they were a matter of existence. It was not a question of whether war would come, it was a question of when was the best moment to wage it. The Bosnian crisis afforded to the Western Powers remarkable evidence of the dangers lurking in Eastern Europe, and it affords to the student of the causes of the First World War at once the most illuminating and the most dramatic of all the crises which preceded the final catastrophe.

The underlying cause of unrest in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe was the disintegration of three empires. The world had long been aware that Turkey was the "sick man" of Europe. The nineteenth century had seen the emergence of the Christian States in the Balkans independent of Turkish rule. The process which had for the first time attracted the attention of Europe in the Greek War of Independence was materially hastened by the Crimean War and by the Treaty of Berlin. While it is true, as we have seen, that Gortchakov and his Slav clients, both Bulgar and Serb, were bitterly disappointed with the conclusions of the Congress of 1878, there is no doubt that on the long view the process of Slav emancipation from Turkish rule was then notably advanced. The changed opinion of Lord Salisbury, publicized some eight years later by the admission that in backing Turkey we had backed the wrong horse, marked the qualified acceptance

by the Conservative Party of the Gladstonian policy of support for independent Christian States in the Balkans. The consequence was an accentuation of Pan-Slav ambitions, now that the English obstacle to Balkan independence—though not to Russian expansion—had been removed.

In the meantime the Government of the Porte, corrupt, unreliable, spasmodically cruel, continued to exist only because it was in the interests of Europe that it should live on after its natural life had ended. In Constantinople the old diplomacy flourished as nowhere else in the world. If an ambassador wanted to know the contents of a note addressed to the Turkish Government by some other Power, all he had to do was to send his chief dragoman down to the Sublime Porte, where, by the aid of a small *douceur*, he got hold of a bag containing the document. Lord Hardinge tells how in the 'nineties all the officials of the Sublime Porte received bribes and the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs received a salary of £1,500 a year from the British Embassy as well as from those of the other Powers. In this way he was compensated for the fact that he received practically no salary from his own government.[1] The State was bankrupt, and the surprise is not that Turkey was sick, but that even with the goodwill of the Powers and with the support of an army which, reorganized under German direction, was once again to prove a formidable fighting force in 1914, it could be kept alive.

The succession states to the Turkish Empire, particularly Roumania and Serbia, did not include within their boundaries all who claimed their respective nationalities. The fervour of nationalist feeling made the existence of these irredentist populations an ever fruitful source of conflict. It was idle for the Great Powers to admonish the rulers of Serbia or of Roumania by saying to them in effect "Consider how much better off your peoples are now than their fathers were and be patient". On the contrary, it was just because their nationalist aspirations had been partially realized that the surviving barriers seemed so intoler-

[1] Hardinge, op. cit., p. 19.

able. It was the peasants of the Île de France—the most prosperous and independent part of the whole country—who were the first to revolt in 1789, not, as de Tocqueville emphasizes, the serfs on the great estates of the Loire, where feudalism survived virtually intact. So, too, as the Balkan States freed themselves from Turkish fetters their nationalism became ever more militant; and it found uncompromising expression in the demand that the minorities of their race and blood should be reunited with them. Since large Roumanian and Serbo-Croat minorities lay within the Eastern, the Hungarian part of the Dual Monarchy, this growth in racial consciousness was an ever-growing threat to the polygot Empire of the Habsburgs.

The Foreign Policy of the Dual Monarchy

Unrest in the Balkans was accentuated by the belief that the Dual Monarchy was doomed to disintegration at no distant date. It was as early as 1902 that Lord Lansdowne had asked the German Ambassador what course his country would adopt on the break-up of the Habsburg Empire, which to "human calculation cannot survive the decease of the Emperor Francis Joseph". The form of the question implying as it did that the dissolution of the Empire was likely to be coincident with that of its ruler did not hold out much hope of a prolonged period of stability in the Danubian basin, since in 1902 the Emperor was seventy-two. This widely held belief in impending disintegration in itself did much to create an atmosphere of uncertainty in which suspicion flourished and dangerous designs were conceived.

By the close of the nineteenth century the only centripetal force in Austria-Hungary was the monarchy. In 1867 the transformation of Austria from one Imperial state into an Austro-Hungarian Monarchy embracing two, gave to the Emperor who ruled over some forty million inhabitants and nine different nationalities a unique constitutional status. In the later chapters of Redlich's life of Francis Joseph is to be found a fascinating account of dualism in action and of the monarch's rôle in

it.[1] The tension between the two ruling races never relaxed. In the strictly constitutional field Redlich tells how learned German jurists began exploring every period and country for a scientific definition of this new political entity, and soon discovered conveniently enough for their purpose that the two collateral and combined states of Austria and Hungary constituted a Union—even a so-called "Real Union". This view was sharply challenged by the Magyars. Their jurists maintained that, though community was accepted in fact, it did not exist of right. In their opinion Francis Joseph was, in Hungary from 1867 on, merely the Hungarian King; as Emperor he had no status there. In Hungary accordingly he was called King; never Emperor.[2] This was in sharp distinction to the German-Austrian view which regarded the Imperial title as covering the entire realm and serving as the symbol of its "real community". The disputes which centred on these and finer juridical points—and they were as multitudinous as they were complicated—seemed of the utmost significance to both Germans and Magyars. One illustration must suffice. In 1867 the Magyars accepted the continued use of the historic "Imperial-Royal" on all official documents. Twenty years later the substitution for the initials I–R of the extended Imperial and Royal (I. and R.) was hailed in Budapest as a national triumph.[3] It was a symbol of the admission of full equality between the two states. But behind the disputes about trifles lay a deep-seated discord between the two ruling peoples; a discord which grew sharper with the passage of time and exerted a deadening influence on the foreign policy of the Empire.

Palacky's well-known saying that if Austria did not exist it would be necessary to invent her, suggests that expediency was the *raison d'être* of the Monarchy. This was only partly true. The Empire survived not so much because it was expedient that

[1] Joseph Redlich: *Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria*, London 1929, chapters IX to XII. A more recent survey of the problems of the Monarchy is to be found in A. J. P. Taylor's *The Habsburg Monarchy* 1815–1918, London 1941.

[2] Cf. Redlich, op. cit., pp. 348–9. [3] Ibid., p. 349.

it should survive as that traditional supra-national loyalty to the throne, most marked in the army, maintained it. This was a remarkable fact. Francis Joseph, who assumed the burden of the Imperial crown in 1848, at the age of eighteen, was a man whose devotion to duty could command only respect, whose misfortunes could inspire only sympathy, but whose inflexibility of outlook, coupled with a rigid devotion to the bleak formalities of his Imperial office, lay like a chill, dead hand upon the administration and so upon the life of his dominions. The reign which had started in the year of revolution recorded the loss of Lombardy in 1859, of Venice in 1866, of the leadership of Germany in the same disastrous year, with the consequence that by the end of the century the foreign policy of the Empire was concentrated no longer in the West, but on the maintenance of its influence in the Balkans. Here, while its intentions were fundamentally pacific, its policy was hampered by an indecision implicit in its hybrid constitution.

Foreign policy on the whole remained a dynastic prerogative. Only a strong Foreign Minister like Andrassy could consistently override the influence of the Crown. The dynastic interest required the extension of the Austrian power in the South-East, if for no other reason than to compensate for the loss of territory in the West. But once the Dual system was created, a system the efficient working of which demanded the predominance of Germans over Slavs in Austria and of Magyars over Slavs in Hungary, foreign policy had to be reconciled, as Andrassy realized, with internal conditions. A foreign policy contemplating an extension of influence or actual expansion to the South-East was bound to be anti-Slav and consequently anti-Russian in the Balkans and ultimately in Europe as a whole. For a semi-Slav state to pursue an anti-Slav foreign policy was in the long run impossible. Yet the dilemma was not to be easily avoided.

The creation of the Dual Monarchy by making the Magyars co-partners with the dynasty left them a freedom of action which, in fact, compromised irremediably the position of the

Monarchy with the Slavs.[1] What happened in 1878 is instructive. Magyar opposition to the acquisition of Bosnia, indicated that the Magyars would in fact have preferred to see the Monarchy support Turkey against Russia and so impose a restraint on pan-Slavism. This indeed was the course which prudence, though not political morality, would have recommended. But in the end Andrassy, a Magyar, assented to incorporation against his better judgment in the interests of Imperial prestige.

In later years the Austrian-Imperialist Drang nach Osten was still confronted at times with statesmanlike resolution by Magyar resistance to any increase of the Slav elements in the Monarchy and this opposition constituted (even though it was not consistently maintained) a formidable barrier to dreams of expansion in the Balkans.[2] Prudent in itself though it certainly was, Magyar restraint on Imperial foreign policy was undermined and thereby deprived of its usefulness by Magyar oppression of the Slavs living within the eastern half of the Empire. Haunted by memories of Jellachitch, the Ban of Croatia, the man of destiny who had saved the Habsburg Monarchy in the year of revolution, the Magyars asserted their power and exercised their internal political predominance in such a way as to eliminate any remote chance that may have remained of reconciling the subject Slav peoples. As Redlich[3] has so truly observed, the last fifty years of the Monarchy is the story of the mounting tide of resistance by all the other nationalities to the intolerable predominance of the Magyar race. To the danger without was added mounting racial passions within.

There is one further distinction between the position of Austria and that of Hungary which in its own way accentuated their different outlook on world affairs. While the threat to Hungary came from the appeal of Serbs and Roumanians without its borders to those within, the threat to Austria came from

[1] H. Wickham Steed: *The Habsburg Monarchy*, London 1913, p. 208, chap. IV, on the Foreign Policy of the Dual Monarchy, is a vivid account of its working by a contemporary observer.

[2] Ibid., and see also Redlich, p. 381 seq. [3] Ibid., p. 210.

the Czechs who were almost entirely within the Empire. In other words for Austria the "nationality" problem was an internal, for Hungary both an internal and an external challenge. This further accentuated the difficulty in reaching agreement about the right foreign policy to be pursued towards the Balkan States.

There was generally little need for Budapest to make concessions to Vienna in foreign policy because the Magyar position was a strong one if only because the vices of Magyar rule enabled them to exert the maximum influence on the affairs of the Monarchy. In the Parliament at Budapest there were normally 400 Magyar Deputies out of a total of 412, with the result that the Hungarian delegation of 60 elected to consider Imperial affairs was exclusively Magyar, whereas the Austrian delegation, more representative, was racially and politically divided and thereby placed at a disadvantage. On the broad issues of foreign and international policy the Monarchy could not cooperate with the Southern Slavs without estranging the Magyars and thereby undermining Dualism, while the Magyars for good reasons of their own would not acquiesce in the dynastic dream of expansion to the East to compensate for losses in the West. "Thus", as Mr. Wickham Steed has said,[1] "the Dual System resolved itself into a system of political paralysis in which immobility became the only pledge of equilibrium." After 1909 the heir to the throne, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, contemplated the possibility of ending the period of immobility by appealing to the Southern Slavs against the ruling Magyar minority and thereby reaffirming the dynastic non-racial mission. Bitterly hated by the Magyars, he was murdered at Sarajevo by Serb terrorists partly because he symbolized German oppression of the South Slavs and partly because he aspired to create a federal monarchy. Had he succeeded in this forlorn and formidable venture the realization of the nationalist dreams of a greater Serbia and a greater Roumania might have been delayed for generations.

[1] Ibid., p. 211.

Russia and the Pan-Slav Movement

As the Dual Monarchy leaned on Germany because of misgivings about her own ability to hold Pan-Slav nationalism at bay, so for their part the Slav States put their trust in Russia, to whom they were for the most part allied by ties of race and religion. It was this dependence of Austria on Germany, of Serbia on Russia, which brought the inevitable Balkan conflict within the field of European politics. A conflict was inevitable, not merely because of the problem of the nationalities, but also because of an expanding vacuum in power. While the moribund Turkish Empire was threatened with spoliation, the Dual Monarchy with disintegration, Russia was preparing for revolution. Defeated in the Far East, the Tsarist autocracy was menaced by a still more terrible catastrophe at home. Sir Arthur Nicolson, soon after his arrival in St. Petersburg, sensed the approach of revolution. "The outlook becomes blacker day by day", he wrote in 1906, "and there are few competent observers who think that a cataclysm can be long averted." And a little later he commented: "The revolutionaries care nothing for constitutions or Dumas or reforms. Their sole aim is by a course of ruthless terrorism to render all government impossible and to pave the way for a socialist republic of the most advanced type". . . . "Should the peasantry excited by socialist and anarchist agitators be led on whither the latter desire to draw them, and should the working classes simultaneously rise in the towns, there will be a catastrophe such as history has rarely witnessed." Nicolson's[1] analysis was accurate though his forecast was premature. Yet in the Russia of 1906 the shadow of the future already lay dark across the scene.

It was at this moment, when prudence would have counselled a continuation of the policy of co-operation in the Balkans such as had reigned from 1897 under the cautious leadership of Count Goluchowski in Vienna and Count Lamsdorff in St. Petersburg,

[1] Despatches to Sir. E. Grey of 31st July and 26th August 1906, quoted in Harold Nicolson, op. cit., p. 223.

that the smouldering embers were stirred to flames. Alexander Isvolski succeeded Lamsdorff in 1906. An able, ambitious man he was, thought Nicolson, somewhat vain, "a little too eager to play a part in society, exceedingly open to the influences of the fashionable world", yet a man of "alert, quick and subtle" intelligence, who was anxious to fill a great rôle in history, "though nervous, and exceedingly sensitive to public criticism". The ambassador's initial reaction to Isvolski's plump, faultlessly clothed figure, his pearl pin, his eyeglass, white spats, the white slip to his waistcoat, and the slight scent of *violette de Parme*, was far from favourable.[1] But Nicolson learned to trust him. It was a fact that was to prove important.

Isvolski came to the Foreign Office with an ambitious programme. His first task was, in his own words, "to liquidate the heritage of Lamsdorff in Asia", and then, building "on the immutable foundation of the alliance with France", to reach agreement with England and Japan. "I have little doubt", reported Nicolson, "that it is the present aim of the Russian Government to remodel their policy in the Far and Middle East, and to husband their resources and to keep their hands free for recovering their position as a European Power." The diagnosis was correct. Isvolski's ultimate ambitions lay not in Asia but in the Balkans. To make their realization practical he liquidated the Far Eastern question and reached agreement, as we have seen, with England in 1907. This was a very considerable personal achievement which enhanced the prestige of the new Foreign Minister. "While Russia is on the brink of Revolution", wrote Grey, in his instructions to Nicolson, "it is no use going faster than is necessary to keep the negotiations alive." It is the measure of Isvolski's achievement that he negotiated successfully on behalf of a defeated empire on the brink of revolution.

The Annexation

In the same year that Isvolski succeeded Lamsdorff, Freiherr

[1] Ibid., p. 216.

von Aerenthal succeeded Goluchowski as Foreign Minister at Vienna. Like Isvolski, Aerenthal was ambitious, but that and a certain lack of scruple was all they had in common. "A tall broad-shouldered man with eyelids that always drooped and a look of weariness," was how Bülow[1] remembered him, and he recalled too his reserve, his "regular features and aristocratic air", "rather indolent and almost apathetic". Previously Ambassador at St. Petersburg Aerenthal was reputed friendly to Russian autocracy and hostile to Western Liberalism. His emphasis on monarchical solidarity led to hopes of a revival of the *Dreikaiserbund*. His policy in the Near East was conservative, and he was reputed not to be averse to an extension of Russian influence. But while still Ambassador at St. Petersburg von Aerenthal had expatiated to Sir Arthur Nicolson on the complete paralysis of will which was destroying the Russian body politic. "An amiable and chatty man", recorded Nicolson in his diary,[2] "but not brilliant." Perhaps not, but his analysis of Russian weakness, correct in substance, was to lead him into dangerous paths and to a brilliant, if evanescent, diplomatic victory.

Once the problems of the Far East were disposed of and the Anglo-Russian Convention signed, Isvolski made it clear that Russia was to devote undivided attention to the Balkans. Her first aim was to restore the Freedom of the Straits. This was an objective of real importance, for so long as the Straits were closed Russian war vessels could not pass through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles and she was therefore unable to use her Black Sea Fleet in the Mediterranean. While the closure of the Dardanelles by the Sultan against the ingress of foreign warships was regarded as a valuable protection for Russia, the restrictions on the egress of Russian warships were regarded as humiliating to the prestige of a Great Power. Isvolski therefore concentrated his attention upon the removal of this restriction, not as the most desirable but as the most practical immedi-

[1] *Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 325.

[2] Quoted in H. Nicolson, op. cit., p. 211.

ate objective for the foreign policy of an empire weakened by defeat. He did not relish the restriction thus imposed and he would have preferred a more ambitious programme, culminating in the acquisition of Constantinople; but the Prime Minister Stolypin vetoed the project for fear of revolution. "After some years", he said, "when we have secured complete quiet, Russia can speak again as in the past."[1] These ulterior ambitions, not wholly unsuspected, account in part for the opposition which the limited project of opening the Straits aroused in European capitals. For the rest a convention existed, recognized by the Great Powers, according to which the maintenance of the integrity of the Turkish Empire should be formally acknowledged as a cardinal factor in European policy. Ferdinand of Bulgaria should continue to owe suzerainty to the Porte; Bosnia should nominally remain part of the Ottoman Empire because it was felt that once this pretence was discarded all would know that the hour of Turkey's dissolution had come and in the ensuing race for the spoils Europe would be plunged in war.

If Isvolski wanted the freedom of the Straits, Aerenthal wished to annex the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the earliest opportunity. Originally Turkish, these provinces had been occupied, as we have seen, by Austria and Hungary since 1878, but they were not formally annexed. Clearly defined treaty obligations stood in the way both of the annexation and of the opening of the Straits. The two Foreign Ministers, however, assumed that if they as the representatives of the two Great Powers most directly concerned could do a deal the concert of Europe could hardly intervene effectively and Turkey, at whose expense the changes would be made, weakened by the Young Turk Revolution, would be powerless to resist. As early as 1907 Isvolski, on a visit to Vienna, hinted confidentially that Russia intended to impose her solution of the Straits question, and Aerenthal noted that the obvious compensation for Austria was to be found in the annexation of the two occupied pro-

[1] Quoted in Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 372.

vinces. Negotiations however came to a standstill when Aerenthal, suddenly and without due warning, secured the strategically important Sanjak railway concession from the Sultan thereby startling Isvolski as if "he had thrown a bomb between my legs".[1]

When King Edward, accompanied by Sir Charles Hardinge, visited Ischl in the autumn of 1908 for the Jubilee of the Emperor Francis Joseph's reign, von Aerenthal took the opportunity to explain that Austria was not concerned with Anglo-German naval rivalry[2] whose potential dangers he saw with misgiving and to discuss the situation in the Balkans generally.[3] He emphasized that the Monarchy as Turkey's nearest neighbour in Europe had specific interests there which she was absolutely determined to defend. He said also that the Monarchy would cling steadfastly to the German alliance "because this makes for the good of Austria-Hungary and for peace in Europe". But no mention was made of the plans for the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. To von Schoen of the German Foreign Office Aerenthal was, however, more candid about his plans. And the response, though confined to a declaration of general benevolence as distinct from specific approval, was encouraging. As for the proposed bargain with Russia over the Straits the German Ambassador felt that while it was full of dangers there was no need for Germany to discountenance it in advance. On the contrary he remarked that Germany "would rather join with Austria in granting 'freedom of the Straits to Russia' than leave it to the Western Powers to grant it as an afterthought".[4] With this view the Kaiser concurred.

But it is clear now that both annexation and the concession which would make it palatable to Russia were the means and

[1] For an account of Isvolski's reactions, see Gooch and Temperley, Vol. V, pp. 242–3, and *Die Grosse Politik*, XXV, p. 313.

[2] Cf. Hardinge, op. cit., p. 163.

[3] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXV, p. 551; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 299; and Gooch and Temperley, Vol. V, p. 827.

[4] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVI, p. 28; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 301.

not the end of von Aerenthal's policy. That, as he explained to Schoen, after securing a pledge of strict secrecy, was no less "than the complete destruction of the Serbian nest of revolutionaries".[1] He thought of Partition first, later of veiled absorption within the Monarchy. But whatever the method the destruction of this small country whose passionate nationalism was believed to threaten the survival of the Monarchy was his aim. That aim was too evident to be wholly disguised and Isvolski was certainly aware that the annexation of two long-since occupied provinces was not the comparatively modest goal of von Aerenthal's forward policy in the Balkans. What Russia was being invited to negotiate was a deal directed first towards checking the aspirations of and then destroying her Slav client—Serbia. That Isvolski was prepared to proceed at all is an indication of the importance he attached to opening the Straits to Russian ships of war.

The negotiations reached a climax when despite the Sanjak incident and despite mutual and well-founded mistrust, Aerenthal and Isvolski met without witnesses at Count Berchtold's castle at Buchlau on 15th September 1908. What exactly transpired at this momentous meeting is uncertain, for there were no witnesses and the two statesmen have left irreconcilable accounts both of the nature of their conversations and of some critical points in them. The character of the bargain which they made at Buchlau is, however, plain enough. Austria was to annex Bosnia and Herzegovina, Russia to open the Straits to Russian ships of war. As a solatium designed to pacify Turkey Austria was to withdraw her troops from the Sanjak of Novibazar. That this secret agreement violated two international treaties disturbed neither of Count Berchtold's guests. But it was clear to both that the success of their plot depended on simultaneous action by the two conspirators. Yet—and it remains a most puzzling fact—Isvolski, who had good reason for taking the most stringent precautions, left Buchlau without fixing the date at which these changes were to be made and published to the world.

[1] Ibid.

It was this curious oversight which gave rise to the subsequent acrimonious conflict between the two negotiators.

Isvolski afterwards explained that he anticipated no definite steps would be taken until the Buchlau conversations had been confirmed in writing. So instead of returning to Russia to prepare for the opening of the Straits, he set off on a round of visits to the several capitals of Europe to prepare the Chancelleries for the impending *coup*. When, however, he reached Paris on 3rd October he received a telegram from Aerenthal stating that circumstances compelled him to proceed with the annexation at once. Two days later, on 5th October, Prince Ferdinand announced the independence of Bulgaria, and on 6th October the annexation of Bosnia was proclaimed by the Emperor Francis Joseph. The Balkan Question was re-opened with a vengeance.

Isvolski was left high and dry. He had betrayed the interests of Balkan Slavs, whose protector by interest and by tradition Russia was, by agreeing to the Annexation and he had not been paid his price. Could he now exact it? The plain fact was that he could not since Russia was unprepared to face the reactions which unilateral action on her part would certainly have provoked, but that he was not prepared to recognize. Diplomatic support from the Powers must be enlisted. It was the only hope. So Isvolski travelled from capital to capital in a vain endeavour to secure support for a project whose success had been dependent on simultaneous moves by Austria and Russia and whose doom had been sealed when Austria had acted alone. For Aerenthal had not only double-crossed his Russian colleague, but by plunging Europe into a major crisis he had made it very unlikely that a further breach of an international treaty would be condoned by the Powers. There was at first general indignation. The Russian people, who had known nothing of the negotiations, were highly indignant at the betrayal of their Slav kinsfolk; the Kaiser, the newly-found and enthusiastic friend of Turkey, described the annexation "as a piece of brigandage"; England denounced the violation of treaties; and the Serbs prepared to fight because the two provinces annexed by Austria

were considered by them to be the very heart of a new and greater South Slav kingdom. They demanded compensation for Austria's gain.[1] In such circumstances, Isvolski's only means of redress was an international conference which might at the least embarrass Aerenthal by bringing his outrageous action to the judgment of the Powers, and at the most might assent to compensation for Russia and Serbia. It was on the question of a conference that the struggle was fought out. To Isvolski's proposal Aerenthal resolutely refused to yield, and it was left therefore to the Russian Foreign Minister to try as best he might to persuade the other Great Powers to support him.

France, the ally of Russia, was in fact the least interested of all the Great Powers in the Balkan crisis. Politically she was concerned only because her ally was so deeply involved, and the one fear of the French Government was lest she should be dragged into a war because of Russian ambitions in the Near East. When Isvolski, in high indignation, tried to secure effective support in Paris, the French Foreign Minister, M. Pichon, was sympathetic but noncommittal and wished to know first what England's attitude was likely to be.

Isvolski then visited Grey in London[2] where he held forth "at great length and with energy and point" to his unsympathetic host.[2] His visitor, Grey thought, was wearing a somewhat guilty look and, records Sir Edward, "directly I began to speak to him his eyes became very dull and defensive". Grey indeed was greatly angered by the annexation. "The Whig statesman, the monitor of public law in Europe, the English gentleman and public schoolboy," remarks Mr. Winston Churchill, "all these elements in his character were equally affronted." What Grey disliked was not only the annexation but even more the way in which it was done. He disliked the annexation because it was a blow to Turkish prestige just when

[1] See M. Ninčić: *La Crise bosniaque* (1908–9) *et les puissances Européennes*, 2 vols., Paris 1937, for a Serb study of the crisis. The author was Foreign Minister in the exiled Royal Yugo-slav Government in London during the Second World War.

[2] Cf. Grey, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 277 seq.

the Young Turks had taken control. As he admitted later he then shared the illusion of many well-intentioned liberals that the "young" Turks, men like Enver and Talaat, were quite different from the "old" Turks, and his sympathy in some degree coloured his judgment.[1] He disliked the manner of the annexation because it involved the arbitrary alteration of a European Treaty by one Power without the consent of the other signatories. Admittedly Aerenthal's concession in the Sanjak was designed to afford compensation to Turkey, but there again Turkey had not been consulted in advance and the decision as to what compensation was appropriate was quite arbitrary. To England the territorial changes were a matter of indifference. "It mattered not to us," as Grey said, "that Austria should annex instead of merely occupying Bosnia and Herzegovina." The British objection was an objection in principle, as Grey's instructions to Goschen at Vienna, when he first heard of the proposal, make clear. "A deliberate violation of the Berlin Treaty", wrote Grey to the Ambassador,[2] "undertaken without previous consultation with the other Powers, of which in this case Turkey is the most affected, could never be approved or recognized by H.M. Government." That remained his view throughout. To assist Isvolski in breaking another Treaty, the Treaty of London, at the expense of the Young Turks was, in Grey's eyes, certainly no redress for what Aerenthal had done.

In Vienna and Berlin the British attitude was interpreted as meaning that this country was backing the Russian claim, thus giving the Anglo-Russian convention something of the appearance of an alliance. Nothing could have been more mistaken. Indignant at Aerenthal's violation of the Berlin Treaty, Grey was not in any way mollified at Isvolski's proposal to compensate for this breach of a treaty obligation by breaking others. The moment, he emphasized, was altogether "inopportune".[3]

[1] Op. cit., Vol. I, p. 273.

[2] Quoted ibid., p. 275.

[3] Grey to Nicolson, 12th October 1908, quoted in Grey, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 281.

Grey did not, in other words, consider the support of Russia an overriding obligation—a clear indication of his reluctance at this time to regard the Triple Entente as an entity in foreign policy. He was on the contrary firmly opposed to the subordination of his country's policy to that of the group of Powers with which it was associated. This aloofness is the more noteworthy in that Isvolski had clearly hinted that a refusal to support Russian claims in the Straits might lead to a rupture in Anglo-Russian relations. "M. Isvolski", wrote Grey to Nicolson,[1] "went on to say that the present was a most critical moment. It might either consolidate and strengthen the good relations between England and Russia, or it might upset them altogether. His own position was at stake, for he was entirely bound up with a policy of good understanding with England which he had advocated against all opposition." This threat made no impression on Grey and produced no modification in his policy.

The reaction of the Entente Powers made it clear that the outcome of the crisis would depend on the attitude adopted by Germany. About this Aerenthal had all along been confident. He had remarked before the annexation took place that Germany must fall in with Austrian policy since she could now depend on the Austrian Alliance alone. His calculation proved singularly well justified. There was, it is true, the moment of resentment when the annexation took place, with the Kaiser denouncing Aerenthal's "frightful stupidity" in having "confronted us with the dilemma of being unable to protect our friends the Turks" because "our ally has injured them". "Thus my Turkish policy, so carefully built up over twenty years, is thrown away. A great triumph over us for Edward VII!"[2] But it was transient and on mature reflection the arguments for supporting Germany's one loyal ally seemed decisive, and Bülow gave Vienna a blank cheque for dealing with the Serbian crisis. "I consider", observed the Chancellor piously, "that reliability pays not only on ethical grounds but also on grounds

[1] Quoted in Grey, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 288.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVI, p. 110; Dugdale, Vol. III, pp. 305–6.

of policy. Austria-Hungary behaved loyally to us at Algeciras. . . . Like should be paid for with like."[1] Metternich, in London, informed Grey that "we could not leave our ally in the lurch because she had stood by us".[2]

Aerenthal had been wise in not informing Berlin in advance of the date of the annexation. Knowledge would have been an embarrassment. As it was the plea of ignorance, half genuine, was an undoubted asset. What happened, so legend has it, is that one evening in August 1908, Aerenthal took the German Ambassador out to dine in the country. The dinner was good, the wine excellent. Aerenthal drank well—drank far too well as the German Ambassador noted with concern. However, there were no witnesses, there never were at Aerenthal's well-contrived meetings, and so no one but the German Ambassador could hear the indiscretions falling from the drunken lips of the Foreign Minister of the Dual Monarchy. It was just as well, for the indiscretions would have set the Chancelleries of Europe in a ferment. Aerenthal was saying that on 8th October he would annex Bosnia-Herzegovina. Fortunately his guest was very discreet and his lips remained sealed. Later, however, when the annexation had taken place, Aerenthal was able to say to the German Government that he told its Ambassador two months earlier of his intentions! No wonder Bülow records in his Memoirs[3] that Aerenthal, "the cleverer player", did not "play quite 'fair' to use an English expression which meets the case".

On the question of a conference the German attitude throughout was well defined. The conference, said Bülow, "won't come off: we shall have nothing to do with it."[4] All the cards were in Aerenthal's hands.

It was clear to most observers that for Russia the game was lost, and that nothing was to be gained by prolonging the crisis; but Isvolski was obstinate and above all his professional pride as a diplomat made him fight on to the bitter end.[5] He explained

[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 306. [3] Vol. II, p. 327.

[4] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVI, p. 169.

[5] This was Sir Charles Hardinge's opinion.

that he had been grossly deceived. At Buchlau he had exchanged views, he had not entered into commitments. He denounced Aerenthal to the German Ambassador as a reckless and dishonourable statesman with whom negotiation was impossible.[1] He was "no gentleman", he was guilty of the most flagrant duplicity. Aerenthal retaliated, much to Isvolski's consternation, by threatening to publish their correspondence before the Buchlau meeting. Though what had actually passed at the meeting between the two statesmen is not fully known, Isvolski had beyond question committed himself implicity and probably explicitly as well in support of Austria's anti-Slav policy. What is equally certain is that Aerenthal's threat of publication was gentlemanly blackmail, effective because Isvolski had shown so little consideration for Serb ambitions in particular and Slav interests in general.[2] And to compensate for this earlier lack of loyalty he felt bound during the crisis to back the extreme Serbian demands for compensation in the hope of restoring their confidence in Russia.

The personal duel continued for six months while Austrian and Russian troops mobilized along the frontier. In Vienna Field Marshal Conrad, the Chief of Staff, urged that the moment had come for the "inevitable" war against Serbia. Austria was sure of German support and, as Isvolski knew all too well, Russia was not ready. Now, said Conrad, is the time for a "preventive war" to crush that "dangerous little viper" Serbia, whose machinations threatened the future of the dynasty. That was exactly what Aerenthal wanted to do, but conscious of the restive nationalities within the Monarchy, he pronounced the course too risky.

In the end, it was Isvolski who was compelled to climb down, for Germany intervened. Von Bülow, who had rightly guessed "that none of the Powers would draw the sword and that when it came to a question of bending or breaking Russia would

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVI, p. 369.

[2] Cf. the account in J. A. Spender, *Fifty Years of Europe*, pp. 297–310, and in Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 378–93.

climb down from her high horse and call her vassal Serbia to order", intervened in March 1909. He proposed a solution which disposed of the idea of a conference and which conceded the substance of Aerenthal's case. When Isvolski temporized he received a peremptory demand from Berlin which stated: "We expect a precise answer, Yes or No. Any evasive, complicated or ambiguous reply will be regarded as a refusal. In such an event we should withdraw and allow matters to take their course."[1] Isvolski, angry and humiliated, yielded to this diplomatic ultimatum which was interpreted in all probability even more drastically than its authors intended.[2] The Bosnian crisis was over.

The Consequences

The material results of the crisis were even more slight than those at Algeciras. Austria had annexed two provinces which she had occupied for thirty years and Francis Joseph could visit them for the first time without loss of Imperial dignity. Yet the consequences were even more far-reaching. Germany had imposed her solution in Eastern Europe; she had stood, as the Kaiser remarked in Vienna with impolitic exuberance, "in shining armour," beside her Austrian ally. The policy of loyalty to Austria under almost any conditions added notably to the dangers that threatened Europe, for it meant that every Balkan dispute was a potential European war. From 1909 onwards the foreign policy of Germany was harnessed to that of the Dual Monarchy and the progressive dependence of Berlin on Vienna, of the strong on the weak, of the homogeneous nation on the polyglot State, was never fully understood in London or Paris. It was dangerous to the peace of Europe because the Austrian State was bound to pursue adventure in order to delay disintegration.

It may well be that Isvolski welcomed German intervention

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVI, pp. 693–5.

[2] Cf. Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 391. He discounts the ultimatum to an extent that is hardly credible.

as a way out of an intolerable personal predicament. But the humiliation of Russia, spectacular and sudden, was never forgiven. It was felt so keenly not because Russia had failed to secure the opening of the Straits, not because she was unable to satisfy the pretensions of her Serbian client, but because her own submission to the threat of force was so deeply wounding to her national pride. The impressions recorded in Sir Arthur Nicolson's dispatch from St. Petersburg, dated 29th March 1909, bear striking testimony to the truth of this conclusion. "I have been assured", wrote Nicolson,[1] "by those who have witnessed the various phases in the recent history of Russia that there has never previously been a moment when the country has undergone such humiliation, and, though Russia has had her troubles and trials both external and internal, and has suffered defeats in the field, she has never had, for apparently no valid cause, to submit to the dictation of a foreign Power."

The surrender to Germany revealed Russian weakness to all the world. "Mark my words", said Isvolski,[2] to the German Ambassador, "the Eastern Question is now insoluble without a conflict." In 1909 Russia was weak and isolated, and she could not face the challenge of the Central Powers. As the submission was complete so, too, was the determination that never again would Russia endure such humiliation. The most important consequence was to be seen five years later. In June 1914 Archduke Francis Ferdinand was assassinated in Bosnia. Austria, backed by Germany, delivered her ultimatum to Serbia, but this second time there was no climb down, there could be none if Russia was to remain a great Power. The annexation of Bosnia was a dress rehearsal, which had determined the rôles the actors would have to play.

Bülow was jubilant at the success of his solution of the crisis. "For the first time", he wrote, "the Austro-German Alliance proved its strength in a grievous conflict. The group of Powers whose influence has been so much over-estimated at

[1] Quoted Grey, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 293–5.
[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVI, pp. 396–9.

Algeciras fell to pieces when faced with the tough problems of continental policy." But as the Anglo-French Entente grew closer after the "brutal action" at Algeciras, so in St. Petersburg the Tsar was now foremost in urging that the Triple Entente must ever draw closer together to withstand the German menace; a war for dominion "between Slav and Teuton", he said, "was now inevitable". That belief was the fatal consequence of the annexation of Bosnia. And all over the Balkans men understood that the old order was doomed to perish in internecine strife. In Belgrade Milovanovitch, the Serbian Foreign Minister, consoled himself with the thought of the cataclysm that was soon to come. "We must give way. . . . But Europe is in a bad way. Europe will not remain long as it is to-day. How the *débâcle* will occur nobody knows. Perhaps a social revolution—in Russia first. . . . But of one thing I am sure, Bosnia and Herzegovina will not remain long in the possession of Austria. . . . I stake my head that by 1920 Bosnia will be free."[1] It was.

It remains to take farewell of the two rivals who had brought Europe right to the verge of war. Count Berchtold, their host, whose weak and wavering hand was to direct the foreign policy of the Dual Monarchy in a darker hour, had a tablet placed in his castle at Buchlau recording that there on 15th September 1908, Alexander Isvolski and Count Aerenthal had met "to settle the affairs of Europe".[2] A more lasting memorial to the two statesmen is, however, deeply graven in the last tragic pages of the history of two mighty Empires. Aerenthal, who died in 1912, was a man of no mean talents. None doubted that he served the Empire with unstinted devotion and none could gainsay that by the annexation of Bosnia he won the last great diplomatic victory of the Habsburg Monarchy. "Ambitious and therefore dangerous," was Lord Hardinge's verdict; "every inch a man," that of the English Ambassador. And there is something not unattractive about the Foreign Minister who had

[1] Quoted in Gooch: *Before the War*, Vol. I, p. 414.

[2] Von Bülow: *Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 326.

so few illusions about the future of the dynasty and of the Empire, but who was, none the less, determined that the risks of war were to be preferred to the certainty of the slow, inglorious disintegration. "I hope our action will succeed," he said in 1908, "if not I am naturally done for; but in that case at least we shall meet defeat with honour; otherwise we should have continued to sink miserably step by step." His triumph was short-lived, and, an experienced diplomatist, he was aware that a price must always be paid for diplomatic victories. But he could not foresee what the price would be, and it is an ironic fact that Aerenthal who aspired to rebuild the crumbling fabric of the Empire should, by fomenting the quarrel between Vienna and Belgrade, only have hastened the day when the realm of the Habsburgs came crashing to the ground.[1]

Isvolski lived on for ever seeking revenge; for ever looking out on the world from the narrow window of the Bosnian crisis. The great services which he had rendered to Russia in negotiating the Anglo-Russian Convention afforded him no satisfaction, because he could never forget that he, a diplomatist by profession, had been outwitted by his Austrian rival. He continued in office till 1911, but after 1909 his position was undermined beyond hope of repair. After his resignation he was appointed Russian Ambassador to Paris. There his influence was directed towards the tightening of the Entente and it was not wholly pacific. "He was not a very agreeable personality," writes Lord Hardinge, "his vanity being his outstanding characteristic."[2] Isvolski indeed lacked greatness and he lacked too a sense of realities and of final purpose. In his later years his bitterness made him forget both dignity and a sense of proportion. His personal responsibility for the war is not altogether inconsiderable. For in his search for personal revenge, he tended to accentuate at every opportunity the rivalries between the two groups of Great Powers. "This is *my* war, my war," he cried in Paris 1914.[3] The boast was untrue, but the undying

[1] Cf. G. P. Gooch: *Before the War*, Vol. I, p. 438.
[2] Op. cit., p. 127. [3] Ibid.

resentment of this embittered man both in his last years as Foreign Minister and as Ambassador to France was certainly not a factor helpful to the maintenance of peace.

Chapter VIII

THE GROWTH OF ANGLO-GERMAN TENSION

ON 1st October 1870, while the issue of the Franco-Prussian War was still undecided, Thomas Davis wrote in the *Irish Citizen*, "Prussia cannot be England's friend. Prussia has her own aspirations and ambitions; one of these is to be a great maritime power, or rather *the* great maritime power of Europe; and nothing in the future can be more sure than that Prussia, if successful in this war, will take Belgium and from Antwerp threaten the mouth of the Thames." This forecast of an Irish exile whose literary gifts had adorned the Young Ireland Movement in the heyday of its influence is remarkable less for its content, though indeed it was to prove true enough, than for the suggestion implicit in it of a long-term sense of purpose and far-seeing calculation (though indeed it was accurate enough then for the implicit suggestion in it of a long-term sense of purpose and of distinction) about German naval ambitions. How well justified is this impression of deliberation? It is not easy to determine exactly, though it is clear that there was a strong predisposition in Germany to welcome a challenge to British seapower. The propaganda of Tirpitz and the Navy League, the influence of the Kaiser were decisive because they built upon a solid popular foundation. But in the realm of practical political decision Germany's direction remained uncertain because her rulers had never clearly decided why she wanted a High Seas Fleet and for what purpose she intended to use it. To this general conclusion there are of course exceptions, notably von Tirpitz himself who was perfectly clear in his own mind on both counts, but it is reflected accurately in the differences in opinion among the political leaders about the expediency and the pace of Ger-

man naval expansion as well as in occasional and more fundamental doubts about its desirability as an objective of German policy. Right up to 1914 the German Government never seems to have made up its mind finally what was the immediate end, or having decided upon it, considered whether the risks involved in pursuing it were worth while or not.

The greatest weakness in German policy in the last years before the war was the lack of a sense of limitation. After the drastic solution of the Bosnian crisis had finally alienated Russia, it would have seemed to be only common sense that Germany should take the utmost care, even to the extent of making considerable sacrifices, in order to ensure that England, too, was not estranged. But in actual fact not only were no precautions taken and no sacrifices made, but England was persistently provoked by the menacing expansion of the German Navy, and by a steady refusal to give serious consideration to proposals for limitation in naval armament which might have allayed the profound misgivings thereby aroused.

Naval Competition

In the first instance, as has been noted earlier, it was German inability to intervene in South Africa that had brought home to the Kaiser and still more to von Tirpitz the fact that Germany was powerless to enforce her will outside Europe unless she built a High Seas Fleet. It was not therefore the Entente with France or the Convention with Russia, or the possible threat of encirclement which the two in conjunction presented, but German inability to use her power outside Europe that was the original and determining factor in the creation of the German Fleet. It was clear both to the Kaiser and to his advisers that the building of a fleet involved a risk and that in the long run that risk was war with England. Tirpitz consistently used the prevalence of anti-British feeling in Germany as a means of persuading the Kaiser and the Chancellor to support his ambitious, expansionist programme. As early as 1898 he warned the Kaiser that Germany must henceforward contemplate "the addition of an

English front to the French one", which meant a war on sea as well as on land.

The supremacy of the British Fleet could not be challenged for many years. In introducing the first Navy Law (that of 1898) Tirpitz had said openly that the fleet must eventually be equal to its most difficult task, in other words to "a naval battle in the North Sea against England", but at the same time he admitted that it must be the aim of German policy to avoid a conflict till the German Fleet was ready for it. The Navy Law of 1900, which doubled the number of battleships, accepted these considerations as the foundation of policy in as much as it proposed a long-term plan for naval construction henceforward to be regarded as immutable in "the sense that although it might be transcended it could never be abrogated".[1]

Tirpitz recognized that for many years the German Navy would be vulnerable, but believed that this inevitable period of naval inferiority might be safely passed. The reasons for his confidence were propounded in his "risk theory" which he used to defend his proposals against their political or military critics. The German Fleet, according to this theory, had to be of such strength that even the strongest naval power could not attack it without endangering its own superiority. It was not necessary, according to his argument, that the German Fleet should be as strong as that of the greatest naval power, for in the event of German defeat, the victor's fleet would be so damaged that it could not withstand successfully a conflict with a combination of the other European naval powers. In other words, Tirpitz aimed at building as quickly as possible a fleet which even though defeated could sink enough British ships to reduce the British Navy below the level required by the two-Power standard, and thereby leave her vulnerable to the French and Russian navies. In the meantime, before the "risk" became operative there was, as Tirpitz was compelled to admit, a danger zone to be passed during which the German Fleet would lie at

[1] Cf. E. L. Woodward: *Great Britain and the German Navy*, Oxford 1935, pp. 33–5.

the mercy of the British.[1] He maintained, however, and as events proved correctly, that while English opinion might mistrust the purpose of the navy they would be unlikely to "Copenhagen" it. Sir John Fisher indeed was the only responsible person on the British side to whom the merits of so drastic a solution strongly appealed. If, however, Tirpitz was rightly confident on this score his "risk theory" depended on political factors which proved transient. The validity of his reasoning was in inverse ratio to the degree of cordiality and confidence that existed between Britain on the one hand and the Dual Alliance on the other. Once the Entente with France had been succeeded by the Anglo-Russian Convention the premises on which his conclusions rested had disappeared.

The construction of the first dreadnoughts introduced a new and more astringent note in Anglo-German naval rivalry. In 1904 Sir John Fisher, acting on his policy of "Ruthless, Relentless and Remorseless", brought home some 160 ships which "could neither fight nor run away" so that, as he said, "we shall be 30 per cent more fit to fight the next war". In 1905 he laid the keels of the first dreadnoughts. Far superior to anything afloat this "new type of floating gun-carriage" with its "all-big gun" armament rendered relatively obsolete the older and smaller types of vessel which had hitherto constituted England's naval superiority. Was it wise for the sake of the initial advantage to lower in this way the value of the older ships? Obviously it would not be long before other Powers, especially Germany, followed Britain's lead. As the striking power of fleets came to be measured by this new standard her advantages would quickly disappear and naval competition would be renewed on something much nearer to level terms.[2] Some of these misgivings were expressed in official circles and Mr. Balfour voiced them in the House of Commons.[3] Moreover, while the construction of

[1] Ibid., p. 33.

[2] Cf. Woodward, op. cit., pp. 107–11, for a detailed consideration of the issues involved.

[3] *Parliamentary Debates, H. of C.*: Vol. CCXII, col. 111–12.

dreadnoughts virtually doubled the cost of capital ships they could be built comparatively quickly, and their introduction in Germany soon after enabled Tirpitz to start only a little behind England in the construction of these new vessels. For example, by 1908 England had authorized the laying down of twelve dreadnoughts, Germany of nine, whereas the ratio between England and Germany in the older type of vessel was 63 : 26.[1] Since in Germany naval workers were conscripted and the cost of naval construction correspondingly low, Tirpitz believed his prospects had improved and this belief, together with a fear that England might use her decisive short-term supremacy at sea to wage a preventive war accounts for the hardening in the German reaction to the proposals made by the Liberal Government for a naval holiday in succeeding years.[2] Provided a political crisis were avoided Germany might pass safely through the danger zone in which the German Fleet was unequal to the Royal Navy in as little as ten or twelve years. That was Tirpitz's belief, but he failed or perhaps did not wish to understand, what Count Metternich, the German Ambassador in London, understood only too well, that there was a heavy price to be paid. The German naval programme poisoned relations between England and Germany and with every stage in German naval expansion they deteriorated progressively.

The Kaiser was at no time prepared to contemplate any agreed limitation on naval construction. The proposals put forward by Campbell-Bannerman on his accession to office evoked no sympathetic response in Berlin. Since the German Government was well aware that the Liberal Cabinet, committed to a programme of armament limitation, was more anxious than was altogether wise to use national revenue for social services and not for dreadnoughts, their refusal to negotiate was confirmation of a deliberate intention to tread the path of naval competition and to run the risks involved.

German hostility to any discussion of limitation in naval

[1] Cf. Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 236.

[2] Cf. Woodward, op. cit., pp. 115–16.

armaments was, if anything, accentuated by the emergence of the Triple Entente. After 1907 such proposals were viewed with profound suspicion as being in all probability the product of concerted action on the part of the three Entente Powers. And the harbouring of this suspicion, ill-founded in point of fact, led in many instances to the angry, outright rejection of well-intentioned, informal or formal approaches inspired by an anxiety to find some sort of tolerable *modus vivendi*. When, in 1908, Count Metternich reported to the Chancellor informal suggestions by Grey and Lloyd George "an ultra-radical Welsh solicitor" who "has now become a respected and leading personage", that a naval discussion would be a most helpful preliminary to the general improvement of relations between the two countries, he recorded also their view "that relations between the two countries could not improve whilst naval competition on each side rose higher and higher".[1] This was a truth not at all to the Kaiser's liking and in a storm of indignation he annotated the Ambassador's despatch, concluding that "Count Metternich must be informed that good relations with England at the price of the building of a German Navy are not desired by me. The German Fleet is not built *against* anyone and also not against England! But according to our need. This was stated quite clearly in the Navy Law, and for eleven years has remained unchanged! The Law will be carried out to the last iota; whether it suits the British or not is no matter! If they want war they can begin it; we do not fear it."[2]

The intensification of naval competition had only one result —to drive England further into the arms of the Triple Entente, by lending substance to her half-formed suspicions of Germany's ultimate intentions. When Churchill said that the English Fleet was a necessity, the German somewhat of a luxury, he was stating, not it is true in very tactful language, a fact which Englishmen, knowing well their dependence on the Royal Navy for defence and for the safe passage of supplies in time

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXIV, p. 99; Dugdale, Vol. III, pp. 284–9.
[2] Ibid.

of war, thought self-evident. England had no large standing army; the control of a narrow sea by her fleet was her one protection and historic bulwark against invasion. She was not prepared to see that safeguard disappear. On this all parties were agreed. There was no half-way house in naval affairs, said Grey, between complete safety and absolute ruin. If the German Navy ever became superior to the Royal Navy then the German Army could easily conquer England. There was, however, no corresponding danger for Germany, for however superior the British Fleet, it would bring her no nearer to Berlin. But, as Balfour observed, taking the argument one stage further, without a superior fleet Britain and her Empire would no longer exist as a Great Power. Without any fleet at all Germany would remain the greatest Power in Europe. It was because of Germany's military predominance on the Continent that the expansion of her Navy introduced into Anglo-German relations a feeling of suspicion which nothing but a clear and explicit agreement to limit naval armaments could have removed.

Honourably and faithfully Count von Metternich continued to warn the Chancellor and through him the Kaiser and von Tirpitz of the inevitable consequences of a race in naval armaments. The Chancellor, it is clear, was impressed and disturbed, but not his Imperial master. To him no hint of limitation was tolerable. What Grey said was discounted on the assumption that he was anti-German. "An honourable and peaceable opponent, but still an opponent," was how von Metternich described him. But with Lloyd George "in whom I have won an important coadjutor . . ." the Ambassador felt that frank discussion might be profitable. Considering the more vital importance of the Navy for England, he reported Lloyd George as emphasizing in August 1908, "the British Navy must always be a good bit stronger than ours, in order to give that feeling of safety which England demanded, and also powerful enough to prevent her being exposed to any wanton attack".[1] "That is language to be used only to China or Italy or similar creatures", was the

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXIV, p. 107; Dugdale, Vol. III, pp. 289–91.

Kaiser's indignant reaction.[1] Count Metternich must be told that "in future he repels such expectorations unconditionally . . .' "He must give the rough answer" to British approaches of this kind. But von Metternich—and it is greatly to his credit—continued to place the unpalatable facts before Chancellor and Kaiser and the former had the grace to recognize that "the first duty of His Majesty's representative abroad was to report the truth and to describe circumstances as they actually were".[2]

Von Bülow's misgivings led him to inquire more closely into von Tirpitz's plans. In December 1908, in a long memorandum, he questioned[3] the wisdom of a High Seas Fleet. In view of the great superiority of the Royal Navy could the German Fleet go into action decisively against it? If not would it not be wiser to concentrate on defensive measures—on improving coast defences, increasing the stock of sea mines and building a strong fleet of submarines instead of concentrating exclusively on battleships? Since it would be some years before the fleet would be so powerful that England would run any serious risk in attacking it, would it not be well to slow down the German naval programme since this was, the Chancellor pointed out, the only way of reassuring London? To these questions von Tirpitz had only one convincing rejoinder. He thought rightly that the risk of a "preventive" war by England need not be taken seriously. Therefore concession was not necessary and would anyway incur additional risk for it would prolong the danger zone.[4]

The Chancellor's recognition of some at least of the political dangers inherent in the German naval programme, and his feeling that Germany might be wiser to concentrate on the construction of a defensive fleet, led to the summoning of a special Conference on 3rd June 1909. Here the protagonists of the rival views discussed Germany's future naval policy and in

[1] Ibid.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVIII,, p. 168; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 352.

[3] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVIII, p. 38; Dugdale, Vol. III, pp. 331–3.

[4] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVIII, pp. 51 and 78.

particular the effect of continued German naval expansion upon her relations with Britain. Count Metternich, undeterred by past indications of the Kaiser's intense displeasure, warned his listeners that German naval construction and the agitation accompanying it "brought to Englishmen a strong and ever-increasing conviction that the Germans meant a threat to their country, for which absolute security and supremacy in sea power was a matter of life and death".[1] Bülow was impressed and filled with misgivings. Von Moltke, speaking for the General Staff, voiced the opinion that there was no chance of carrying a war with England to a successful conclusion, and recommended an honourable understanding for the slowing down of naval construction. At the same time he considered that the failure of an attempt to reach an understanding might mean war. But von Tirpitz remained uncompromising and deaf to all warnings. "In my opinion", he said, "the danger-zone in our relations with England will be passed in five to six years, say in 1915, after the widening of the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal and the completion of the fortifications of Heligoland." "That is all very fine," retorted Bülow, "but the question is still how are we going to get over the dangers of that period?" His question remained unanswered. Nor did he inquire why the danger-zone would end in 1915. Yet it would have been a pertinent question, for England was hardly likely to remain inactive in the intervening years.

The Mischievous Influence of the Kaiser

It is possible that Bülow, conscious of the political dangers looming in a Europe divided into two armed and hostile camps, might have exercised a restraining influence on German naval policy had he remained in office. But it is doubtful, for under the influence of the Kaiser, political arguments which should have been decisive tended to be more and more pushed into the background and a purely naval argument put forward by Tirpitz without any relation to political realities to gain uncritical support. In all the discussions about a possible limitation in naval

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVIII, p. 168; Dugdale, Vol. III, pp. 352–60.

armaments, the Kaiser's voice was always on the side of those who advocated no compromise; of those who argued that the end in view made the risks worth taking; of those who declared that Germany must pursue her own policy irrespective of the reactions to it in other countries. At times it seemed as if he failed to understand the concern with which the addition of a powerful navy to Germany's unchallenged military strength must be regarded by other maritime Powers; at others that he was so confident of German strength that reactions elsewhere could be disregarded with impunity; and at others again he treated this formidable and menacing problem with such levity that further attempts to reach a settlement seemed futile. In one of his conversations with the Kaiser, Sir Edward Goschen, the British Ambassador, ventured to hint that the man-in-the-street viewed with anxiety the building of the German Navy because he did not know why it was being done. "Because I want to make myself safe," exclaimed the Kaiser, "safe against France and Russia, and England too. And there is another reason: I am all for the white man against the black, whether they be Chinese, Japanese, Niggers or Slavs." Such unmitigated nonsense from any other source would not be worth recalling, but when it came from the absolute ruler of the most powerful State in Europe, it could not be overlooked. What did he really want? It is hard to say, for by 1909 the Kaiser was yet another illustration of the truth of Lord Acton's dictum that absolute power corrupts absolutely, and in the subsequent years of his reign it was only too evident to observers that long exercise of autocratic authority was having a disastrous effect on a character that had always lacked stability.

The Kaiser's championship of the German naval expansion was certainly reinforced, if not inspired, by his inherited sense of rivalry with England, accentuated as it was by a dislike of his uncle, King Edward VII. This personal antipathy between Kaiser and King, though only an incidental cause of friction between the two countries, was none the less a factor which removed one dwindling hope that might otherwise have been

entertained of bridging the widening gulf between them. "Never", writes M. André Maurois in his biography of King Edward VII, "were two men less fitted to understand one another. Where the Kaiser was vain and romantic, the King was modest and practical. His conversation lacked sparkle, but never tact; the Kaiser's shone but with an offensive glitter." The Kaiser's offensiveness was indeed notorious and his descriptions of King Edward VII as an "old peacock", of his ministers as "unmitigated noodles", did not suffer anything in their retailing by the malicious. The Kaiser's indiscreet loquacity has rarely been rivalled among monarchs.

The Kaiser contributed to the estrangement of Germany and England by an article published in the *Daily Telegraph* in October 1908 more than by any other single act. The draft of the article was seen by the Chancellor but read only cursorily by him, though it had been examined in the Foreign Office.[1] In the article the Kaiser, having pointed out that the English were mad, "mad as March hares," to doubt the sincerity of his friendship, instanced as proof of it that in the darkest days of the Boer War he had worked out a plan of campaign which was "among the State papers at Windsor" awaiting "the severely impartial verdict of history"; a plan which "by a matter of curious coincidence" was on much the same lines as that successfully put into operation by Field Marshal Lord Roberts in South Africa. In England the article was regarded as a tactless piece of nonsense which provoked some resentment; in Germany it aroused an outburst against the irresponsible ruler which threatened at one time to culminate in a demand for his abdication.

"Mere bragging humbug from beginning to end," is the verdict on the *Daily Telegraph* article which Bülow pronounces in his Memoirs.[2] In retrospect such criticism, richly deserved, came easily from the embittered, fallen Chancellor. At the time he excused himself for not having read the article by pleading pressure of work and the fact that it was written by Colonel Stuart

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, Vol. XXIV, p. 179; Dugdale, Vol. III, p. 313.

[2] Vol. II, pp. 341–5, for a full personal account.

Wortley (who drafted it on the basis of the Kaiser's comments), very illegibly and on bad paper. He then offered to resign. But the Kaiser said no, and the delicate task of defending him in the Reichstag fell to von Bülow. It was too much even for his superb dialectical skill. The Chancellor's assurance to the deputies that in future the Kaiser would maintain the reserve indispensable "to a consistent foreign policy" was a promise that had to be made but which could not be forgiven. With ever-growing misgivings about German naval policy,[1] Bülow remained in office till the autumn of 1909, but his position, already undermined after Björkö, was made intolerable by the *Daily Telegraph* incident, and he took the opportunity of a defeat on a comparatively minor issue in the Reichstag to resign, in July 1909, before he was dismissed. With every appearance of regret, with a farewell kiss and embrace, the Kaiser parted from the man who was to have been his Bismarck. But only a few days later, standing in the same place in the gardens of Sans Souci, the Kaiser said to the King of Würtemburg: "This is where I gave that sweep the boot."[2]

The Coup *of Agadir*

Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, who succeeded Bülow as Chancellor, had good intentions but neither the ability, the influence, nor the experience, of his predecessor. His memoranda and comments on international affairs show a depressing lack of incisiveness and understanding. In his early days of office, he laboured under the illusion that responsibility for deteriorating relations with England might be attributed to Sir Edward Grey's anti-German views. It is doubtful whether this misconception was ever wholly removed, but in time, like Bülow before him, Bethmann-Hollweg came to understand that a reconciliation with England would not, and could not, be brought about until some agreement had been reached on naval construction.[3] Un-

[1] Cf. private letter to Count von Metternich, 23rd June 1909, *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVIII, p. 181.

[2] Ludwig, op. cit., p. 356.

[3] Cf. *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVIII, p. 412; Dugdale, Vol. III, pp. 422–3.

happily the new Chancellor's well-meaning anxiety for a *détente* in Anglo-German relations had little chance of realization because neither the Kaiser nor Herr von Kiderlen-Wächter, his Foreign Minister, were prepared to abandon an adventurous policy. Kiderlen[1] was a man of no mean ability who had little regard for the Chancellor, whom he nicknamed the "Earthworm" (on whom the Kaiser treads), and who inclined by temperament and by a training in Balkan diplomacy towards a spectacular foreign policy. Major responsibility for the Agadir crisis rests with him.

Because of continuing and mounting disorder in Morocco and of the apparent inability of the Sultan's Government either to protect itself or to suppress rebellion, the French marched on Fez at its request, and to its relief, early in 1911. In view of France's well-known expansionist designs in North Africa this was a step which provoked legitimate concern in Berlin. Kiderlen at once observed, shrewdly enough, that it was easy for the French to march on Fez, but not so easy for them to withdraw. He did not indicate in public that he regarded the French action as a breach of the Act of Algeciras, though he warned the French Ambassador, on 28th April, that if the French troops remained at Fez, Germany would consider the Act had lapsed and would resume "entièrement notre liberté d'action".[2] In public, "neither objecting nor encouraging," Germany maintained a silence which was, and was intended to be, ominous. It achieved its aim, for the French became nervous and entered into unofficial conversations, broaching the possibility of colonial compensation for Germany should they find it necessary to extend the area of their jurisdiction in Morocco. This all suited Kiderlen's plans excellently, and no sooner had these informal discussions opened on this basis than he sought, and obtained, the Kaiser's qualified assent to another dramatic gesture, by giving him the assurance that this time the risks involved were negligible. "If", said

[1] Cf. G. P. Gooch: *Studies in Diplomacy and Statecraft*, pp. 129–61, "Kiderlen-Wächter, The Man of Agadir."

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXIX, p. 97; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 2.

Kiderlen, "the French out of anxiety for their compatriots settle themselves at Fez it is our right too to protect our compatriots in danger. We have large German firms at Mogador and Agadir. German ships could go there to protect the firms." By seizing a pledge, argued Kiderlen, "the Imperial Government might give such a turn to the Morocco affair as would cause the former ill-success to be forgotten".[1] He then instructed the German gunboat *Panther* to put in at Agadir on the Atlantic coast of Morocco on its return journey from South Africa. The justification for this astonishing move—that the German business community at Agadir required protection—was heard with misgiving by a sceptical world. Had there in fact been a German business community at Agadir the explanation might have carried greater conviction. But there was not. Kiderlen indeed had intended to remedy the deficiency, but the German business-men instructed to go to Agadir failed to reach their destination in time owing to unforeseen delays on their journey.

Since Kiderlen had evidently intended the gesture at Agadir to be nothing more than a means for the blunt assertion of Germany's demand for compensation, he should have carefully considered in advance what compensation Germany required, and relieved the tension by informing the French accordingly. This, however, he failed to do and he returned no answer for some weeks to the direct inquiries which Sir Edward Grey made of the German Ambassador. Why was *The Panther* at Agadir? It may be, after all, that the subsequent German explanation was correct and that because *The Panther* was such "a very little ship" it had not occurred to Kiderlen that a gesture intended to extract compensation from France might be interpreted in London as a move towards the establishment of a naval base on the Atlantic. When the step was first contemplated, Kiderlen had considered it "very unlikely" that England would raise objections.[2] But this is precisely what happened. The Morocco dispute

[1] Memo of 3rd May, *Die Grosse Politik*, XXIX, p. 105; Dugdale, Vol. IV, pp. 2–4.

[2] Ibid.

which in the first instance appeared to concern France and Germany only, was soon converted by this too forceful diplomacy into an Anglo-German crisis of the first magnitude. Once more that combination of menace and mystery to which German diplomats were so addicted had driven the Entente Powers closer together. It had alarmed them once again with the prospect of immediate war, and that was a threat which could serve only to cement the Entente.

The crisis dragged on. Indeed it seemed to have no apparent end. On 17th July 1911 Kiderlen wrote to the Chancellor explaining the difficulties of the position as he then saw them. The French, he wrote, "are much afraid of their own public opinion; moreover, they have the advantage that, if the compensation scheme comes to nothing we can hardly make demands which will not bring us into conflict with other Powers." And he went on to say very truly that "occupation of the South of Morocco would bring us into conflict with England as well as France; and I do not know how we are to find the means for such a proceeding." How indeed? Had he thought a little more and a little earlier such an eventuality need never have arisen. In the circumstances Kiderlen's predicament was not enviable. But he was not converted to the desirability of more moderate diplomacy. On 15th July he had informed the French Ambassador that Germany wanted the "*whole* of the French Congo". The Ambassador, he reported, "was aghast", on which the Kaiser commented: "He is a good actor!"[1] But the Kaiser became more irritable and impatient, for months had gone by and still no settlement seemed in sight. Withdrawal meant a loss of prestige; further demands, as Kiderlen so rightly diagnosed, brought the certainty of conflict with Powers other than France. "What the devil is to happen now?" inquired the Kaiser. "It is pure farce. They negotiate and negotiate, and nothing happens. . . ."[2] Such was the *impasse* into which adventurous diplomacy had led the Foreign Minister but, still satisfied with his diplomatic technique, he advised

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXIX, p. 184; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 11.
[2] Ibid., XXIX, p. 174.

the Chancellor, in mid-July, that a "favourable result" was still to be found by acting "very strongly".[1] But Agadir was one of those occasions when London was not prepared to wait indefinitely on Berlin. On 19th July, in view of the continuing uncertainty about German intentions, Grey took alarm and asked Asquith for "authority to impress on Germany that if her negotiations with France came to nothing, we must become a party to the discussions and send ships to Morocco". On 21st July, having obtained preliminary approval from Grey and Asquith, Mr. David Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in a speech at the Mansion House, announced to the world the strong line that the British Government were prepared to take if Germany decided to carry her forceful diplomacy to even greater lengths.

The Mansion House speech was all the more important in that Lloyd George was considered by von Metternich and in Berlin to be the leader of the pro-German party in the Liberal Cabinet. Strong language from him was well calculated to dispel illusions about England's attitude. In the course of his speech Lloyd George declared: "Britain should at all hazards maintain her place and prestige among the Great Powers, and if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the sacrifice of the great and beneficent position that Britain has won by centuries of heroism and achievement—then I say emphatically that peace at such a price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure." There is no doubt that the speech was well-timed. On 17th July Kiderlen concluded his private letter to the Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, with one more reiteration of his view that the only way to get something out of the compensation question was by "brusque negotiation".[2] Because the moment of delivery was well chosen, Mr. Lloyd George's speech was all the more resented in Berlin. But its effect was wholesome. A spirit of realism and of compromise was at once introduced into the

[1] Ibid., XXIX, p. 184.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXIX, p. 189; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 12.

negotiations with France about compensation, for gone, once for all, was the comforting conviction that Grey was merely a representative of a pro-French faction in the Cabinet, and gone with it the hope that a forward diplomacy might succeed in detaching England from France.

The final settlement of the crisis was delayed for many months more, but the threat to peace had disappeared and what remained to be done was to find a reasonable basis for compensation for Germany. Kiderlen, who had earlier astounded M. Cambon by his remarks that Germany would require as compensation, the whole French Congo, was prepared to think in more modest terms after July. Throughout the ensuing discussions the French were assured of Britain's support, and though Grey advised reasonable concession, he was prepared to support French resistance to any demand which seemed to them excessive. Responsibility on the British side during the Parliamentary recess lay to an extent not easy to understand to-day with the Foreign Secretary alone. Throughout the long, hot summer months he was, with one exception, the only Cabinet Minister in London. The colleague who remained with him was Mr. Winston Churchill, whose "high mettled spirit was exhilarated by the air of crisis and high events", and who followed the detailed negotiations on the Moroccan dispute with an intensity unusual in a Home Secretary.[1] But the Home Secretary of 1911 was soon to be transferred to the Admiralty, and in his new office he did not forget the warning of Agadir.

Professor Brandenburg[2] describes Agadir as an ill-conceived action dictated by the desire for prestige and the wish to blot out the failure of Algeciras. Bülow, not at all reluctant to expose the incompetence of his successors, calls it "deplorable", for "like a damp squib it startled, then amused, the world, and ended by making us look ridiculous".[3] With these verdicts none can

[1] Grey, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 59–60; cf. also Churchill: *The World Crisis*, Vol. I, pp. 42–69.

[2] Op. cit., p. 384.

[3] *Memoirs*, Vol. III, pp. 86–7.

quarrel. Agadir alarmed English opinion as no other crisis had done, and brought the prospect of war with Germany home to the public for the first time. For the military and naval advisers, both in Paris and in London, it was a warning, not to be neglected, that next time Germany might pursue an adventurous policy to the end regardless of the consequences. From Agadir onwards the plans of the experts became less hypothetical and the defensive machinery of the Entente became progressively more closely co-ordinated.

The Haldane Mission

Agadir reduced almost to vanishing point the prospects of a reconciliation between England and Germany. The crisis had emphasized once again, this time particularly to Western Europe, the indefinable character of German aims. Only the most explicit proof of a German intention to negotiate on the naval question with a view to a definite limitation in naval armaments could now have reassured public opinion in England. That is why after Agadir attention was concentrated once again on the mutual arrest or decrease of naval expenditure as the test of whether an understanding with Germany was likely to be worth anything. The very fact that Agadir had made plain the imminence of war encouraged well-meaning efforts not to let the case for negotiations go by default.

After earlier failures the resumption of conversations on naval competition was not easy. Judicious diplomatic manœuvres were the indispensable preliminary to the choosing of a suitable moment. For this reason unofficial conversations between Albert Ballin, the head of the Hamburg-Amerika Line, and Sir Ernest Cassel were used to pave the way[1] and they were successful in that they led to the issue of an unofficial invitation first to Grey and then, with his encouragement, to Haldane, to visit Berlin to discuss the possibility of negotiating a satisfactory settlement. Grey felt that Haldane rather than himself was the right man to send, partly in view of Haldane's knowledge of Germany and

[1] Cf. *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXI, p. 105.

his reputed sympathy with her culture and aspirations, and partly because it would involve less risk of misunderstanding in Paris than if he went himself.[1]

About the Haldane Mission of 1912 there lingers an atmosphere of unhappy epilogue.[2] Not altogether discouraging in its early attempts to find a satisfactory formula, the mission failed in its major objective because the one thing that the German Government was not prepared to do was to limit German naval construction in any material sense. As the negotiations proceeded the negotiators tended to talk about different things. Haldane tried to keep the naval question in the forefront all the time. Bethmann-Hollweg, on the other hand, knowing the Kaiser's views, sought first for some agreement which would ensure British neutrality in the event of Germany becoming involved in a war with the Dual Alliance, implying that a naval agreement might more easily follow a political understanding of this kind.[3] Here the British Government were adamant. The essential thing was agreement on limitation of naval construction. Failing that, co-operation in other fields was not practicable. Grey insisted that the German political proposals in all the varied forms in which they were put forward were wholly unacceptable in principle as well as in approach. "I cannot", he had written to Sir Edward Goschen in Berlin in May 1910,[4] "enter into any agreement with Germany which would prevent me from giving to France or Russia, should Germany take up towards either of them an aggressive attitude such as she took up towards France about Morocco, the same sort of support I gave to France at the time of the Algeciras Conference." That remained his unalterable opinion.

The Haldane Mission, while making it abundantly clear to the German Government that negotiations with England could not

[1] Grey, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 75–7.

[2] Lord Haldane's own account is to be found in his *Autobiography*, London 1929, p. 239 seq.

[3] E.g. *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXI, p. 120.

[4] Grey, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 79.

be successful unless a naval agreement were first reached, at the same time confirmed in London the view that the Kaiser, as distinct first from Bülow, and then from Bethmann-Hollweg, did not want good relations at the expense of the Fleet. The sinister story of Admiral Tirpitz's attempts to deceive London about the rate of German naval construction, told in detail in Professor Woodward's invaluable study,[1] affords the fullest justification for the Cabinet's refusal to be drawn into negotiations of a political character before a firm naval agreement had been concluded.

After the Bosnian crisis Germany had estranged Russia; after Agadir she estranged Britain, though perhaps estrangement in the West was not so final; and there were always the lost provinces of Alsace-Lorraine to stand in the way of cordial relations with France. Her diplomacy had been clumsy. It was almost as though Germany were trying to chain England ever more firmly to Russia by playing on her fears of the High Seas Fleet. But in Berlin the complaint was always of encirclement, for, however blind to the reactions to her naval policy, Germany understood that the European balance of power was tilting against her by 1912. Yet the remedy lay in her own hands. Concessions about naval construction would have restored good relations with England, who would instinctively, perhaps too readily, have returned to her rôle as mediator between the rival groups rather than remain a semi-detached member of one of them. This loosening of the ties that bound England to the Dual Alliance would have been far more valuable to Germany than any narrow agreement about a political formula. But the Kaiser and his military advisers, inclined by temperament and by tradition to a forceful removal of the threat of encirclement, were thinking more and more of an appeal at a favourable moment to the verdict of war.

The last word lies with the Kaiser. In February 1914, in a note to the Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, he disposed finally of any lingering hope of naval agreement. "I wish", he said, "to

[1] *Great Britain and the German Navy*. For an account of the Haldane Mission, *vide* chapter XVIII.

see the whole endless and dangerous question of the limitation of armaments rolled up and put away for good." Such was the Kaiser's will. Did he recognize that it meant that Germany could no longer expect a "favourable moment" for waging a short, decisive war according to the pattern which the master of *real Politik* had laid down? Germany's deliberate neglect of many opportunities to reach naval agreement with Britain did not make war inevitable; but it did make certain that when war came it would be prolonged and bitterly contested, for the greatest naval power in Europe would know that in such a conflict she would be fighting for life itself.

Chapter IX

TRIPLE ALLIANCE AND TRIPLE ENTENTE

IT is easy and tempting to over-simplify the European picture in the last years before the war. It is true that from 1909 onwards relations between the two rival groups had deteriorated, but they had not deteriorated evenly over the whole range of issues which might have produced a conflict in Eastern or Western Europe. The most disturbing and significant symptom in the international scene in the years immediately preceding the final catastrophe were the repercussions in the East to the growing sense of strain that pervaded relations between the Western Powers and Germany. It is a paradoxical fact that it was tension in the West which resulted in an Eastern war.[1] To understand this paradox it is essential that attention should not be fixed on relations *between* the two Groups of Powers at the expense and still less to the exclusion of relations within each group. In general these were not uniformly good—much less good indeed than is often supposed; and it was only pressure from without that provided a sufficiently powerful unifying force to hold together Alliance or Entente whose component parts entertained such individual, such conflicting, ambitions. Indeed it is true to say that as a rule relations within each Group were good in direct ratio to the degree of tension between the rival groups.

At the time of the Congress of Berlin there was no problem likely to produce a war in Western Europe. Franco-German relations had been settled for a generation at least by the decisive defeat of France. The possibilities of conflict lay therefore only in

[1] Cf. an article in *The Times Literary Supplement* of 16th February 1946, reviewing *Le Origini Della Guerra Del* 1914 by Luigi Albertini, which is a stimulating and suggestive short analysis of the immediate causes of the war.

the East, and to that extent at any rate Bismarck had an easier task than either Bülow or Bethmann-Hollweg. The successive crises which marked the early years of the twentieth century, Morocco, Bosnia, Agadir, were in themselves an indication both of increasing tension and of the fact that the risk of war was now almost as great in the West as in the East. All the crises served, moreover, to increase tension, not merely in the area or between those countries which were directly involved, but throughout Europe as a whole. The crises in Morocco tended towards the tightening of the Franco-Russian Alliance by underlining France's dependence on Russia almost as much as they led to the strengthening of the Entente Cordiale. Russia's humiliation after Bosnia made it only too plain to the Tsar, and to his advisers, that they were dependent on French support for the success even of their Balkan policy, for it was Isvolski's failure to enlist the active support of France immediately after the Buchlau conversations that left Russia weak and isolated in the negotiations which culminated in the spectacular diplomatic victory of the Central Powers. Broad considerations of strategy strongly reinforced considerations of policy in urging that both Triple Alliance and Triple Entente should be tightened, so that when the war, so widely believed to be inevitable after 1909, eventually came, each side would know precisely from the beginning of the final crisis the military resources on which it could rely.

The more nearly equal the strength of the rival groups, the more even the balance of power in Europe, the more important it seemed to each European Power to define in the most explicit and concrete terms its relationship to its partners and associates. From 1911–14, therefore, the attention of each of the Great Powers in Europe was concentrated on the strengthening of the bonds that linked it with its allies, so that there should be a clear, mutually agreed understanding of what constituted a legitimate *casus belli*. It was in this process of definition that a distinction emerged more clearly than ever before between "national" and "alliance" objectives. If the support of allies were to be demanded

it was legitimate to pursue only the latter. In this way one member State of an alliance was able to exercise no little influence on the policy of its partners by its recognition or non-recognition of political aims as being legitimate in the sense that in the last resort support would be forthcoming to implement or defend them. This crystallization of forces removed whatever dwindling hopes remained of reviving the sense of a Concert of European Powers. The gulf was growing too wide to be bridged, though to the last, efforts were made to appeal to the traditional sense of the community of European peoples.

Relations between Germany and Austria

The Triple Alliance was renewed for the last time in 1912. Its purpose and its character had changed very much since the days when Bismarck had negotiated it. It was no longer a strictly defensive alliance, and what was more important, Germany, the predominant partner, was no longer a restraining influence. Gone were the days when Germany felt that the Balkans were "not worth the bones of a Pomeranian grenadier". In the intervening years Berlin had become dependent on Vienna, and every successive crisis accentuated that dependence. Despite deliberate attempts, particularly in 1912, to reassert the independence of German policy, and to insist that Germany should not be dragged into Balkan disputes at the mere behest of the Dual Monarchy, there was no decisive stand against the claims of Vienna. Aerenthal, as we have seen, at the time of the Bosnian crisis, and Berchtold after him, were too well aware that in the last resort Germany would not disassociate her fortunes from those of the Dual Monarchy, and therefore whatever warnings might be received from Berlin, there remained an underlying confidence in Vienna that whatever Germany might say, if the worst came to the worst she would not, because she could not, leave Austria in the lurch. Moreover, the Austrian Government had more than calculations to reassure them. On 26th October 1913, the Kaiser said to Count Berchtold: "Whatever comes from the Vienna Foreign Office is a command for me." Those

were fine and fateful words, and they summarize in one sentence the dependence of the Germanic State on the semi-Slav Monarchy of the Habsburgs in the last years before the war.

The dangers arising from German dependence on Austria were certainly not unforeseen in Berlin. There were moments when caution suggested that Germany should keep her hands entirely free of Austria's Balkan entanglements. One was the morrow of the Annexation crisis. To the Chancellor in Berlin the German Ambassador at Vienna then conveyed the solemn warning: "Germany is not a Balkan Power. During the past year for reasons of higher policy we threw the weight of our political influence into the scales in favour of Austria. In my opinion we would do well to prevent, as far as possible, a repetition of this procedure. For the future we ought to preserve a free hand for ourselves and allow ourselves to be drawn as little as possible into Balkan questions." This warning was underlined by Kiderlen in 1912. "Even if we were not agreed on all things with Count Berchtold, reasons of policy would make it hard to separate from our ally once his intentions are known to the Powers of the so-called Triple Entente. . . . For this very reason we must desire urgently that the Austrian Government keep us informed of their intentions *in advance* and not as has so often happened, face us with a *fait accompli*."[1] He went on to point out that treaty engagements did not bind Germany to support Austrian schemes "let alone adventures" in the East, and he concluded: "We will not become the satellites of Austria in the Near East. . . ." But isolated protestations, however vigorous, were no substitute for a consistent policy.

Italy and the Triple Alliance

The dependence of Germany upon Austria was made all the greater by the growing estrangement of Italy from her partners in the Triple Alliance. The position of Italy was difficult. Two fundamental considerations account for her tortuous diplomacy. Strategically she was vulnerable to a naval attack and politically she was not quite a great Power. The former consideration was

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIII, p. 92; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 112.

responsible for the 1887 Mediterranean Agreement with England and for her consistent refusal to contemplate fighting in a war of the Triple Alliance in which England was involved on the other side; the second accounts for her balancing position between the two groups—a position she contrived to fill with no inconsiderable success even after the outbreak of war. This balancing position, justified in the eyes of some Italians as *sacro egoismo*, required the furtherance of Italian interests without too nice an insistence on any code of international ethics. Bülow had few illusions about Italy's loyalty to the Triplice, but after Algeciras he argued that the façade of the Triple Alliance was worth preserving if only because in the event of war it might ensure Italy's neutrality in place of her active co-operation with France. On these terms the Alliance was preserved, but its hollowness was exposed when, on 8th March 1906, in the Chamber of Deputies, Sonnino expounded the principles of Italian foreign policy. "Loyal to the heart to the Triple Alliance, we shall maintain the traditions of intimacy with England and our honest friendship with France." On this the Kaiser commented: "No one can serve two masters, it says in the Bible; certainly therefore not three masters. France, England and the Triple Alliance, that is wholly out of the question! It will turn out that Italy stands in the British-French group. We shall do well to reckon with this and write this ally off as smoke."[1]

Italy's mistrust of Austrian policy in the Balkans induced her to adopt an attitude of virtual hostility to the Dual Monarchy. Her estrangement from Germany was much less marked since there was no direct conflict of interest. It is true that Italian statesmen were profoundly disappointed by the cool indifference of Berlin to Italy's colonial ambitions in North Africa and that their irritation reached considerable intensity on the eve of and during the Tripolitanian War of 1911. But that was a minor factor in determining her attitude to the Triplice by comparison with Balkan rivalry and irredentist sentiment inevitably directed against Austria.

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXVI, p. 61.

In the history of Italy's relations with the Central Powers the Bosnian annexation occupies a foremost and fatal place. Aerenthal had failed to consult Italy before the annexation, though she had some knowledge of his plans. That was unforgiveable. "Donnerwetter!" was the Kaiser's comment when he heard of this unpardonable neglect. Bad feeling became more pronounced when Italy secured no compensation after the annexation which had so notably altered the Balkan *status quo* in favour of Austria. This indeed was the last straw. Shortly afterwards Italy entered into negotiations with Russia. The basis for an agreement already existed since Russia was so clearly marked out as the principal opponent of further Austrian expansion towards the South East, and her negative interest in this respect at least coincided with Italy's concern to prevent further changes in the *status quo* to Austria's advantage. Both were profoundly aggrieved at the methods and results of Aerenthal's forward diplomacy and for this reason even more disposed to negotiate a formal agreement defining the terms of Russo-Italian co-operation in the Balkans.

The agreement between Italy and Russia signed at Racconigi on 24th October 1909 was directed against Austria. One of the clauses provided that Russia should look with benevolence on Italian interests in Tripolitania, and in return that Italy should look with benevolence on Russian aspirations for the opening of the Straits to Russian ships of war. In addition the two Powers bound themselves not to make agreements with a third Power about the Balkans without the participation of the other. Both these clauses ran counter to Italian obligations to the Triple Alliance, and for this reason their existence remained a close secret. This was all the more desirable because Signor Tittoni, the Italian Foreign Secretary, who had been responsible on the Italian side for the Racconigi negotiations with Isvolski, a few days later concluded an agreement with Austria providing that neither State should make an agreement with a third party without the knowledge of the other.[1] Here, indeed, was a notable

[1] Cf. Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 408.

milestone even in the history of Italian duplicity. With the conclusion of the Racconigi Pact with Russia, Italy had entered into alliances or understandings with every Great Power in Europe. Though the Mediterranean Agreement of 1887 had lapsed nine years later, it was recognized by all the Powers that Italy would not fight in a war against England; the Triple Alliance associated her with Austria and Germany; the understanding of 1902 with France reinterpreted her Triple Alliance obligations; the Racconigi Pact brought her into association with Russia. Prudently, if not always honourably, she had safeguarded her position on every side.

The *Cambridge Modern History*, published in 1910, remarks that "it is doubtful how far Germany and Austria could rely on the co-operation of Italy in the event of war". In the immediately succeeding years Italy's loyalty to the Triplice became even more doubtful. It continued to exist, explains Signor Croce, "owing to inertia. It stood like the façade of a building which alone remains erect when everything behind it has been levelled to the ground."[1] But that is special pleading. The principal target for Italian denunciation after Bosnia was her ally, Austria, for apart from specific grievances the whole weight of Italian irredentist sentiment was thrown against the Dual Monarchy. Such hostility and the survival of the Alliance through inertia are hardly to be reconciled. There were indeed no illusions in Vienna, and on more than one occasion Field Marshal Conrad von Hötzendorf, Chief of the Imperial Staff, urged a preventive war against Austria's nominal ally. It was his contention, though not one which he sustained with consistency over a period of years, his attention being easily deflected by the attractions of a preventive war in the Balkans, that Italy was in fact Austria's principal enemy. In 1911 this view was not accepted by Aerenthal and the Field Marshal resigned—but not for good.

It can be, and indeed at the time was, argued that Italy's indeterminate position was a factor in working for peace. In May 1912 Sir Eyre Crowe, in an able analysis of the situation in the

[1] Op. cit., p. 270.

Mediterranean, observed that "Italy while not leaving the Triple Alliance, which she could not afford to do, has made it clear that in a war between France and Germany, and still more in a war between England and Germany, she would not consider herself bound to fight by Germany's side." And from this Crowe concluded that "the resulting somewhat indeterminate position of Italy has been a feature of the general balance of power in Europe, well calculated to serve the maintenance of peace and therefore eminently favourable to British interests".[1]

Italy pursued her balancing policy until well after the outbreak of war. According to her understanding with France, she was bound to remain neutral if she thought that the Central Powers were the aggressors in 1914; under the terms of the Triple Alliance she should have declared war on the side of Germany and Austria if she considered they were not. The qualifications she had made formally and informally about non-participation in a war against England to some extent blurred the issue. But in any case Italian statesmen allowed their treaty obligations to weigh lightly in the determining of their policy, and they selected the time and the occasion for declaring war in accordance strictly with the selfish interests of their country. And in the decision which they ultimately made, they showed themselves wiser in their generation than the dictator who controlled Italian destinies a quarter of a century later.

Relations within the Dual Alliance

The Dual Alliance was defensive in form, and defensive in spirit as well, when it was first signed. In the course of time the slow shift in the balance of power from the side of the Central Powers to that of the Dual Alliance encouraged each of its signatories to interpret the Alliance a little more widely. France was always anxious to ensure that she had the full support of Russia in the pursuit of her ambitions in North Africa, whilst Russia was equally concerned to ensure that the Alliance should serve principally her own ambitions in South-Eastern Europe.

[1] Gooch and Temperley, Vol. X, Part II, pp. 585–9.

The fact that in the Bosnian crisis Isvolski secured only cautious and nominal support in Paris for the opening of the Straits, persuaded him that it was necessary to interest France more closely than hitherto in Balkan affairs. His endeavours in the two years following the annexation were not wholly successful, and Isvolski was frankly disappointed with their results. But taken as a whole there is little doubt that the Dual Alliance was tightened in these years in a way that was neither wholly desirable nor wholly beneficial to the cause of European peace.

Isvolski's endeavours to enlist French sympathy for the opening of the Straits were actively renewed in 1911, when, his position strengthened by the Racconigi bargain by which he felt he had gained at least a partial revenge on his hated Austrian rival, he sounded out the French Foreign Minister about the possibility of French support. The Agadir crisis had drawn the bonds between the Entente Powers closer together, and Isvolski, not to be outdone after the event, prefaced his soundings in Paris by underlining the support which the Imperial Government had given to France during the crisis. The French Government, fully aware that they had received effective support from Britain, their Entente partner, but only non-committal sympathy from their ally reluctant as ever to become involved in a dispute over Morocco, were not impressed. When therefore Isvolski proceeded to explore with M. de Selves his favourite project for the opening of the Straits, the response was very discouraging. Isvolski discounted this on the ground that M. de Selves "is very little informed on all these questions", and had "a very feeble knowledge of questions of foreign policy".[1] He complained bitterly of M. de Selves's absorption with Morocco and other African questions of small importance. His irritation, pardonable in the light of past disappointments, at last led him to attribute French reluctance to become embroiled in Russia's Near East policies entirely to M. de Selves's "encyclopaedic ignorance". But whatever its cause French reluctance was prudent enough.

Isvolski's criticisms of M. de Selves personally were exagger-

[1] Cf. Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 418–26.

ated, but he had just ground for complaint, for he was the victim of the chronic political instability of the Third Republic. If the continuity of French foreign policy was not thereby seriously impaired, its day-to-day direction was unduly dependent on the firmness and experience of the Foreign Minister who happened to be in office. M. de Selves, it is true, has had his apologists. Professor Fay is perhaps to be numbered among them.[1] But in fact Isvolski was not alone in his annoyance. The former Prefect of the Seine Department whom the chances of democratic government placed for a short period at the Quai d'Orsay with little or no knowledge of foreign affairs, provoked the indignation not only of Isvolski but also, if a short digression may be allowed, of no less a personality than M. Paul Cambon in the later stages of the Agadir crisis. From London on 9th September 1911 the Ambassador wrote to his chief protesting particularly against the lack of discretion allowed to him but also against the general conduct of French foreign policy. "An ambassador", wrote M. Paul Cambon[2] to M. de Selves, "is not a subaltern carrying out instructions. He is a collaborator, who even at the risk of giving offence, must always express himself freely on questions of which only one aspect is seen in Paris. . . . I have been an ambassador for twenty-five years and for thirty years in the Foreign Service, during which the play of circumstances has led me to deal with questions similar to those now at issue with Germany. I may, therefore, allow myself to express an opinion, and I am a little surprised when I see young fellows who have never left their desks lay down the law on everything and counsel you to take highly inexpedient steps." When one reads this outspoken rebuke from an Ambassador to his Minister one understands why Europe in general and Russia in particular welcomed the coming of the strong hand of M. Poincaré to control French foreign policy. As the tension increased, indecision and uncertainty in foreign policy became a dangerous liability.

Perhaps because M. de Selves knew so little of Balkan affairs,

[1] Cf. ibid., pp. 421–2.

[2] *Correspondance*, Vol. II, pp. 342–3.

his policy was to co-operate closely with Sir Edward Grey. The outcome was that Isvolski was given to understand that the time was still very inopportune for a forward policy in the Near East and for the opening of the Straits. Not for the last time the Entente Powers exercised a restraining influence on Russian policy. This phase in Franco-Russian relations, in which the French, with their eyes on London, were resolutely opposed to the Balkanization of the Dual Alliance, was beneficial to the extent that it acted as a brake on any adventurous policy which Russia might contemplate in the Near East. But there was a limit beyond which the French could not resist Russian pressure without endangering good relations with her ally.

After 1911 the tide towards greater Entente solidarity flowed one way. This is in the main to be attributed to the deterioration in the general European situation. While France firmly resisted any attempt on the part of Russia to Balkanize the Alliance, at the same time she tended to make some concessions in order to preserve its spirit. Cumulatively the concessions were not unimportant. On the Russian side the same tendency is discernible; perhaps indeed it is more marked, since while France in the West could depend if challenged by an aggressive Germany upon support from England, Russia could rely with confidence only on her alliance with France. In an important memorandum drafted by Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, in December 1913, it was assumed that a general European conflagration would find Russia in alliance with France and "in a possible, but not at all assured, alliance with England, or at least with her as a benevolent neutral".

The growing emphasis on Entente solidarity after 1911 is also, but in a lesser degree, to be attributed to the more forceful personalities who controlled policy in the succeeding years. In particular M. Poincaré's term at the Quai d'Orsay gave a new firmness and a new sense of direction to French foreign policy. Raymond Poincaré, who was born at Bar-le-Duc in Lorraine, was ten years old when the victorious German armies swept across France and made him an exile in the province of his birth. A law-

yer by profession, he was emphatically a strong man, and it was a sure indication of the imminence of war that in 1913 he was elevated to the Presidency of the Third Republic, an office in which strong men were by tradition not popular.

It was in January 1912 that M. Poincaré formed his Ministry. He took control of the Foreign Office for himself and brought into his Cabinet experienced colleagues such as Delcassé, Briand and Millerand. To the Entente and to the Triple Alliance Powers alike, it was clear that the formation of M. Poincaré's Cabinet was something more than the usual French parliamentary reshuffle. "M. Poincaré", reported the German Ambassador,[1] "differs from many of his countrymen by a deliberate avoidance of that smooth and fulsome tone characteristic of the Frenchman. His manner is measured, his words unadorned and carefully weighed. He makes the impression of a man with a lawyer's mind who expresses his convictions with stubborn emphasis and pursues his aims with a powerful will." The impression produced upon the German Ambassador varied but little from that made upon Poincaré's Russian allies. Both Sazonov and Isvolski on many occasions paid tribute to his firmness of character and purpose. "I feel bound to say", reported M. Sazonov to the Tsar, "that I was very glad of the opportunity of meeting M. Poincaré and to enter into personal contact, all the more since our exchange of views left the impression that in him Russia possesses a reliable and true friend endowed with a statesmanlike understanding that is exceptional, and with an indomitable will. In the event of a crisis in international relations it would be very desirable that at the head of the Government of our ally should stand, if not M. Poincaré himself, at any rate some personality possessing the same resolution and equally free from all fear of responsibility."[2] But resolution and firmness are not to be confused with aggressiveness, and neither friends nor enemies attributed to

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXI, p. 384.

[2] Cf. Gooch: *Before the War*, Vol. II, Chapter II. Poincaré. *Vide also* R. Poincaré: *The Origins of the War*, London 1922, and his memoirs, *Au Service de la France*, 10 vols., Paris 1926.

M. Poincaré a predisposition towards a dangerous or adventurous diplomacy.[1]

A more dubious verdict must be pronounced on the activities of Isvolski, who was in Paris as Russian Ambassador from 1911. It was his consistent aim to tighten the alliance and to broaden its foundation so that it would be the better prepared for the war which he anticipated would come in the next few years. His purposes were assisted by the recall of M. Louis, French Ambassador in St. Petersburg in 1912. M. Louis had displayed a cautious reserve, which had aroused the hostility of the government to which he was accredited, in resisting all Russian endeavours to commit France to the active support of Russia's Balkan ambitions. M. Louis was replaced by M. Delcassé, who like Isvolski had suffered personally from the thrustful diplomacy of the Central Powers. Both appointments suggested at the least a more unyielding attitude on the part of the Dual Alliance, at the most less reluctance to give to the Alliance a wider and more positive purpose. Certain it is that in the last two years before the war France was prepared to let Russia ride with a looser rein in the Balkans. This growing emphasis on the solidarity of the Dual Alliance which was to be illustrated in many incidents yet to be recorded was the consequence—and this must be repeated once more—of Germany's "sudden" diplomacy, first in the Bosnian crisis in the East, and then at Agadir in the West.

England and the Dual Alliance

The differences in emphasis that existed between French and Russian policy were slight in comparison with that impenetrable penumbra of uncertainty in which the intentions of England, the third partner in the Entente, were surrounded. It is true that after Agadir, even more than after Algeciras, the bonds of the Anglo-French Entente were tightened. This was well understood in Berlin. "Each Morocco crisis", reported Count Metternich in

[1] For a very critical verdict on M. Poincaré's rôle in European politics between 1912–14, see Professor Fay, Vol. I, pp. 314–17.

November 1911, "has strengthened the understanding between the British and French Governments and I know on good authority that there has never been so keen an exchange of views between London and Paris as on this last occasion."[1] There followed in 1912 an exchange of notes between Sir Edward Grey and M. Cambon, from which it was to be assumed that the two Powers would stand together in the event of unprovoked German aggression in the West, though once again these notes reiterated specifically that England had entered into no binding commitment and reserved to herself the absolute right to decide whether any action which Germany might take constituted a *casus belli* for her or not.

In all the circumstances it has been a matter of surprise to some, and of criticism to others, that after Agadir England did not come down firmly on the side of the Dual Alliance. Her indecision, a matter of cardinal political importance in view of the balance of power on the Continent, was however deliberate. It reflected the pull of different forces. Though isolation had been abandoned in practice with the Japanese alliance of 1902, its advocates remained powerful both within and without the Liberal Party. As late as July 1912 Kühlmann[2] noted that there "are always two currents running side by side" in English foreign policy; one of them favouring "absolute isolation", the other closer relations with France, Russia and the United States. After the Bosnian crisis the advocates of the "Entente policy" were a waning influence, but Agadir infused into them fresh life and purpose. For, as Kühlmann rightly recognized, an attempt to strike France out of the list of the Great Powers would bring England in, even at the risk of a Great War, to defend interests which could not even by the most liberal interpretation be described as British interests.[3] But though the German analysis of British reactions was sound in essentials, it was based upon a necessarily speculative assessment of probabilities. Disturbing to them, this uncertainty

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXIX, p. 159; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 47.

[2] *German Chargé d'Affaires* in London.

[3] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXI, p. 506; Dugdale, Vol. IV, 101–2.

was a far more disconcerting factor to the Dual Alliance. Yet in the state of political opinion, particularly within the Liberal Party, with its Radical wing strongly inclined in principle to armament reduction and to mistrust of entanglements with "imperialist" Continental Powers, the middle path was probably the only practical one. It was, in other words, internal political considerations which largely conditioned the direction of foreign policy. In 1912, writes Mr. Spender,[1] "it was certain that any attempt to conclude . . . an alliance with France would wreck Asquith's Government". On such a point no one's judgment is more to be respected.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, has recorded that in the final crisis before the war he was guided by five leading ideas on policy: (1) we have no obligation of any kind either to France or Russia to give them military or naval help; (2) we must not forget the ties created by our long-standing intimate friendship with France; (3) it is against British interests that France should be wiped out as a Great Power; (4) we cannot allow Germany to use the Channel ports as a hostile base; (5) we have obligations to Belgium to prevent its being utilized and absorbed by Germany.[2]

The Prime Minister's memorandum makes it clear that the British attitude, while in essentials conforming to her traditional quasi-isolationist policy, reflected a compromise which tried to extract the best from both the Entente and the isolation policies. There were no binding obligations, no foreign entanglements. Parliament was left free to decide the issue of peace and war. But on the other hand France, a partner in the Dual Alliance, could not be allowed to go down unaided. However, if Asquith's compromise conclusions were in conformity with traditional policy, it is more questionable whether they were in conformity with political realities. Since 1906 Anglo-French military conversations had proceeded with the presumption of active

[1] *Fifty Years of Europe*, p. 385.

[2] *Memories and Reflections*, Vol. II, p. 9. Cf. also the commentary in Spender, op. cit., pp. 385–6.

co-operation in the event of war—and far more significant—in the autumn of 1912, after the failure of the Haldane Mission and with memories of Agadir still fresh, it was agreed that the main strength of the French Navy should be concentrated in the Mediterranean, where it would be a match for that of Austria-Hungary, and of Italy as well if need arose, while on her side Britain would transfer part of her Mediterranean Fleet to the North Sea. In other words, France denuded her Atlantic naval defences on the assumption that her northern coasts would be defended from invasion by the British Fleet. Churchill warned Asquith of "the tremendous weapon France would possess to compel our intervention if she could say 'on the advice and by arrangements with your naval authorities we have left our northern coasts defenceless. We cannot possibly come back in time." What had been undertaken was an obligation of honour no less binding, in fact, than a formal commitment. It is remarkable that Asquith and Grey remained satisfied even after this arrangement had been concluded that the phrase "our hands are free" represented the realities of the situation. It is true that the notes exchanged between Grey and Cambon in November of the same year—notes whose contents were incidentally not divulged to Parliament till August 1914—expressly stated that the conversations of the military and naval experts were "not an engagement that commits either government", and that the disposition of the two fleets "is not based upon an engagement to co-operate in war". But the exchange of notes was very differently regarded in London and in Paris. To France, whatever the reservations, the agreement to consult should "the general peace be threatened" represented a clear advance. Their view in the light of after-events was the correct one. It is not to be denied that Grey's restrictive interpretation was valid in form but not in substance, and that Cambon's remark to Nicolson when Grey remained hesitant, even in the early days of August 1914, was wholly justified. "I am wondering", he said bitterly, "whether the word 'honour' is to be erased from the English language."[1]

[1] H. Nicolson, op. cit., p. 420.

The agreement between France and Britain about the disposition of their navies was known in Berlin. By the professional diplomats, though not by the Kaiser, due weight was attached to England's reservations and its significance fairly assessed in the light of them. On 16th September 1912 *The Times* observed that the essential difference between an entente and an alliance was that while "an alliance implies armed assistance as a matter of obligation; an entente only implies armed assistance in any given case if the interests of the two parties to it are identical, as they well might be." Kühlmann felt that this definition of the Entente represented the views of leading Englishmen, and he rightly believed that the distribution of naval forces involved a sacrifice of England's free choice of action in a crisis. It was, however, the outcome of Britain's belief that it was a vital interest of her foreign policy that France "should neither be destroyed nor even reduced to being a second-class Power".[1] But so realistic an appreciation had no appeal for the Kaiser. Dismissing the distinction between an alliance and an entente as "Jesuitical casuistry", he concluded that it all meant "only one thing for Germany's enemies: they fight and arm together against us."[2] These contrasted German interpretations of British policy had their importance, and it was not those of the experts that prevailed.

Within the Foreign Office there was friendly but persistent criticism of some aspects of the Secretary of State's policy. Sir Arthur Nicolson, now permanent Under-Secretary, believed profoundly after his experiences at Algeciras and in St. Petersburg that the German menace was a reality. "He believed, that is to say, that the German Army, and above all the German Navy, were larger and more fully equipped than was necessary for purposes of mere defence."[3] He believed that there existed in Germany a compact minority powerful enough to force the hand of the pacific but ill-informed Chancellor, and that that minority desired by force to impose the will of Germany upon other

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXI, p. 543; Dugdale, Vol. IV, pp. 103–5.
[2] Ibid.
[3] H. Nicolson, op. cit., p. 330.

nations. It was by force alone that such people could be restrained, and for this reason Nicolson argued that the solidarity of the Entente should be open and proclaimed.[1] Its indeterminate character which Grey so heavily underlined gave it most of the disadvantages and none of the benefits of an alliance. British aloofness did not, as Grey had hoped, act as a restraining influence upon Russian policy, and at the same time the association with the Dual Alliance was not sufficiently binding to discourage Berlin or to overawe Vienna. There was a possibility after all—Bethmann-Hollweg, who had little knowledge of international affairs, at times seems to have believed a probability—that England would not fight. But confronted by a definite Anglo-Russo-French alliance even the boldest might well have paused. Such was Nicolson's argument; it was the argument of the expert, the argument of a realist who had personally been confronted by Germany's "brusque diplomacy". The substance of his argument is difficult to controvert, but that does not necessarily make it conclusive. Nor does it, of course, prove that the course he advocated was practicable, even if desirable.

In some closely-reasoned pages of his *Twenty-Five Years* Grey makes his reply.[2] He maintains that the two clear-cut alternatives, that is to say, a statement that Britain would not fight on the Franco-Russian side, or a definite alliance, might well have hastened the outbreak of hostilities. In the first instance, the Central Powers would feel that a "favourable" moment had come for breaking the Dual Alliance; in the second, the Central Powers might well decide to fight before the balance had definitely swung in favour of the new Triple Alliance. In either event, Grey argues, the prospect of avoiding war was remote. That may be true; but it is to be noted that by Grey's own policy war, in fact, was not avoided. If war was inevitable was not English indulgence in half measures, unfair to her allies and misleading to her potential enemies, and for that reason—quite apart from its effect on German policy—difficult to justify? Calcu-

[1] Ibid.,

[2] *Vide* op. cit., Vol. II, chapters XVIII, XIX, and Vol. III, p. 225 seq.

lation alone is rarely a sound criterion on which to frame a policy.

But was Grey really considering the merits of British foreign policy in the light of conditions in Europe alone? Could he, in fact, afford to do so? He was a member of a Liberal Government, challenged at home by a shrill and exacerbated Tory opposition which seemed to be steadily growing in strength. In such circumstances was it reasonable to ask the Government, even had they so wished, to force the pace in foreign policy beyond what the electorate was prepared for? Had the Liberals been united in the conviction that this was the right course the answer would have been clear, but the fact is that they were profoundly divided. The Cabinet could not have recommended a firm alliance with France, and still less with Russia, without dividing the party and thereby bringing about the fall of the Government. Even as it was, British support for "French Imperialism" in Morocco, and "Russian Imperialism" in Persia, was considered by members of the Radical wing of the Liberal Party to be a wholly unwarranted and unprincipled connivance in indefensible imperialist exploitation of the weak. Moreover, not only the Liberal Party, but also the country as a whole remained altogether allergic to a Continental alliance or "entanglement", as its critics would have termed it, and unprepared for it until there was overwhelming evidence of a direct and immediate threat to British security. Though the country was alarmed by German ambitions, and more particularly by the German naval programme, foreign affairs remained a matter not only outside general knowledge but also little discussed in Parliament, with the result that the inherent instability of contemporary Europe and the danger of a conflict between the two great systems of alliances was not widely understood even by 1914. In these circumstances, therefore, Grey is on safe ground when he writes that "even if an alliance were desirable, it was not practicable and my informal understanding with M. Cambon is the most that was politically practicable". The final verdict on this question, a vital issue in English foreign policy, with implications and lessons for suc-

ceeding generations, may well be that an alliance was desirable, but for internal political reasons was not practicable and that at the most it would have postponed but not averted a European war.

In the end it was the inexorable pressure of events that determined British policy. There is a revealing conversation recorded in Grey's account of his visit to Paris with King George V in June 1914.[1] He was approached indirectly by the Russian Ambassador with a firm request for naval conversations on the Anglo-French model. The strategic value of such conversations was negligible since the Russian Fleet had been obliterated nine years earlier in Far Eastern waters. On the other hand, the political implications were considerable. Refusal was out of the question for Russia insisted on equality of treatment with France and could not be refused. So Grey, assenting reluctantly, reaffirmed once again that it was as impossible as ever to give any pledge that Britain would take part in a Continental war. But the fact that naval conversations with Russia had been authorized was an indication of the strengthening of the ties that bound Britain to the Dual Alliance. This was fully understood by Sazonov, who had no illusions about the strategic value of the naval conversations but welcomed them as a step towards a more intimate and more satisfactory political relationship.[2]

More deep-seated than England's political aloofness from the Continent was her psychological detachment, and indeed the former was one expression of the latter. Coupled with it was a certain lack of understanding and of sympathy with the controlling forces in European politics. So long as England was in a position to play her balancing, mediatory rôle this was an asset rather than a liability. But it did not make her an easy or wholly reliable associate in the tensions of Power politics. Her reactions were too spontaneous, too unpredictable, to make her a safe and dependable partner. Her support could never be assumed. It is probably true that the degree of detachment was somewhat

[1] Grey, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 118–25.

[2] Cf. Gooch: *Before the War*, Vol. II, pp. 356–9.

President Poincaré and the Tsar Nicholas II at Peterhof, July 1914

The Kaiser, in the uniform of an Austrian Field-Marshal and the Archduke Francis Ferdinand in the uniform of a German Admiral, on a visit to Naval Manœuvres at Kiel Behind, Prince Henry of Prussia, Admiral Count Montecuccoli, Austrian Minister for the Navy, and Grand Admiral von Tirpitz

THE EMPEROR FRANCIS JOSEPH

AND COUNT BERCHTOLD

accentuated by Grey's personal outlook. He was no professional diplomat like Bülow or Aerenthal whose international morality had been learned in the easy school of the old diplomacy, whose vision had been dimmed by a narrow concentration on the refinements of the game of Power politics. He was, in fact, an English country gentleman by upbringing and by inclination, who entered politics by chance rather than by choice, and his conduct of foreign affairs was marked by a wide understanding rather than by a detailed knowledge of foreign countries to which indeed he laid no claim. "A frank straightforward man," said Count Metternich of Grey, "one knows where one is with him."[1]

During that last visit to Paris with his King in June 1914 Grey studied the two cavalry soldiers who rode beside his carriage as he drove in procession after the military review at Vincennes. One was a swarthy, stolid, thick-set young man, a typical son of the soil; the other was slender, fair and rather frail, with a face suggesting a possible artist or poet—perhaps something of a dilettante. Watching them Grey felt that he understood for the first time what conscription on the Continental scale meant and what it implied. The realization brought with it misgivings and regrets, but Grey's instinctive reaction was that these great Continental armies and the great alliances and counter-alliances, whose strength they constituted, had come into being independently of Britain and of Britain's policy. Was it not beyond the power of his country to modify their purposes or restrain their actions? Was it not futile to expect that there would be any change?[2] England once again he thought of as outside Europe. With all the good will in the world he felt that it was possible for this country to do so little. That was not perhaps so unfortunate a conviction as in rather different circumstances it might have been because by 1914 only a miracle could have averted a conflict, and Grey was perhaps right in believing that England could not work a political miracle. At the most more assertive leadership in London might have

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXI, p. 45. [2] Op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 114–16.

helped to postpone the conflict. For England was the only country whose pacific intentions were recognized and respected throughout the Continent, and Grey was the only Foreign Minister whose straightforward sincerity of purpose could have commanded the confidence that might have made it possible to check even for a time the fated onrush of war. That was the measure of his achievement and it is only because it was so great that the question arises whether he might not by a bolder initiative have accomplished more.

How far was British policy determined by a desire, if only instinctive, to restore the Balance of Power in Europe? Grey denied that this concept ever influenced his conduct of affairs and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance so quickly succeeded by the Anglo-French Entente, seemed to him, not deliberate steps in the execution of a co-ordinated policy but merely isolated and individual responses to particular situations. This inability to see the wider picture was a weakness, and to it is to be attributed the failure to use Britain's powerful bargaining position to the fullest advantage. So empirical an approach resulted inevitably in a tendency to wait upon events.

The Balance of Power was a concept, honoured it may be almost as much in the breach as in the observance, but still traditionally accepted as the goal of British policy.[1] Grey's agnosticism was shared neither by the public nor indeed by all his colleagues. In December 1912 Prince von Lichnowsky, German Ambassador in London, reported[2] Lord Haldane as saying that the roots of British policy lay in the universal feeling that the balance of the Groups should be maintained to some extent. England could never allow France to be overthrown nor could she, nor would she, after that suffer the emergence of a united Continental group under the leadership of a single Power. The theory of the Balance of Power, observed Lord Haldane, was an axiom of British policy and it had led to the association with France

[1] Cf. the classic definition of Britain's policy in Sir E. Crowe's *Memorandum of January* 1906. Gooch and Temperley, Vol. III, p. 402 seq.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIX, p. 123; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 126.

and Russia. In all this Lord Haldane was undoubtedly accurate, and the Kaiser's reaction to his comments shows that the risks against which such a policy was intended to guard were real enough. "Haldane's conversation with Lichnowsky", exclaimed the Kaiser, "tears away every veil of uncertainty. From envy and hatred of Germany England intends absolutely to stand by France and Russia against us. The coming struggle for existence, which the Germans in Europe (Germany, Austria) will have to wage against the Slavs (Russia) assisted by the Latins (the Gauls) will find the Anglo-Saxons on the side of the Slavs." To the Kaiser this seemed unpardonable betrayal of the Teutonic race. "A real nation of shopkeepers," he wrote in a mounting tide of indignation. "They call it a policy of peace! Balance of Power!"[1] In a sense the Kaiser interpreted the direction of British policy better than Grey. Because it was in fact directed towards the maintenance of a Balance of Power it was inevitably directed against the Group which threatened to dominate the Continent. And the Kaiser was judging it realistically in the light of the "coming struggle" for which Germany was already preparing in 1912 and about whose prospects she was calculating carefully. "Although it is always a mistake to try and prophesy in politics", observed Lichnowsky in December 1912,[2] "I still think that we shall not be attacked until we have marched into France and won the first victorious battle. But a declaration of war on France or by France on us would of itself be followed by the mobilization of the British Fleet, whereas war with Russia alone, if such were conceivable, would not necessarily be followed at once by British naval intervention." With such thoughts in mind, it is little wonder that even Britain's rather apologetic adherence to the Balance of Power received so stormy a reception in Berlin. Germany was not interested in balance, she aimed at preponderance, and diplomatic failures turned the minds of her rulers to more ruthless measures.

[1] Ibid.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIII, p. 463; Dugdale, Vol. IV, pp. 124–5.

Chapter X

TRIPOLI AND THE BALKAN WARS

THE integrity of the Turkish Empire had been guaranteed by the Great Powers at the Congress of Berlin. But it was not supposed that a mere paper guarantee was sufficient to sustain the strength of this dying Empire, and as a matter of prudent precaution the Powers simultaneously and secretly discussed its eventual partition. In accordance with the informal understanding reached at Berlin France had occupied Tunis, and it was generally recognised that in order to preserve the "equilibrium" in North Africa Italy should have the reversionary claim to Tripoli. For Italy, an informal understanding was very naturally not thought to be enough, and from 1878 to 1911 she prudently and persistently endeavoured to secure the agreement of all the Great Powers to her ultimate occupation of this barren and unprofitable province of the Ottoman Empire.

At the third renewal of the Triple Alliance in 1891 Italy secured German support for the maintenance of the *status quo* in North Africa with the proviso that if "unfortunately as the result of a mature examination of the situation Germany and Italy should both recognize that the maintenance of the *status quo* had become impossible, Germany would endorse and aid any steps Italy might find it necessary to take to occupy the province". This was a satisfactory arrangement from the Italian point of view, though German caution and her reluctance to be involved in ill-considered Italian adventures in North Africa were underlined by the insertion of the phrase "mature examination". Italy's next step was to secure French agreement to her eventual occupation of Tripoli which was, as has already been noted, embodied in the colonial understanding reached between the two Latin Powers in 1900. The similarity of their

aims in North Africa and the evident advantages to both of a settlement on the accepted principle of compensation provided an easy and satisfactory basis for negotiation. The Italian position was further strengthened by a general understanding that Britain was not unsympathetic to her colonial ambitions in North Africa, more particularly after the Anglo-French Agreement of 1904 which made it seem the more reasonable that the "balance" in the Mediterranean should not thereby be adjusted in Italy's disfavour. The anxiety of both Powers to detach Italy from the Triplice made England the readier to recognize Italian claims for compensation, and Grey was committed to giving Italy "moral support" when she decided the time for action had come. But Italy delayed long and further reinsured herself against any embarrassing repercussions in Europe by the Racconigi Pact of 1909 with Russia. Here it will be remembered that in return for Italian support for Russia in the opening of the Straits Isvolski promised to recognize "Italy's freedom of action in Tripoli" and to regard "with benevolence" her interests there.

The Invasion of Tripoli

It was the French march on Fez in 1911 and the Agadir crisis which followed that convinced the Italian Prime Minister Giolitti that the hour to strike had come. With the Entente Powers the ground had been carefully prepared, but Giolitti felt that his allies might entertain misgivings or urge restraint at the last, so in order to spare them "serious embarrassment" as he remarks euphemistically in his Memoirs,[1] the enterprise was launched without full consultation either with Berlin or Vienna.[2] It was this deliberate oversight which prompted Conrad to recommend an immediate "preventive" war against Italy while she was preoccupied in North Africa. But Aerenthal would not listen and indeed welcomed the fact that Italy's attention had been distracted for the moment from the Balkans.

[1] *Memoirs of My Life*, trans., London 1922, p. 266.

[2] Cf. *Die Grosse Politik*, XXX, p. 50.

England's prior assent to the Tripolitanian adventure was given because of the anxiety to win over Italy to the side of the Entente. "It will be tiresome", wrote Grey to Nicolson,[1] "if Italy embarks on an aggressive policy and the Turks appeal to us. If the Turks do this I think we must refer them to Germany and Austria as being the allies of Italy. It is most important that neither we nor France side against Italy now." As Dr. Gooch[2] emphasizes this was pure *real Politik*. Grey denounced the annexation of Bosnia which Austria, with the assent of the Powers had occupied for thirty years, but the Italian attack on Tripoli after an ultimatum with a twenty-four hours' time-limit incurred no rebuke. Equally significant was England's open abandonment of her historic policy of support for Turkey. That created alarm in Constantinople where it was feared that Russia might take advantage of the war in Tripoli "to advance towards her final aim of laying Turkey in ruins."[3] If England was a consenting party to Italian policy did it not mean that she would also agree to a Russian solution of the Straits Question? However sharp a departure this might involve from her traditional policy in the Near East, the German Ambassador in Constantinople speculated whether such a change were not contemplated "now that the Triple Entente embraces England and Russia".[4]

Why did Italy embark on the Tripolitanian adventure? Signor Croce declares that her reasons were sentimental. Though Tripoli was popularly represented as a land of promise and plenty where two million emigrants, assured of an enthusiastic welcome by the Arabs, might be settled, for those who knew the real facts, the war was a war of prestige. Italy could not resign herself to the idea of Spanish, French and English control on the North African littoral if she, the heir to the great Roman tradition of African colonization, had no place there. Nor could she accept the Abyssinian disaster of fifteen years earlier as the

[1] Gooch and Temperley, Vol. IX, Part I, p. 274.
[2] *Before the War*, Vol. II, p. 95.
[3] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXX, p. 217; Dugdale, Vol. IV, pp. 65–6.
[4] Ibid.

final chapter of her African history.[1] And so, on 28th September 1911, Italy informed Turkey of her feeling that "the state of disorder and neglect in Tripoli and Cyrenaica should come to an end", for that was "required by the exigencies of civilization". The Turks had sent reinforcements to her own provinces—considered an unpardonable move in Rome—and the Italian Government "finding itself forced to consider the guardianship of its dignity and its interests, decided to proceed to the military occupation of Tripoli and Cyrenaica".[2] War was declared on 29th September and not for the last time an army marched along the coast from Tripoli to Derna, to Benghazi. . . . But the campaign was slow and hard fought and it was not till October 1912 that the war came to its victorious end.

While Italian success in Tripoli was a foregone conclusion the war was dangerously protracted. This acquisitive colonial enterprise had far-reaching implications, for by underlining once more the weakness of the Ottoman Empire it encouraged all to think that the hour of its decease was at hand, thereby precipitating a race to snatch the spoils. For that reason Italy's Tripolitanian adventure lies in the direct sequence of events which led to the outbreak of the World War and though Giolitti[3] later was at pains to refute the charge, a direct degree of responsibility unquestionably attaches to Italy, not for causing, but for bringing forward the day of its outbreak.

The Balkan Wars

The Bosnian annexation had inflamed nationalist feeling in the Balkans; the Tripolitanian War, exposing afresh the weakness of Turkey, encouraged the Balkan States to believe that the hour had struck to avenge themselves on their past oppressors and to win easy spoils. This reaction to Italy's success was the more disturbing in that the ground for manœuvre and compromise in the Balkans had been lessened by the Annexation,

[1] Croce, op. cit., pp. 260–4.
[2] Cf. G. Lowes Dickinson, op. cit., pp. 226–7.
[3] Op. cit., p. 175.

while simultaneously the tension between Austria and Russia had been accentuated by the possibility on the one hand that the Dual Monarchy might once again try to forestall her rival by a forward policy, on the other that Russia might choose the moment to settle the question of the Straits in her favour.

In March 1912 Serbia and Bulgaria with the direct encouragement of the Russian Ministers at Sofia and Belgrade signed a treaty guaranteeing mutual support in the event of a forward, acquisitive policy being adopted by any of the Great Powers in the Balkans. The terms of the Treaty stated that "both contracting parties agree to support each other with all their forces in case any one of the Great Powers should make the attempt to annex or occupy or seize with its troops, even provisionally, any territory situated in the Balkans and at present under Turkish rule". In a more secret annex to the Treaty it was declared that "in case internal troubles should arise in Turkey of a nature to endanger the national or public interests of the Contracting Parties or of one of them, or in case internal or external difficulties in which Turkey should be involved should imperil the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Balkan Peninsula that one of the two parties which should first arrive at the conviction that military action should be taken, shall address itself in a reasoned proposal to the other party which will be bound immediately to enter into an exchange of views and if it does not agree with its ally to give a reasoned reply".

The first thing to be noticed is that the secret Treaty and the still more secret annex to it cover quite different contingencies. The Treaty, it is clear beyond doubt in view of its Russian sponsorship, was directed against the Dual Monarchy and designed to safeguard against a repetition of the annexation *coup*. The annex on the other hand, which is either by design or accident so poorly drafted as to be applicable in almost any likely contingency, was directed against Turkey and was intended to ensure that the contracting parties acquired a reasonable, or a more than reasonable, share of the territories of the dissolving Turkish Empire. And though the wording of the annex

clothes its intention in a decent penumbra, what was contemplated was an aggressive war. If proof were needed, the first Bulgarian draft of the Treaty which contains the phrase "if the interest of Serbia and Bulgaria require the liquidation of the question"[1] is evidence enough apart from that which the sequel supplied. The Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty was reinforced by a Treaty, the same in purpose but more judiciously worded between Bulgaria and Greece. This was directed exclusively against Turkey.

The secret annex to the Serbo-Bulgarian Treaty contained material which was almost certain to lead to an early war, and though the Russian representatives in the Balkan capitals had assisted in its negotiation the actual form in which it was signed alarmed even Sazonov. He showed it to M. Poincaré after some hesitation during the latter's visit to St. Petersburg in August 1912. When Poincaré had read the text he exclaimed in alarm, "Mais c'est-là une convention de la guerre". He was right, but it was too late to take effective action. In October Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece joined Montenegro in war on Turkey and the Balkan allies won quick and astonishing victories. The Bulgars reached the outskirts of Constantinople, the Greeks occupied Salonika, and the Serbs swept over the upper valley of the Vardar, the Sanjak of Novi-bazar and the northern part of Albania to the Adriatic.

The overwhelming victories of the Balkan allies which compelled Turkey to sue for peace, were welcomed by none of the Great Powers not even by Russia who, to quote M. Poincaré's felicitous phrase, had "started the motor" even if she had later tried "to put on the brakes". The Dual Monarchy in particular was rightly alarmed at the greatly increased strength of Serbia which emerged from this, the First Balkan War with its size almost doubled and its population increased from two to nearly four and a half million. It was abundantly clear that the time was now coming when Serbia, having realized her ambitions

[1] Quoted in G. Lowes Dickinson, op. cit., p. 310. Cf. his comments, pp. 310–13 on both Treaties and their purposes.

in the Balkans, would concentrate all her attention on her "irredenta" within the Monarchy.

It was not, however, so much the territorial acquisitions of the Balkan Powers, important though they were, as the disequilibrium in an area so productive of conflict that gave rise to a state of nervous tension so intense as to persuade the Great Powers for the last time to act in concert. A conference of Ambassadors under Sir Edward Grey's chairmanship assembled in London in December 1912 and resolved successfully the many delicate territorial issues that had arisen as a result of the victories of the Balkan States. The most thorny was the future of the Northern Adriatic coast, including the port of Durazzo. The Serbs, having won it by force of arms, were not prepared to see it snatched from their grasp. To its retention by Serbia, Austria was resolutely opposed. Her policy aimed at counterbalancing Serbia by creating a strong Albania. But at the same time, however rigidly Austria maintained that under no circumstances must Serbia have an outlet to the Adriatic, Germany was not prepared to be drawn into a war to prevent it. "I see absolutely no risk", said the Kaiser,[1] "for Austria's existence or even prestige in a Serbian port on the Adriatic Sea. I admit that there are many changes in the Balkans caused by the war which are very awkward and unwelcome for Vienna, but none are so desperate that we should be exposed to the risk of war complications for her sake." On this the Kaiser took his stand. "I shall not march against Paris and Moscow for the sake of Albania and Durazzo",[2] and by thus reasserting momentarily the independence of German policy, he made a decisive contribution to the preservation of peace.

On the more critical issues Russia was prepared to be accommodating. Gratified though she might be at the triumph of her Slav clients in the First Balkan War, she was fearful lest the coveted prize of Constantinople might fall to a petty Balkan State. Ferdinand of Bulgaria was known to entertain the ambi-

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIII, p. 295; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 120.
[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIII, p. 302; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 121.

tion that one day he might be crowned in St. Sophia, and there was a moment when it seemed as if this fantastic dream might be realized. Any such outcome was not at all to the taste of Sazonov. His aim was to strengthen the Balkan States against the Dual Monarchy and while a war against Turkey seemed essential for this purpose he was anxious in a period of comparative Russian weakness that the Straits and Constantinople should remain in Turkish hands.

Early in December 1913 Sazonov submitted a memorandum to the Tsar.[1] In it, while making clear that Russia desired neither war nor territorial acquisitions, he maintained that she could never permit either Constantinople or the Straits to fall into the hands of another Power even of a small Balkan State such as Bulgaria. "At present", wrote Sazonov, "the question of safeguarding the Straits is settled in a fairly satisfactory manner as regards our direct interests. Turkey is a State neither too strong nor too weak—unable to be a danger to us but at the same time obliged to give attention to Russia, which is stronger than she. The very weakness of the Ottoman Empire, and its inability to regenerate itself on the basis of law and civilization have hitherto been to our advantage, creating among the peoples subjected to the Crescent that aspiration towards Orthodox Russia which is one of the fundamental bases of our international position in the East and in Europe. . . ."

The argument is cynical but the conclusion is clear. A further convulsion in the Balkans carried with it the risk of the final dissolution of Turkey in Europe, and that would raise a problem with which Russia had no wish to be confronted while she was weak. So her attitude also was conciliatory during the deliberations of the Ambassadors in London.

The London Conference over which Sir Edward Grey presided was, allowing for the circumstances in the late autumn of 1913, remarkably successful. Its sittings, informal and protracted, were marked by a spirit of co-operation among the Ambassadors who represented the five Continental Powers. To Grey well-

[1] This is summarized in Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 525 et seq.

deserved tributes were paid and Prince von Lichnowsky reported to Berlin that he "was clearly making an effort during our negotiations to avoid giving an impression of partizanship and to act as mediator whenever necessary".[1] Upon the deliberations of the Conference, however, there intruded abruptly the Second Balkan War provoked in 1913 by Bulgaria's treacherous attack on her ally Serbia. Roumania and Greece came to the aid of Serbia, and the Bulgars were overwhelmed. The war ended in the dictated Treaty of Bucharest which transferred a large slice of the Dobrudja to Roumania, and despite Austrian opposition gave Kavala, the Aegean port which afforded the Bulgars an outlet into the Mediterranean, to Greece. While in some respects the signal defeat of Bulgaria eased the tension within the Balkans, without it accentuated the threat to the Dual Monarchy, now confronted not only by a larger and more powerful Serbia but also by a larger and more powerful Roumania. Both States, exalted but not satiated by their triumphs in the Balkan Wars, thought henceforward of reunion with their kindred across the Hungarian frontier.

"In 1912–13", writes Grey,[2] "the current of European affairs was setting towards war. Austria and Russia were drifting with it, and dragging the other Powers in the same fatal direction. In agreeing to a Conference, it was as if we all put out anchors to prevent ourselves from being swept away. . . . Then the current seemed to slacken, and the anchors were pulled up. The Conference was allowed to dissolve. We seemed to be safe, but in reality it was not so; the set of the current was the same. . . ." This melancholy verdict was only too well justified by events. But the implication that the Conference, had it remained in being, could have checked the current does not seem in retrospect to have been well-founded. The problem created by the Balkan nationalities could not in the long run have been solved by the decisions of a conference which had to rely on negotiation to achieve its ends. In each case their aspiration, not to be disputed

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIV, p. 70; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 151.
[2] Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 110.

in an age of triumphant nationalism, was to create a national State. Either, therefore, Serbia and Roumania had to acquire all the territories predominantly populated by peoples of their own race, or the Dual Monarchy had in some form or other to bring these States within the orbit of its influence. There could be no permanent solution so long as peoples, the force of whose nationalism by 1913 could no longer have been blunted by concessions, were so inflamed and violently discontented with the *status quo* that they were resolved, even at the price of a European war, to upset it.

The Balkan wars resulted in a realignment of loyalties. Bulgaria, whose losses in the Second Balkan War, which by her treachery she had provoked, was alienated from Russia whose support for Serbia had been unswerving and who was cultivating good relations with Roumania. In the hope of revenge in the Balkans, Bulgaria gradually shifted her loyalty from St. Petersburg to the Central Powers. Turkey, defeated in the First Balkan War, looked with increased and well-justified suspicion at the direction of Russian policy and tended to rely more and more on Berlin to support her tottering strength. Thus the vanquished placed their confidence in the Central Powers, but the victors, and above all Serbia, counted on Russia to enable them to fulfil their destiny, to reunite their peoples under one flag. They did not count in vain. "Our fundamental task", said Sazonov after the Balkan wars "is to guarantee the political and economic emancipation of Serbia."[1]

Russian support of Serbia, coupled with her policy of deflecting Roumanian interest from her "irredenta" in Bessarabia to her "irredenta" in Transylvania confronted the Dual Monarchy with the problem of the nationalities in its most formidable and far-reaching shape. Here was a challenge so direct that it could not be overlooked. "The first game is won," said M. Pashitch, the Serbian Minister at the Peace Conference in Bucharest, "now we must prepare for the second, against Austria."[2] Had

[1] Quoted in Sumner, op. cit., p. 419.

[2] Quoted in G. Lowes Dickinson, op. cit., p. 343.

M. Pashitch's reputed remarks been unsupported by the policy of a Great Power Vienna might have regarded them with no great concern: but in Vienna it was known only too well that the Serbs were not relying on their own strength alone to see them through the second round. "Turkey's business is finished," said Hartwig, the Russian Minister at Belgrade, "now it is Austria's turn." The Pan-Slav movement was at the last the controlling force in Russian foreign policy.

If one asked why Russia who had so much to lose in a Balkan and still more in a European conflagration was prepared to encourage a forward policy in Serbia the answer is because she, too, felt herself threatened. Since the time of the Congress of Berlin there had been in Russia a growing conviction that the road to the realization of "her immemorial dream" of the possession of Constantinople and the Straits lay through Berlin. The Kaiser's friendship for Turkey served only to confirm a belief which was already entertained by many in Russia, and to it was now added the fear that in Turkey the Germans saw a possible basis for a diversionary attack in the event of war.

German interest in the Bagdad railway, a recurrent and fruitful source of suspicion, suggested that she was trying to secure an economic stranglehold on Turkey; her attitude after the Balkan wars suggested that she entertained strategic ambitions as well. To Sazonov, in particular, the appointment of Lieut.-General Liman Von Sanders as Inspector-General of the Turkish Army in December 1913 confirmed the existence of a direct threat to the security of Russia. His fears were exaggerated, but the fact that they were entertained explains in no small measure why Russia was anxious for reasons of policy as well as of sentiment that her client Balkan States should prepare and should strengthen themselves for the war that seemed inevitably to be approaching. Russia could not permit a solution of the Straits question counter to her interests. "The Straits", to quote once more from Sazonov's memorandum of December 1913, "in the hands of a strong State would mean that the economic development of all South Russia would be subjected to it. He

who possesses the Straits will hold not only the key to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean; he will have also the key to the penetration of Asia Minor and the hegemony of the Balkans."

The two States who had profited most from the Balkan wars, Serbia and Roumania, now faced the Dual Monarchy with a new strength and a new self-confidence, and husbanded their resources for the final struggle for its overthrow. The challenge of nationalism, the most powerful force in the modern world, was one that the heterogeneous multi-national Empire of the Habsburgs could least of all afford to ignore. It was a challenge to existence itself in which the scales were heavily weighted against her. Alone the Dual Monarchy could not hope indefinitely to withstand the corroding pressure of nationalist sentiment within and without its borders; German aid was the condition of survival. Everything depended on the German response to an appeal which one day was bound to come from Vienna. A war in the Balkans was almost certain; the probability after 1913 was that Russia as well as Austria would be involved because there remained no scope for compromise and negotiation, and unless therefore Germany were resolved to remain detached and to localize the conflict under the existing system of secret alliances a European war was certain to follow. After the Balkan wars the hopes of maintaining peace hung on the slender thread of German restraint.

In 1913 it seemed also probable that the crisis would come soon rather than late. Once the peace of Europe depended on tranquillity in the Balkans it was likely to be short-lived. Passions were inflamed; ambitions were aroused, intrigue and suspicion flourished and above all there was a prevailing belief that in the conflagration of Europe the old order would dissolve. It was an Irish romantic revolutionary of whom Yeats was thinking when he wrote:

> "You that Mitchel's prayer have heard,
> 'Send war in our time, O Lord'."

But "war in our time" had long been the hope of the submerged

nationalities in Eastern Europe. The Polish patriot poet, Adam Mickiewicz, in exile in Paris in 1848, prayed, "for the universal war, for the freedom of nations, we beseech Thee, O Lord". Many in the Balkans echoed and shared his conviction that in the convulsion of war the old order in Europe would be destroyed and national freedom won. It was that conviction which, added to the intrigues, the jealousies, the internecine feuds of the Balkan States, made it so improbable that after 1913 a further and a final crisis would be long delayed.

Chapter XI

THE FINAL BALANCE

THE Kaiser observed in March 1914 that "we find ourselves now in a no-man's-land between the military and the political—treacherous and obscure ground on which the diplomat most of all goes astray. I, as military do not entertain the smallest doubt, on my information, that Russia is systematically preparing war against us and I shall govern my policy accordingly."[1] In speaking of the no-man's-land between the military and the political, the Kaiser had hit upon an underlying truth.[2] Europe had undergone so many crises in preceding years that statesmen in every country had begun to despair of averting a final crisis. Their principal preoccupation was no longer the preservation of peace but preparation for war. Implicit in this attitude was the admission that, because statesmanship was bankrupt, therefore war was inevitable. The consequence was the stiffening of the great alliances, and within them a new dependence upon military opinion. After all if statesmanship were helpless to avert war, wisdom counselled each nation that war should be waged at a moment favourable to itself. So the soldiers reasoned and the statesmen listened, for nothing more surely made war inevitable than the pernicious belief that it was inevitable.

The aim all along had been not a balance of power in Europe, but predominance for one or other of the great alliances. The Central Powers assumed that while by 1914 the balance was still in their favour, it would not remain so for much longer. Already, argued Conrad, the most favourable moment had gone

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIX, p. 550.

[2] Cf. Spender, *Fifty Years of Europe*, p. 395.

by. Had Germany seized the opportunity presented by the Russo-Japanese War what doubt could there have been of the outcome? Then Russia was impotent and the Entente untested and unprepared. Even in 1909 all the chances were in favour of the Central Powers.[1] Was it not wise to strike before it was too late? The war envisaged was, in many respects, considered as a preventive war. War alone could break the encirclement of the Entente Powers; and it was prudent to fight before their military preparations were complete. To say this is not to convict the Central Powers of sole responsibility for its outbreak. For while 1914 was still reckoned a favourable moment for Germany, there is equally little doubt that since Bosnia Russian opinion, in certain circumstances, contemplated the use of force to obtain a Pan-Slav settlement of the Balkan question. The considerations that held Russia back were the restraining influence of her allies and her own unpreparedness. She was awaiting an opportunity such as the death of the Emperor Francis Joseph might create, she was not prepared to take the initiative.

The position of Russian rearmament provides the clue to Russian policy in the last years of peace. M. Nekludov relates[2] that, in 1911, when he was received by the Tsar before taking up his post as Russian Ambassador at Sofia, Nicholas, "after an intentional pause, stepping back and fixing me with a penetrating stare, said, 'Listen to me, Nekludov, do not for one instant lose sight of the fact that we cannot go to war. I do not wish for war, as a rule I shall do all in my power to preserve for my people the benefits of peace. But at this moment of all moments everything that might lead to war must be avoided. It would be out of the question for us to face a war for five or six years—in fact till 1917. . . . Though if the most vital interests and the

[1] Cf. Brandenburg, op. cit., p. 518. He uses Germany's failure to strike in 1905 and again in 1909 as proof of her pacific intentions. This is a singularly unconvincing line of argument.

[2] A. Nekludov: *Diplomatic Reminiscences before and during the World War* 1911–17, Eng. translation, London 1920, p. 5.

honour of Russia were at stake we might, if it were absolutely necessary, accept a challenge in 1915; but not a moment sooner in any circumstances or under any pretext whatsoever.' " The substance of what the Tsar said was known to the Central Powers and to France. Russia's lack of preparedness was as much of an inducement to the former to fight before 1917 as it was to the latter to postpone the outbreak of a conflict which few believed could now be wholly averted. But its influence on Russian policy was qualified by one factor, the memory of what had happened in 1909. The German Ambassador, the Count von Pourtalés, reported in 1914 on the "general animosity against Austria-Hungary" in St. Petersburg.[1] It meant that whatever the state of Russian preparedness there would be no more concessions to Vienna.

The Growing Tension

The Tsar's warnings to his Ambassador were symptomatic of the state of tension in Europe. In common with every ruler in Europe he sensed that war was coming. For that tension Germany was primarily responsible. That seems clear beyond all doubt. Her diplomacy in the East and in the West had antagonized peoples and States who had no fundamental cause for quarrel with the German Empire. France was the only country, as Bismarck well understood, which was irreconcilable. It was German policy and German diplomacy that had been mainly responsible for the ending of cordial relations first with Russia and then with Britain. That both of these Great Powers had been estranged with such finality was the determining factor in international relations in the Europe of 1914. It was also the most dangerous, for Germany, by reason of her central geographical position, was the only Power likely to involve Europe simultaneously in war both in the East and in the West. Her ally, Austria, under the Treaty of 1879 had assumed obligations only in the East and had no feud either with France or with Britain. In such circumstances the most marked restraint in German

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIX, p. 571; Dugdale, Vol. IV, pp. 356–7.

foreign policy was called for to localize the Eastern war which was perhaps inevitable. But such restraint was wholly lacking. No saving sense of limitation influenced the German outlook, even after she had been made fully aware by her representatives in the principal European capitals of the dangers of a situation for whose creation she was so largely responsible. This lack of restraint is to be attributed partly to a ruthless impatience with any obstacle or check to the realization of German ambitions and partly to a characteristic psychological failure to understand and to allow for the fears of German military might deeply implanted in the consciousness of peoples who had been shaken by her "sudden", "brusque" methods of diplomacy. In a moment of candour after the Agadir crisis Herr Zimmerman had remarked to the British Ambassador, Sir Edward Goschen, that it was thought in Berlin that the sending of *The Panther* to Agadir "would have a good effect on the negotiations with France".[1] That the Wilhelmstrasse should think on such lines and should place reliance on such reckless means of applying diplomatic pressure in the existing state of international tension displays so alarming a lack of sense of proportion that many have refused to believe that Germany's actions were so irresponsible as superficially they appeared to be. But the evidence is not confined to Agadir.

Germany's predilection for forceful diplomacy was reinforced in the last years before the war by a revival of confidence in Germany's ability to overcome any challenge. After all, the German military leaders could reflect not without satisfaction that France had been decisively crushed in 1870–1, that Russia, an empire on the verge of revolution, had been defeated by an upstart oriental State only ten years earlier. And they could reflect, too, that though English intervention on the side of the Entente was a possibility, it was by no means a certainty and that it might well come too late to influence the result. As late as May 1914 the German Ambassador in London felt that the balance was shifting in favour of the Central Powers,

[1] Gooch and Temperley, Vol. VII, p. 487.

positively because of the increased strength of the German Navy and negatively because of the decline in the French population and the weakness of Russia since her defeat in the Far East.[1]

Was it necessary for Germany to think in terms of a preventive war in 1914? Was she menaced by the Entente Powers? The answer was clearly in the negative. It was recognized to be so by the German Ambassadors in the three Entente capitals. On 14th May 1914 Prince von Lichnowsky repeated his conviction that in the event of German aggression against France England would come to the assistance of the French, but he made it abundantly clear that England desired good relations with Germany and showed only too evident an anxiety that the issue should not be forced. Grey, he noted, "opposed all movements of French Chauvinism so as not to be forcibly involved on the side of France". "M. Cambon", he said, "knows as well as I do" that England "will no more permit a war of *revanche* than they would a repetition of the events of 1870–1." Protection in the event of aggression was Britain's policy towards France. Towards Europe, English policy rested "first and foremost upon the Balance of Power between the groups. It is as little to England's interest that a single Power should be predominant on the Continent as that a group should prevail."[2]

If Germany was assured by her Ambassador in London that England at the most contemplated with reluctance a defensive war to sustain France and so preserve the Balance of Power in Europe, what of France herself? Was she not a menace to German security? Did she not harbour designs of an aggressive war to recover her lost provinces? The answer of the German Ambassador was emphatic. On 5th February 1914 the Baron von Schoen reported to the Chancellor, "The wish for *revanche* in war, as personified in Boulanger and Déroulède, is over and done with. It survives to-day . . . only in theory. It is true that the wounds of 1871 still burn in French hearts, but no man is

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIX, p. 614; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 367.
[2] Ibid.

inclined to risk his own or his son's bones in the cause of Alsace-Lorraine, even though a constellation took shape, offering a thoroughly favourable and fairly easy prospect of success for the venture. . . . The idea continues to gain ground that France's salvation must be sought in better relations towards Germany."[1] Though no one would wish to suggest that the verdict of an Ambassador is final or conclusive evidence, yet even after every allowance has been made this opinion of von Schoen, an experienced diplomatist who had been in Paris since 1910 and who had been Ambassador at St. Petersburg from 1905–7, is not to be lightly disregarded.

Of the unpreparedness of the third Entente partner something has already been said. Its existence was acknowledged by the German Ambassador in a despatch written in March 1914. He believed that Russia was not working for war partly because there were no leading personalities capable of concerted action on a large scale. But he agreed that the Tsar might easily be carried away by the Pan-Slav movement. Peace for the moment was the policy of Russia but none could foresee what might happen in three or four years' time. On this last point the Kaiser observed, "The gift sometimes occurs. Among sovereigns frequently, among statesmen seldom, among diplomatists almost never."[2] His foresight told him that Russia was preparing for a possibly still distant war. The German Chancellor added his cautious agreement, thinking that "of all the European Great Powers Russia is the most inclined to face the risk of a great military adventure". But the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, it is interesting to recall, while sharing to the full the Kaiser's view of Russia's fundamentally warlike disposition, was quite satisfied "that the internal difficulties are too great to permit of an aggressive policy for that country".[3]

From the point of view of Berlin, therefore, aggression by the Western Powers in 1914 could be ruled out; an attack from

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIV, p. 248; Dugdale, Vol. IV. pp. 354–5.
[2] Cf. Brandenburg, op. cit., p. 474.
[3] Ibid.

the East directed against Austria-Hungary was not felt to be impossible though the moment for it was likely to be delayed, perhaps for many years, because of internal weakness. In such circumstances to localize any eventual conflict in the East should surely have been the aim of German policy had it been fundamentally pacific. But judged by this test it was not.

From 1913 onwards the despatches of M. Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador in Berlin, reflect an ever deepening anxiety about German intentions. The new military measures taken early in 1913 and extended a year later; the declared intention of the Chief of Staff von Moltke to act by surprise; "to put on one side all commonplaces as to the responsibility of the aggressor"; the determination of the militarists always to be ready; the fact that they seemed to have won the Kaiser over to their views and, above all, the state of public opinion underlined the extreme gravity of the situation. In Berlin, M. Cambon detected no reluctance to contemplate a war with France and complete confidence in its outcome.[1]

It was the misgivings about Germany's ultimate intentions coupled with a sense of continuing vulnerability that increased the anxiety of the Entente countries, and more especially of the two members of the Dual Alliance. It was their avowed aim to build up against the Central Powers a preponderance of defensive strength in Europe. Their hope was that the occasion of the war which all foresaw would be such as to bring in England on their side, but as we have seen they could not rely upon this happening. England's attitude remained resolutely qualified. Without her assistance the Dual Alliance could hardly hope to withstand the assault of the German armies. How could that assistance be guaranteed? That was the question around which the minds of French and Russian statesmen revolved. In late July 1914 M. Paléologue, French Ambassador to St. Petersburg, on his way to welcome M. Poincaré on his official

[1] *Vide* M. Cambon's despatches of 17th March, 1913; 6th May, 1913; 22nd November, 1913; reprinted as Nos. 1, 3 and 6 in the French Yellow Book.

visit as President of the Third Republic, spoke to the Tsar of the possibility of a war forced on the Dual Alliance by Germany. "Perhaps", said the Ambassador, "I do too much honour to the Kaiser when I consider him capable of willing or even of accepting the consequences of his gestures. But if war were threatened could he or would he prevent it? No, Sire, in all sincerity I do not think so." The Tsar remained silent, took a few puffs at his cigar and then in a firm tone of voice said, "It is all the more important we should be able to rely upon the English in case a crisis arises. Unless she has completely lost her reason, Germany will never dare to attack Russia, France and England together."[1]

What would have been the effect on the Dual Alliance and on the European scene generally of a more positive British policy? Whatever the thoughts of Tsar or Ambassador, it may, in fact, be doubted if the firm adherence of England to the Dual Alliance so late as 1914 would have deflected the direction of German policy, but it would have inspired a greater degree of confidence in Paris and in St. Petersburg. Both partners in the Dual Alliance were wholly at one in believing that no efforts should be spared to obtain a firm guarantee of support from Britain not merely because it seemed the only way in which war might yet be averted but also because it seemed to provide an assurance of victory if war did come. The legal mind of Poincaré craved for some precise legal formula of a kind to which Grey with his inherited faith in the empiricism of British statesmanship, was wholly antipathetic. To a degree even greater than that of his French colleague, Sazonov was discouraged at what he considered the weak and vacillating policy of England. Like the Tsar he appeared to be firmly convinced that peace could be maintained even in the summer of 1914 if the Triple Entente were transformed into a defensive alliance and published as such to all the world. Such an alliance, Sazonov argued, would in fact destroy once for all the danger of German domination in

[1] *La Russie des Tsars pendant La Grande Guerre*, Paris 1921, pp. 2–3. English translation, London 1923.

Europe, and in so doing would undermine the foundation of Germany's aggressive policy. His hopes were doomed to disappointment though from his point of view something positive at least was achieved when, as we have seen, in June 1914 Grey assented to Anglo-Russian naval conversations. It was not much, but it was a consoling indication to Russia that England was sufficiently conscious of the tension in Europe to take one further step along the road towards collaboration with the Dual Alliance.

Parallel with the growing anxiety to ensure outright support from Britain the outward signs of the greater degree of intimacy between France and Russia became more and more unmistakable after the Balkan wars. France, after Agadir, wished to be able to count on stronger Russian support in the event of new Franco-German difficulties in the West, and it was recognized in Paris that if this assurance were to be given it was conditional on France for her part manifesting a greater interest in Russia's ambitions in the Balkans. By 1914 this indeed was the crucial issue. How far was France prepared to back Russian aims in the Balkans? Poincaré was the first Frenchman holding a responsible position to acknowledge the likelihood of a European war about a Balkan issue in which France would be involved as Russia's ally. And he believed in 1914 such a war was coming in the not very distant future. It was on 14th March of that year that he said: "Whatever be the issue small or great, which may arise in the future between Russia and Germany it will not pass by like the last. It will be war." Careful though Poincaré was to make it abundantly clear that the military support of France was limited to the hypothesis that Germany intervened to support Austria against Russia,[1] it was a case in which a traditional urge to restore France's position in Europe led, under the stress and strain of growing diplomatic tension, to a broader and deeper interpretation of the Franco-Russian partnership.

[1] Gooch: *Before the War*, Vol. II, p. 199.

War Clouds in the Balkans

The tightening of the Triple Entente accentuated Germany's dependence on Austria. Every day that brought Europe nearer to the final catastrophe strengthened the ties of sentiment and self-interest that bound Germany to her one remaining ally. France was irreconcilable; Italy was only a nominal member of the Triple Alliance; England had been estranged by the German naval programme; and Russia by the Bosnian crisis. Germany was not encircled but the friends with which Bismarck had sought to surround her had all fallen away and only the Treaty of 1879 stood unweakened by the passage of time. This meant that the days when Bismarck had bluntly told his ally that he would not fight for her Balkan ambitions had gone for good, and in the Wilhelmstrasse ever greater importance was attached to the belief, which Bismarck had certainly entertained, that the maintenance of the Empire of the Habsburgs as a great European Power was for Germany a condition of European equilibrium, and perhaps indeed the only condition other than that of self-defence under which Germany might be drawn into a war with an easy mind. This was a dangerous doctrine. In the Balkans two proud Empires stood face to face. One of them had been compelled to withdraw and was determined not to withdraw again; the other believed itself to be faced with the alternatives of a forward policy or of disintegration. It was a situation which under the conditions of the time could probably only have been resolved by war, and it was therefore wholly disastrous for Europe that Germany should have become committed to taking part in that war when it came almost regardless of its occasion or of whether she were satisfied that the *casus foederis* was justifiable or not.

The dangers of virtually unqualified support for Austrian policy sometimes loomed up with frightful clarity. It was almost a cry of despair that came from Tschirschky, the German Ambassador in Vienna, in May 1914. "I constantly wonder", he said,[1] "whether it really pays us to bind ourselves so tightly

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIX, p. 364; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 369.

to this phantasm of a State which is cracking in every direction. . . ." But what was the alternative? "I still see no other political constellation which could replace the extra power we still obtain from the alliance with the Powers of Central Europe. If we had not this alliance we would be forced to aim at a partition of the Monarchy." For partition the time was not ripe and so after consideration of the alternatives German policy came back once again to the necessity of unqualified support for Vienna. And since few illusions were entertained in Berlin about the recuperative powers of the Dual Monarchy the lesson that was implicitly drawn was "Strike before it is too late".

The actual dependence of Germany upon Austria-Hungary was only too well understood in Vienna. It was Austrian knowledge of Germany's predicament that encouraged Count Berchtold to exploit the situation to the full. True it required no great perspicacity on his part to realize that where he led Germany would almost certainly follow. Any restraint that had existed was dispelled by the Kaiser's language when he visited Vienna in October 1913. Convinced of the inevitability of a war for supremacy between Teuton and Slav the Kaiser was concerned about the increase in Serbian strength as a result of the Balkan wars. Austria must be resolute. The Slavs were born to serve, not to rule. The only possible relation between Austria and Serbia was dependence of the lesser upon the greater, like a planet upon the sun. If the Serbs proved, as Berchtold feared, not to be amenable force should be applied. "If H.M. the Emperor Francis Joseph makes a demand", concluded the Kaiser, "the Serbian Government must obey. If not Belgrade must be bombarded and occupied till his will is fulfilled. And rest assured that I am behind you, and am ready to draw the sword whenever your action requires." And as he uttered these vainglorious assurances, the Kaiser's hand moved to the hilt of his sword.[1] That was enough, more than enough, for Berchtold. The only question was when should the Balkan question be settled once for all in Austria's interest. And here with fatal logic Field-Marshal

[1] Cf. Gooch, *Before the War*, Vol. II, pp. 424–5.

Conrad was ready with his familiar arguments for a preventive war before Russia had rearmed. Take action at once was his advice to the German military attaché in March 1914.[1] And that advice was not unwelcome in Berlin. Austria-might indulge in adventurous policies likely to lead to war, but it is quite wrong to suppose that by 1914 Germany was a reluctant partner being dragged against her better judgment whither she would not go. On the contrary for different ends but for the same reasons Germany preferred an early to a later war. In the long run she too, feared Russian strength. It might be that revolution would intervene before Russian rearmament was complete but that was far from certain, and anyway for the Kaiser it was not an attractive alternative. And in the meantime on 13th June 1914 an article, believed to be inspired by the Russian War Office, spoke of the progress of army reforms, and of the forces some 2,320,000 strong which Russia could put in the field. The Central Powers could not think in such terms. Were they to wait till these great forces were fully trained and equipped and the Slav "battering ram" driven home, as Count Tisza feared,[2] against the Dual Monarchy. In introducing the new Army Bill in the Reichstag on 7th April 1914 the Chancellor after pointing out that the balance had moved to Germany's relative disadvantage when the position once occupied by European Turkey had been filled by the Slav states, spoke frankly of a possible war between German and Slav. The Chiefs of Staff including von Moltke also believed in the coming of this great racial struggle for supremacy. Was it tolerable that Germany should wait till Russia was ready? These were the fears, these were the arguments, at once specious and severely logical if the premise of an inevitable war be accepted, which led Vienna and Berlin step by step to favour the forcing of the issue in the autumn of 1914.

The annexation of Bosnia followed by the Balkan wars had, as we have noted already, narrowed the ground for manoeuvre in the Balkans to vanishing point since Turkey could retreat no

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIX, p. 565.

[2] Ibid., p. 333.

further without ceasing to have a foothold in Europe at all. This had come about at a time when the Habsburg Monarchy was brought face to face with the challenge of the Slav States, whose nationalism was now unbridled and whose determination to reunite all their peoples under one flag made relations intolerable. To Central European observers there seemed to be only two possible solutions—a break-up of the Monarchy or the virtual absorption of these States within its borders. Either was likely to provoke a European war. Yet leaving fears of Russia aside could the existence of so acute a challenge be disregarded? There was no easy answer but the urgency of this question fostered dangerous counsels in Vienna, where Berchtold shifted uneasily from indulgence in dreams of a master-stroke to a policy of prudent restraint while the military chiefs inspired by Field-Marshal Conrad von Hötzendorf, once more Chief of Staff, openly favoured cutting their way out of the impasse by the sword. Conrad advocated the forcible incorporation first of Serbia and then of Roumania within the boundaries of the Empire, thereby hoping to reduce the problem of the Balkan nationalities to a more manageable affair of internal politics. But whatever the soldiers might advise, the statesmen were well aware that the adoption of so unrealistic a course would plunge the whole of Europe in war. Russia would not and could not stand aside. At such a prospect even the boldest and the most feckless paused, however favourable the moment might seem to be.

After the Balkan wars the attention of Vienna was concentrated on the Greater Serbia danger. Violent nationalist propaganda for the reuniting of all the Southern Slavs in the Serbian kingdom provoked ever deepening concern. The British Ambassador describing, in January 1913, the indignation aroused in the Austrian capital was deeply pessimistic about the outcome. "It seems to me", he wrote,[1] "that the relations between Russia and Austria-Hungary, instead of showing any signs of improvement, are growing worse from day to day, not officially perhaps,

[1] Gooch and Temperley, Vol. IX, Part III, p. 467.

but through the steadily increasing animosity between the two nations. Serbia will one day set Europe by the ears and bring about a universal war on the Continent. . . . I cannot tell you how exasperated people are getting here at the continual worry which that little country causes to Austria under encouragement from Russia. . . . The next time a Serbian crisis arises with probably a younger emperor on the throne here, I feel certain that Austria-Hungary will refuse to admit any Russian interference in the dispute and will proceed to settle the differences with her little neighbour by herself *coûte que coûte.*" Some six months later Count Berchtold unfolded his fears to the German Ambassador. The South Slav provinces, he said, could not be held if Serbia became too powerful. "As to that, all competent opinions here agree." Austria had no wish to pursue an adventurous policy, far from it, but she had to safeguard her South Slav possessions which "of course include Trieste". The happiest solution would be the defeat of Serbia by her Balkan rivals, but failing that the Monarchy would have to take action even if this included a possible occupation of Serbia. "There must be no mistake", concluded Berchtold, "as to the danger of Great Serbian 'Piedmont' weighing as a military factor on the borders of the Monarchy."[1] Oppressed with the weight of their fears Austrian statesmen inclined more and more to the idea of a decisive step which would mend or end all.

One man in the Dual Monarchy championed a settlement that might be carried through pacifically and might also endure. He was the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir-presumptive. He believed that a policy of drift would be fatal to the Monarchy; he was well aware that the Serbs dreamed of a Greater Serbia; that the Roumanians longed for the day of reunion with "their suffering brethren across the frontier"; and that neither would willingly renounce their aspirations. Since it was clearly impossible for Austria to satisfy them without loss of territory, the

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXV, p. 122. *Vide* also Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 447–55, for a detailed examination of Germany's reaction to Austrian policy in the Second Balkan War.

only policy that seemed at once prudent and practical to the Archduke was the pacification of the Slavs and of the Roumanians who lay within the borders of the Empire. That at least would remove the canker within. To reconcile the minorities to the dynasty; to revive their loyalty to the Habsburgs, the Archduke contemplated bringing the Southern Slavs into active participation in the government of the Empire. How this was to be done in practice was not clearly known. Antipathetic to dualism,[1] hating the Magyar politicians and nobles; critical of their intolerant rule of the subject peoples, the Archduke favoured such a course partly because the reconciliation of the southern Slavs might strengthen the Monarchy by broadening the basis on which it rested and partly because the foundation of Magyar predominance would be thereby undermined. At the same time it would lessen the danger of the nationalist agitation from without the Empire meeting with a revolutionary response within. It may well be that the Archduke's hope of restoring the balance and the internal strength of the Empire by concessions to the Southern Slavs would have aroused so much hostility from the Magyars as to be impracticable; in any event it is probable that by 1914 the opportunity for a successful experiment in trialism had been outlived. But none could afford to disregard the plans entertained by an heir-presumptive whose accession could hardly be long delayed. It was from that fact that much of their importance was derived.

In the last months before the outbreak of war, the anxious gaze of Vienna shifted from Serbia to Roumania. "Hopelessly vague and undecided",[2] was the British Ambassador's comment on Count Berchtold, and these weaknesses were apparent in his Balkan policies. The association of Roumania with the Triple Alliance, for which Bismarck had been responsible, remained, but its value was more than doubtful. While the loyalty of the Hohenzollern king to the Central Powers was beyond question, the feelings of his people had grown less and less friendly as the

[1] *Vide* Redlich, op. cit., pp. 491–3.

[2] Gooch and Temperley, Vol. X, Part I, p. 91.

years went by. When the alliance was renewed once again in February 1913[1] it was thought prudent to confine the secret of Roumanian association to so narrow a circle that only the successive Prime Ministers were informed of its existence. Sentiment towards Germany remained cordial, but Roumanian indignation at the oppression of their kith and kin by the Magyar ruling class directed the full force of their animosity against the Dual Monarchy. Had wiser counsels prevailed at Budapest, no pains would have been spared to deflect Roumania's irredentist sentiment towards Bessarabia, now in Russian hands, and so at the least to lessen their interest in the future of Transylvania and the Bukowina. This was better understood in Vienna and at the close of 1913 Berchtold caused Count Czernin to be appointed Minister to Bucharest. To the Roumanians Czernin was *persona grata*. To a widely known sympathy for the Balkan States he added the equal virtue of dislike for the Magyars. His appointment therefore was a practical step towards trying to regain the loyalty of Roumania to the Central Powers. But it was too little and too late.

Czernin's reports from Bucharest were deeply pessimistic. To Berchtold he wrote: "One thing is certain. Things cannot remain as they are. This vague and morbid relationship can only be a stage as in every illness to be followed by death or recovery."[2] His recommendation was a more clear-cut policy towards Roumania; "a passive policy", he wrote, "of floating with the current; of *laissez-faire, laissez aller*, will not improve this situation. Nothing but the clearest, positive action on Austria's part, nothing but an iron, unbending determination to compel Roumania to show her colours can avert at the twelfth hour unfathomable disaster." While Count Czernin felt that the Roumanians did not wish to commit themselves to an open allegiance to Russia, he recognized that they were prepared to

[1] A. F. Pribram: *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary* 1878–1914, Oxford 1920, Vol. I, p. 260 ff.

[2] Quoted in Gooch: *Before the War*, Vol. II, pp. 429–30. *Vide* generally pp. 425–33. See also Fay, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 475–98.

continue in alliance with the Central Powers while the alliance was favourable only to them. In other words they liked the prevailing twilight because it enabled Roumania to rely if need be on Austrian support, whilst Austria could no longer count on hers. Whether Czernin was wise in recommending that the issue be forced is very open to question. In any event his advice was not heeded.

The wavering allegiance of Roumania, a matter of slight importance in normal times, assumed great significance because the balance of power in Europe as a whole was so even that a small Balkan State might well bring down the scales on one side or the other. When the Kaiser visited the Emperor Francis Joseph at Schönbrünn in March 1914 both his host and Count Berchtold felt "that Roumania was as good as lost to the Triple Alliance". The Kaiser was reassuring. He had confidence in the goodwill of King Carol and he felt, moreover, that Roumania's interests were on the side of the Triple Alliance by force of circumstances. "The supremacy of Slav Russia was intolerable to Roumania, with Serbia on the other side of her." But clearly a condition of continued co-operation with Roumania was the adoption of a more conciliatory policy towards the Roumanian minority in the eastern half of the Empire. About this the Kaiser spoke to Count Tisza, the powerful Magyar Premier. He recommended not "magnanimous action" but small concessions. His advice was not well heeded.[1] By June 1914 Berchtold was lamenting to Tschirschky, the German Ambassador, that he had "often and urgently tried to persuade Count Tisza in favour of greater concessions to the Roumanians", but all in vain.[2] The Kaiser was fretful, for as he rightly observed, Hungarian internal policy towards the Roumanian minority reacted upon the foreign policy of the whole Triple Alliance.

While Tisza remained stubbornly immovable, while Czernin in Bucharest was filled with a desperate sense of urgency, while Berchtold feebly lamented, Sazonov was not standing idly by

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIX, p. 333; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 357 ff.
[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIX, p. 369; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 372.

awaiting the outcome. He, too, was greatly concerned with the direction of Roumanian policy, and in the early summer of 1914 the Tsar and his Foreign Minister paid a State visit to Constanza. The visit publicized the shifting loyalty of Roumania and deepened the already profound misgivings in Vienna. Its evident success and perhaps even more the fact that Sazonov chose this moment to go for a drive in Transylvania with Jon Bratianu, the Roumanian Prime Minister, angered Budapest and alarmed Count Berchtold. It seemed hardly likely, despite the fame of the scenery, that the Russian Foreign Minister would tour the Transylvanian Alps, unless he were also anxious to indicate unofficial Russian support for Roumania's irredentist claims. "When we entered Transylvania", records Sazonov, "the same idea probably shot through us both—that we were on Roumanian soil which awaited deliverance from the Magyar yoke and reunion with the motherland." From the visit as a whole he came away well satisfied. "My general conclusion from these talks", he reported, "is that Roumania is not bound in all circumstances to join Austria against us but that in the event of an Austrian-Russian war she would join the stronger party and the one who could promise the greatest advantages."[1] This was the same conclusion as Czernin had reached, but whatever doubt there might be in Bucharest about the relative strength of the rival Powers there was none about which could promise most. There Russia held the ace of trumps.

The interest of Russia in the Balkans was old and traditional. Since the defeat in the Far East Russian policy had been of necessity rather negative. In 1913 Sazonov, in his general review of Russian foreign policy,[2] had made it clear that Russia's concern at this time of comparative weakness was simply to preserve the *status quo*, and above all to ensure that Constantinople did not fall into the hands of a rival Power. This defensive strategic interest in the future of the Near East was coloured and at times overlaid by the peculiar character of Russia's traditional cham-

[1] *Livre Noir*, Vol. II, p. 377 ff.

[2] *Vide* p. 189.

pionship of the Slav States. She had inspired and sometimes assisted by force of arms in the winning of their freedom, and sentiment and self-interest happily coincided in her sponsorship of the reunion of all the Slav peoples within their own States. Calculation was no doubt the decisive factor in determining policy, but there was also behind it as a strong all-pervasive influence an element of mysticism to which the Orthodox Church made its own very considerable contribution. Dostoievsky,[1] thinking, as he wrote of "Holy Russia, invincible and eternal", and "of the day when she would be the only Colossus in Europe", had asked melodramatically in 1861: "Who among you gentlemen of Europe realize that Russia may well be waiting until you have finished, that one day she may assume some new immense task hitherto unknown to history by beginning at the point where you left off? . . . From Russia will come a new element, a new force to penetrate the world . . . something which implies the end of all European history such as we have known it until to-day."

While it is not easy to say exactly how far a sense of mission determined the direction of Tsarist policy it is none the less a fact that it existed, that it influenced the Russian outlook on Europe profoundly, and that it was considered in Central Europe an incalculable factor in the Empire's policy.[2] Bethmann-Hollweg, who paid a visit to Russia in 1912, was all the more conscious of it because he recognized Russia's underlying strength. "My all too brief journey in Russia", he wrote[3] after his return, "was full of fine and great impressions. . . . The wealth of the products of the soil and the physique of the population are factors which we, under the influence of our softening culture, need not indeed fear, but should not underrate." And the French Ambassador reported that Bethmann-Hollweg had come back "deeply im-

[1] The extracts which follow are from his *Letters* recently translated into French.

[2] For an interesting analysis of its strength and character see *The Russian Idea*, by Nicolas Berdyaev, English translation, London 1947.

[3] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXI, p. 449.

pressed by the latent strength of Russia and convinced that there is in that country a reserve of political, industrial and economic power which greatly surpasses that of the Old World. France and Germany were old nations. Russia was only at the dawn of her development."[1] For a moment the German Chancellor had pierced the veil of the future.

The War that Germany Envisaged

In the spring of 1914 it was clear to most observers that war would not be long delayed. The Central Powers revised and co-ordinated their military plans. The balance of power was tilting against them and it seemed most of all in Vienna that the hour had come to strike—if indeed it had not already passed. "For us in the Triple Alliance", said Conrad to the German Military Attaché, "there are only two alternatives, either to strike at once, or to strengthen our armaments correspondingly, and of the two the former from a military point of view is by far the more correct."[2] And on 14th May 1914 von Moltke and Conrad, the respective Chiefs of Staff, met at Karlsbad. Von Moltke, too, thought that any delay meant a lessening of the chances of the Central Powers. Conrad agreed, adding forcibly "that the attitude of Germany in past years (especially 1908) has caused us to let many favourable opportunities slip by". He then asked Moltke how long the war against the Dual Alliance would last. Moltke replied: "We hope in six weeks after the beginning of operations to have finished with France, or at least so far as to enable us to direct our principal forces against the East." Moltke was reckoning on a war according to the Schlieffen Plan, which was in fact put into operation three months later. Conrad was concerned about the length of time Austria would have to hold out against Russia without the assistance of the bulk of the German forces. On the whole, however, he was satisfied with von Moltke's assurances that the period would be brief and would be safely passed. From this conversation it is evident that French

[1] Quoted in Gooch: *Before the War*, Vol. II, p. 245.

[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIX, p. 565; Dugdale, Vol. IV, p. 356.

official circles, observing that Germany had raised a capital levy of £50 millions to finance the latest increase in the German Army, were not mistaken in concluding that so extreme a measure portended an early war.

The Meeting at Konopischt

The State visits which occupied the early summer months of 1914 were indicative of the extreme tension in Europe. The June visit of King George V to Paris was followed later in the same month by the State visit of the President of the Third Republic to the Tsar of All the Russias. Both visits were intended to underline the growing solidarity of the Entente. Both in fact served their purpose. But it was President Poincaré's visit to St. Petersburg which was the more significant because it finally convinced the Imperial Government that France would stand firm should the expected crisis develop soon in the Balkans.

The French Ambassador to St. Petersburg, M. Maurice Paléologue,[1] has recalled the colourful scene when M. Poincaré arrived. "In vibrating silver light, on waves of turquoise and emerald, the *France* leaving a long furrow behind her, advances slowly then stops majestically. The formidable ironclad which carries the head of the French State justifies eloquently her name. It is indeed France that approaches Russia." The President was not perhaps altogether at home amid the festivities and the displays of imperial magnificence with which his visit was honoured. But the incongruities were not out of place. There was a gulf between the manners and the sentiments of a Radical Republic and an absolutist Empire which had been bridged only under the shadow of a menace which threatened both alike. What was of lasting importance was that M. Poincaré left no doubts in St. Petersburg about how France would respond to the challenge when it came.

Neither the King's visit to Paris nor the President's visit to St. Petersburg aroused such misgivings as that of the Kaiser in the same month to the Archduke Francis Ferdinand at his villa at

[1] Op. cit., p. 3.

Konopischt. The roses for which the Archduke's garden was famous were in full bloom, and the official announcement stated that the Kaiser had come to admire them. The rest of the world was, however, as incredulous about the Kaiser's interest in the Archduke's roses as it had been about Sazonov's craving for Transylvanian scenery, and the choice of Admiral Tirpitz as his companion was hardly calculated to still misgivings or check speculation about this last meeting between the Kaiser and the heir-presumptive to the Habsburg throne. Moreover, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was closely associated with the Army; he was a friend of Field-Marshal Conrad, and though he had flouted the tradition of his House by marrying a commoner his policy was fundamentally dynastic. Did not his meeting with the Kaiser augur ill for the Slav peoples? Might not the Archduke recommend a forceful solution, and might not the Kaiser listen? Those were the fears that alarmed the Balkan States. For if the Archduke's rumoured plans for broadening the basis of support for the dynasty by concessions to the South Slavs were distasteful to the Magyars, they were viewed with even more profound misgiving by the Slavs.He was "an enemy of the South Slavs", said his assassin Princip when on trial and the principal motive which inspired the deed was "the avenging of the Serbian people". But of greater significance was Princip's admission that he regarded the Archduke as "an energetic man who as ruler would have carried through ideas and reforms which stood in our way". What he feared was Francis Ferdinand's federal solution for the problems of the Empire. Union of the Southern Slavs within the Monarchy might lead to a direct threat to Serbian independence and anyway would create a most formidable barrier to the hoped for union of Bosnia and Herzegovina with Serbia in a national South Slav state.[1]

At this last meeting at Konopischt "every possible question was discussed in detail" and there was "complete agreement between the Kaiser and his host".[2] It was not Serbia but Rou-

[1] Cf. Fay, op. cit., Vol II, p. 127 seq.
[2] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIX, p. 369.

mania which was the principal preoccupation of the Archduke. Its defection, now virtually certain though not formally announced, had revived proposals that it might be brought within the boundaries of the Monarchy, enjoying the quasi-autonomous status that the Kingdom of Bavaria retained within the German Empire. But that was a long-term policy, and the immediate anxiety was to secure from Roumania an explicit answer saying on which side she stood. Simultaneously attempts might be made to win over Bulgaria in order to show the Roumanians they were not indispensable.[1] The Archduke complained of Tisza's still insufficiently conciliatory attitude to the Roumanian minority, and the Kaiser promised to instruct the German Ambassador to keep on saying to the Hungarian Premier: "Sir, remember the Roumanians!" While it is reasonable to suppose that the Kaiser's influence on Balkan policy during the conversations at Konopischt was on the whole a moderating one, it remains uncertain what decisions were actually made about future policy beyond the fact that a veiled ultimatum was to be delivered to Roumania. But it was a case in which the fact of the meeting was more important than any discussions which took place at it. After it was over, like a prairie fire, across the Balkans swept the rumour that Vienna had decided on an offensive against either Roumania or Serbia in the late summer of 1914. "I knew", said one of the Archduke's assassins "that there existed at the Ballplatz a clique . . . which wanted to conquer Serbia. . . . At its head stood the heir to the throne. I believed that I should take vengeance on them all in taking vengeance on him."

Sarajevo

Sarajevo was the capital of Bosnia. When the province was occupied by Austrian troops after the Treaty of Berlin, it was there that resistance was most bitter. And it was there on 28th June 1914 that the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife came on a visit intended to instil in the Bosnian people loyalty to the

[1] Cf. Brandenburg, op. cit., pp. 482–3.

dynasty which now ruled over them. It was a glorious summer day. The streets were beflagged in the Archduke's honour, his portrait stood in many windows, though a discordant note was struck by the leading Serbian paper which printed instead a picture of King Peter framed in the national colours.[1] The heir to the throne in full military uniform, with his wife beside him, drove down the streets. A bomb was hurled at the Archduke's car. Though the reports of what followed are somewhat confused, it seems that the Archduke seized it with extraordinary coolness and threw it behind him into the road. No second attempt, it was felt, would be made that day. But there was a second attempt. As the Archduke's car came down the narrow winding street the chauffeur mistook the turning. He braked. The car paused for a fatal moment. Franz Princip stepped forward and fired two shots point blank. In a few moments the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his wife were dead. The assassin was an Austrian subject but a Serb by race. Europe had entered on the last crisis of all.

Prelude to War

When the Archduke was assassinated by an Austrian Serb at Sarajevo, all the Great Powers in Europe had already assumed the "state and posture of gladiators". Though, in fact, more than a month was to elapse between the assassination and the outbreak of general hostilities, the policy to be followed by all the Powers principally concerned was already predetermined. It is true that the events of July 1914 have been subjected to a careful and judicial scrutiny by many historians concerned to fix responsibility for the outbreak of war. However interesting this detailed examination may be, it is questionable how profitable it has, in fact, proved. For responsibility for the outbreak of war is not to be attributed to the statesmen who happened to control the policy of the Great Powers in the last desperate days, so much as to their predecessors and to the peoples of Europe who were

[1] *Vide* Fay, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 122, and generally pp. 121–6.

prepared for and who in many cases welcomed, the adoption of nationalist or imperialist policies which could only end in conflict. It is difficult not to accept a determinist view of the history of these last weeks of peace. The struggle for power had reached its predestined climax.

The Bosnian murders convinced Vienna that the time had come for an appeal to arms. Conrad described the assassinations as Serbia's declaration of war and argued that it could be answered by war alone. That view was shared by Berchtold, converted at last to the gospel of a preventive war. "Peremptory is the need", he declared, "for the Monarchy with unflinching hand to tear asunder the threads which its foes are endeavouring to weave into a net above its head."[1] And the aged Emperor, in an autograph letter to the Kaiser, wrote: "The bloody deed was not the work of a single individual but a well-organized plot whose threads extend to Belgrade. Though it may be impossible to establish the complicity of the Serbian Government, no one can doubt that its policy of uniting all Southern Slavs under the Serbian flag encourages such crimes, and that the continuation of this situation is a chronic peril for my House and my territories." So the indecisive Berchtold and his Emperor felt the hour to strike had come at last. At the Ministerial Council on 7th July the Foreign Minister favoured an immediate advance into Serbia even though it meant war with Russia.[2] Opinion in Vienna was on his side. Only one influential figure within the Dual Monarchy was opposed to violent measures. It was Count Tisza, whose strong will and clear ideas had so impressed the Kaiser at their meeting in March.[3] He doubted the complicity of the Serbian Government and was certain that a war for the punishment of Serbia would in fact mean a European conflagration. War against Serbia, he advised the Emperor, would involve Russia and that would mean a world war. The demands therefore

[1] Cf. Brandenburg, op. cit., pp. 483–4.
[2] Cf. ibid., p. 485.
[3] *Die Grosse Politik*, XXXIX, p. 333.

should not be so conceived as to make it inevitable. The note to Serbia, he maintained, "should be couched in a moderate not a threatening tone". And if war should follow, it must be clear that it had not been provoked by Austria. This was sound advice, but at the Council Count Tisza was in a minority of one. It was decided to send an ultimatum to Belgrade drafted in such terms as to make rejection certain. For the Monarchy a diplomatic success was held to be not enough. War was felt by all except Tisza to be a necessity. Berchtold and the Military Advisers accepted the pessimistic view of the Monarchy's future which had inspired Aerenthal's annexation of Bosnia and believed that only by risking all could the honour and the integrity of the Monarchy be saved. The despatch of the formidable ultimatum upon which Vienna had decided was delayed until President Poincaré had left St. Petersburg in order not to afford an opportunity for personal consultation between the heads of the Dual Alliance Powers on the appropriate response to be made by them.

From the beginning of the crisis only a restraining influence from Berlin could have held back Vienna. That influence was not exerted. The Kaiser, on the contrary, assured Vienna of his support, and told the Emperor that he recognized the necessity "of freeing your Serbian frontiers from their heavy pressure".[1] This support was given in the first instance in unqualified form. It was accompanied by no request to see in advance any ultimatum that might be sent to Belgrade and by no demand for preliminary consultation. Indeed the Kaiser went out of his way to dissociate himself from any concern with the particular differences between the Monarchy and Serbia, and contented himself with an indication of his general support in accordance with the terms of the Alliance.

However much, as the crisis developed, opinions in Berlin might waver, a free hand to Austria was the Wilhelmstrasse's considered policy. "We were perfectly aware", says the excul-

[1] *Austrian Documents*, I, No. 3.

patory memorandum of the German Foreign Office dated August 1914, "that a possible warlike attitude of Austria Hungary against Serbia might bring Russia into the field and that it might therefore involve us in war. . . . We could not, however, in these vital interests of Austria-Hungary, which were at stake, advise our ally to take a yielding attitude not compatible with his dignity, nor deny him our assistance in these trying days."[1] Ostensibly the belief was cherished in Berlin that the war might be localized, not because of German restraint but because of Russian weakness. A despatch sent by the Foreign Office to the German Ambassador in London two weeks after the assassination affords an instructive *résumé* of the factors which determined German policy. "Austria," observed the Secretary of State,[2] "which has forfeited more and more prestige as the result of her lack of vigour, hardly counts any longer as a Great Power. The Balkan crisis weakened her position still further. Our group of allies has been weakened by this retrogression of Austria's position as a power. Austria no longer intends to tolerate the sapping activities of the Serbians. She fully realizes that she has neglected many opportunities and that she is still able to act though in a few years she may no longer be able to do so. Austria is now going to come to a reckoning with Serbia. . . . We have not at the present time forced Austria to her decision. But neither should we attempt to stay her hand. If we should do that, Austria would have the right to reproach us with having deprived her of her last chance of political rehabilitation. And then the process of her wasting away and of her internal decay would be still further accelerated. Her standing in the Balkans would be gone for ever. You will undoubtedly agree with me that the absolute establishment of Russian hegemony in the Balkans is indirectly not permissible even for us. The maintenance of Austria, and in fact of the most powerful Austria possible is a necessity for us. . . . That she cannot be maintained for ever I

[1] Reprinted in The German White Book.

[2] Kautsky: *Die Deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch*, 4 vols, English translation 1924, No. 72, p. 135.

willingly admit. But in the meantime we may be able to arrange other combinations."

There is no doubt the German attitude was largely determined by fears of Russian hegemony in the Balkans coupled with the belief that Russia would not be prepared to fight, or at the worst to wage war effectively, because her rearmament was so evidently incomplete. It was this assumption, not altogether well founded in fact, which left Berchtold with a free hand to send his ultimatum to Serbia. Later there were misgivings in Berlin, but having encouraged his partner to light the fuse, as Dr. Gooch has so aptly described it,[1] Bethmann was left to do his best to avert an explosion. At this moment of crisis the Chancellor, for all his excellent qualities, was shown to be a man unfitted to control events. There is something at once engagingly modest and rather pathetic in his subsequent remark that the gifted Bülow might have done better. In respect of Russia, Bethmann clearly had little idea of what the reaction would be to the strong line which Austria intended to take. It should have been abundantly clear to him, as it was to the Kaiser's Military Advisers, that Russia could not for overwhelming reasons of prestige give way a second time, and that therefore an attack on Serbia by the Dual Monarchy meant a European war. If this was not understood by civilians in Berlin it was certainly well understood in St. Petersburg. On hearing the news of the assassination, Sazonov telegraphed the Russian Ambassador in Belgrade instructing him to impress upon the Serbian Government the need for caution. "The latest events in Austria which have led to such an intensification of Serbophobia", he wired, as to "compel us to warn the Serbian Government to be extremely careful in regard to questions likely to increase this feeling and to create a dangerous situation." The Serbian reply to Berchtold's ultimatum suggested that this advice did not go unheeded.

The Serbs indeed were under no illusions about the drastic action which Vienna contemplated. There is "no room for optimism", wrote M. Yovanovitch, the Serbian Minister at

[1] *Before the War*, Vol. II, p. 271.

Vienna, before the ultimatum was delivered. "There is no doubt that Austria-Hungary is making preparations of a serious character. What is chiefly to be feared, and is highly probable, is that Austria is preparing for war against Serbia. The general conviction that prevails here is that it would be nothing short of suicide for Austria-Hungary once more to fail to take advantage of the opportunity to act against Serbia. It is believed that the two opportunities previously missed—the Annexation of Bosnia and the Balkan war—have been extremely injurious to Austria-Hungary. In addition the conviction is steadily growing that Serbia after her two wars is completely exhausted, and that a war against Serbia would in fact merely mean a military expedition to be concluded by a speedy occupation. It is also believed that such a war could be brought to an end before Europe could intervene."[1] With none of this would Berchtold have disagreed, though he would have added that even the risk of a European war had to be taken because there was no longer any alternative.

In the meantime events had moved in Vienna. At the Ministerial Council of 19th July Count Tisza had withdrawn his objections to the ultimatum provided no part of Serbian territory were annexed by the Monarchy. But this qualification was not agreed and the ultimatum was sanctioned in terms which were expressly acknowledged to involve "the probability of war". The choice was deliberate. Serbian nationalists aimed at no less than the dissolution of the Monarchy, and Berchtold, in a note to the Austrian Ambassador in Rome, maintained that "the responsibility of doing nothing, of letting things drift till the waters close over our heads seems to me even greater, though for the moment the easier course, than to look danger in the face and shoulder the consequences".[2]

Why a man so strong-willed as the Hungarian premier withdrew his opposition to war remains something of a mystery. To any annexation of Slav territory he was consistently and resolutely opposed partly because it would mean a further weaken-

[1] The Serbian Blue Book, No. 31.

[2] Quoted in Gooch, *Before the War*, Vol. II, p. 439.

ing of the position of the Magyars within the Monarchy. He also understood well that Russia could not and would not allow her Serb clients to be crushed. Russian intervention meant a European war, which the fabric of the Monarchy was ill-fitted to survive. In these prudent misgivings Count Tisza was reflecting the opinion of his people. While the French Ambassador in Vienna[1] was reporting the passionate demands of various newspapers for "a war to the knife against Pan-Serbism" while the European balance was still favourable, his consular colleague at Budapest was noting[2] that in the Press there, "all was for peace". Count Tisza spoke of a *démarche*, but for *démarche* the semi-official Press wished to substitute the friendlier word *pourparlers*. Anger, said the French Consul-General, had evaporated, though "the general public believed in war and feared it." This contrast in sentiment between the two capitals is remarkable, and it makes Count Tisza's change of mind the more puzzling. His own story he did not live to tell, for before the Great War had ended this powerful and intractable Calvinist, long the outstanding political figure in Hungary, fell a victim to an assassin on his doorstep in Budapest, leaving no published record behind him explaining why in a fatal hour he changed his mind and perhaps in so doing, the history of Hungary.

It was on 23rd July that the ultimatum was presented at Belgrade. After stating that the murder of the Archduke had been plotted in Belgrade, and that the weapons and explosives used had been supplied by Serb officers and officials, and that the entry of the assassins into Bosnia had been arranged by Serbian frontier officials, the Austrian Government declared that it must put an end to the machinations which constituted a chronic menace to the tranquillity of the Monarchy.[3] This prelude was followed by ten demands to which the Serbian Government was

[1] The French Yellow Book, No. 12. M. Dumaine to M. Viviani, 15th July, 1914.

[2] French Yellow Book, No. 11. M. d'Apchier le Maugin to M. Viviani, 11th July, 1914.

[3] Printed in *Collected Diplomatic Documents*, p. 3.

requested to reply within forty-eight hours. The demands were such that their acceptance was in fact, as it was intended to be, incompatible with Serbia's continued existence as an independent State. Sir Edward Grey exclaimed[1] to the Austrian Ambassador that he had "never before seen one State address to another State a document of so formidable a character". He doubted if acceptance of its provisions was consistent with the maintenance of Serbia's independent sovereignty. The King of Roumania forecast that the ultimatum meant war in Europe within a week. This was also Sazonov's view. When he heard the news, he exclaimed: "C'est la guerre Européenne," and he added angrily to the Austrian Ambassador, "you are setting Europe alight. You have burned your bridges." That indeed was the deliberate intention. Apart from the demands made in the ultimatum, the time limit seemed expressly designed to exclude any possibility of successful negotiation, though in fact it was at least as much prompted by military considerations. To the British Ambassador Sazonov spoke in similar terms, denouncing Austria's provocative and immoral conduct and expressing the belief that she would never have taken such action unless Germany had first been consulted. He hoped that England would not fail to proclaim her solidarity with France and Russia.[2]

Germany only saw the text of the ultimatum twenty-four hours before it was handed in. Professor Brandenburg maintains that in Berlin they "were shocked by the whole tone of the document". That is as may be. Ignorance had its conveniences, and Vienna had assuredly not lacked encouragement from the highest quarter to take decisive action. Moreover, as Professor Brandenburg admits, fully conscious after seeing the ultimatum of the risk of war with Russia and therefore a world war, Berlin decided Austria was to be supported "whatever the risk".[3] The

[1] Sir E. Grey to Sir M. de Bunsen, 24th July 1914, *British Diplomatic Correspondence*, No. 5.

[2] Sir G. Buchanan to Sir E. Grey, 24th July 1914, *British Diplomatic Correspondence*, No. 4.

[3] Op. cit., pp. 486–7.

British Ambassador in Vienna was quite satisfied that his German colleague knew of the tenour, if not the actual context, of the ultimatum before it was despatched.[1]

Berlin was much concerned with English reactions. In the early stages of the crisis these were somewhat nebulous. Preoccupied with the imminent possibility of Civil War in Ireland, the public was at first little interested or concerned with the consequences of the assassinations on that summer afternoon in far-distant Sarajevo. But as the crisis deepened the one thing that seemed clear in London was that England's attitude and the prospects of peace in Europe depended on German policy. Grey, believing too firmly that the road to Vienna lay through Berlin, warned Prince Lichnowsky that if war were to be avoided Germany must, by the exercise of the strongest pressure, restrain Vienna. If Vienna could once be persuaded to moderate her reasonable indignation and her unreasonable anxiety for the complete humiliation of Serbia, Grey felt that a final and peaceful solution might be reached by a European conference.[2] Profoundly impressed by the success of the London Conference of 1912–13, he believed that once again the same procedure might yield the same happy results. Berchtold had other views.

A remarkably conciliatory Serbian reply to the ultimatum was delivered within the meagre time allowed and welcomed with relief by the Kaiser, whose comment on it was that it constituted "a capitulation of the most humiliating character" and that "with it every ground for war disappears". It was "a brilliant result" and "more than one could expect".[3] But he added that Austria must have some visible satisfaction, and he suggested that that could be afforded by allowing Austria to hold Belgrade as a guarantee for the fulfilment of his terms. This seemed to the Kaiser all the more necessary since he considered the Serbs to be

[1] Sir M. de Bunsen to Sir E. Grey, 1st September 1914, *British Diplomatic Correspondence*, No. 161.

[2] Cf. Sir E. Grey to Sir H. Rumbold, 24th July 1914, *British Diplomatic Correspondence*, No. 11.

[3] Cf. Brandenburg, op. cit., p. 394.

"orientals, false and procrastinating". It is clear that as a whole, after the first largely emotional reactions to the assassinations, the Kaiser had growing misgivings about forcing the issue. The vainglorious Monarch, who in the heyday of his power and of his pride had delighted to extol the might of Germany and to intimidate his neighbours, who had spoken in spacious language of Attila and his Huns, of shining armour, of dry powder and well-sharpened swords, shrank back at the last when brought face to face with fearful reality. His half-hearted efforts could achieve nothing at this late hour, for control in Germany had passed into the hands of the militarists and the Continent had reached a state of intolerable tension to which the Kaiser had made as large a personal contribution as any man in Europe. Behind him lay twenty-five years of autocratic rule in which this glittering Monarch swayed the destinies of a continent; before him a quarter of a century of forgotten exile in an obscure village in a foreign land. No retribution could have been more fitting.

The German General Staff contemplated a war on two fronts. The Schlieffen Plan, which von Moltke and Conrad had discussed some three months before, did not contemplate war with Russia alone, but a war both in the West and in the East in which victory would be secured by defeating France before the Russian war machine was fully mobilized. If this plan were to be put into practice successfully the initiative, diplomatically and militarily, must lie with Germany. In the event of a war arising in the East its success required a declaration of war on Russia, which, under the terms of the 1894 Alliance, would bring France into the conflict; and secondly, the concentration of the main weight of the German forces for the quick knock-out blow against France through Belgium. Though the militarists were clear about their plans the statesmen neglected to make corresponding preparations,[1] with the result that in the last days of crisis German policy was uncertain and fumbling. Both so little understood the psychology of the British people that they felt it possible to the last that Britain would stand aside and be content

[1] *Vide* Brandenburg, op. cit., pp. 503–7.

to remain a neutral while the Schlieffen Plan, with the invasion of Belgium as an essential feature of it, was put into effect.

At the last some substance was perhaps given to these German illusions by the fact that Sir Edward Grey resolutely refused to commit himself to any definite course of action despite the persistent appeals of the French and Russian Governments. On 30th July M. Poincaré is reported by the British Ambassador in Paris as being convinced that peace lay in the hands of Great Britain, and that if her Government announced that she would come to the aid of France there would be no war. Grey, however, reiterated that no pledge could be given, and he added that "we did not feel that any treaties or obligations were involved". On this Sir Eyre Crowe, from within the Foreign Office, commented with justice: "The argument that there is no written bond binding us to France is correct. There is no contractual obligation. But the Entente has been made, strengthened, put to the test and celebrated in a manner justifying a belief that a moral bond was being forged. The whole policy of the Entente can have no meaning if it does not signify that in a just quarrel England will stand by her friends."[1]

It seems clear from the records of the deliberations in Vienna that the President of the French Republic was in fact mistaken. The Austrian Government was determined on war, and it is extremely unlikely that any declaration of Britain's solidarity with the Dual Alliance would have deflected her from her chosen course. Only perhaps the declared intention of the whole of the English-speaking world to intervene in the event of aggression by the Central Powers could have checked the fulfilment of this fatal policy. Such a pronouncement was, however, wholly outside the realm of practical politics.

All the evidence confirms that integral acceptance of the ultimatum by Serbia was neither expected nor desired in Vienna. Soldiers and statesmen and people alike believed that the hour of decision had come. There was a moment of keen disappointment in the Austrian capital when the conciliatory nature of the reply

[1] Gooch and Temperley, Vol. XI, pp. 228–9.

to the ultimatum was known. It seemed as though another "favourable moment" might pass. But the mistake was quickly corrected, and to quote from the British Ambassador's record, "as soon as it was known later in the evening [of 24th July] that the Serbian reply had been rejected and that Baron Giesl [the Austrian Minister] had broken off relations at Belgrade, Vienna burst into a frenzy of delight; vast crowds were parading the streets and singing patriotic songs till the small hours of the morning." By all the war was conceived as a war of defence, as the only means by which the disintegration of the Empire might be averted. That the Dual Monarchy deliberately decided on a settlement by the sword is not to be denied, but it has to be added that war against Serbia was believed to be both just and inevitable.

War

The Austrian attack on Serbia was followed inevitably by Russian mobilization. Irresolute to the last, the Tsar ordered both partial and full mobilization, and with characteristic weakness he signed both orders, stating that he would say later which was to be put into effect. In this way he left the final decision in the hands of his military advisers. There is little doubt that the Tsar was anxious to preserve peace. But this so-called autocrat was a ruler whose character and certain of whose weaknesses resembled so closely those of Louis XVI and of Charles I that he seemed to Trotsky[1] to be a man of doom, "between whose consciousness and whose epoch there stood some transparent but absolutely impenetrable medium"[2]; a man predestined to preside over the downfall of a dynasty. He seems indeed to have been little conscious of what in fact must follow from the decisions which he took. In these last days of peace his vagueness became more pronounced and he is said to have moved like a man half in a dream. Sazonov on the other hand, fully aware of the risks to Russia of a European conflict, was satisfied that the

[1] *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. London 1939, p. 119.
[2] Ibid., p. 73.

Empire of the Romanoffs could not give way a second time without suffering such a loss of prestige that its survival as a Great Power would be in doubt. And throughout the crisis his actions are consistent with that belief. The militarists in Russia had wider ambitions. Though the Russian forces were not ready, they had hopes that in the changes and chances of a European conflagration the old Russian dream of the capture of Constantinople and of an outlet to the Mediterranean might at last become a reality. But the hour was not of their choosing. So Russia mobilized, and once she had mobilized Germany delayed no longer. Perhaps she could not afford to. All her plans were dependent upon a ruthless seizure of the initiative. Russia is open to criticism[1] for mobilizing too soon, but Sazonov maintained that Russia was forced to mobilize as an indispensable precautionary measure at a time when Austria, "while confining herself to discussions of a dilatory nature was bombarding Belgrade and was undertaking general mobilization."[2] What is certain is that had Russia not mobilized, and had Germany none the less declared war, Russia would have been at an overwhelming disadvantage. She would have been confronted with the prospect of sudden and catastrophic disaster.

Bismarck had said long ago: "I shall not live to see the Great War. But you will see it and it will start in the East." On the afternoon of 1st August the hour had come and Germany declared war on Russia. Under the terms of the 1894 Alliance France had assumed definite obligations in the event of a German attack on her ally. But she was reluctant to take the initiative. Such a step might suggest she was in part an aggressor and might alienate English opinion. For internal reasons too, M. Poincaré was anxious that France should go to war, not because of the obligations of a secret treaty, but to defend France against a German attack. "If Germany declares war against us", he said, "the

[1] Brandenburg, op. cit, p. 497, places Russian mobilization in quite false perspective in claiming that it was the decisive step that made war inevitable. This is clearly nonsense.

[2] Russian Orange Book, No. 78.

people of France will rise with greater ardour to defend its soil." This passive reaction caused some confusion in Berlin. When von Schoen inquired on 31st July whether France intended to remain neutral in the event of war against Russia he received from M. Viviani, not the expected assertion that France would fulfil her Treaty obligations, which would have allowed Germany to attack without assuming the rôle of a blatant aggressor, but the noncommittal observation that "France will do what her interests demand". By this rejoinder the Wilhelmstrasse were nonplussed.[1] But action was imperative even though it carried with it all the odium of open aggression. The Schlieffen Plan could not wait upon diplomatic niceties. On 3rd August Germany declared war on France. On 4th August the invasion of Belgium had begun.

The attitude of Britain remained uncertain almost to the last. When the German declaration of war on Russia was known on 1st August the Cabinet met to consider Britain's reaction. Afterwards Sir Edward Grey informed M. Cambon that "France must take her own decision without reckoning on an assistance which we are not now in a position to promise". M. Cambon replied that he must refuse to transmit such an answer to his Government. When Nicolson learned of this continued evasion of responsibilities—how else is it to be described?—he exclaimed to Grey: "You will render us a byword among nations."[2] But Grey had assessed the political, though not the international, situation more nicely than either Under-Secretary or Ambassador. It was not till the afternoon of 3rd August that he made his anxiously awaited speech in the House of Commons. In the morning he had learned of the ultimatum to Belgium and its categorical rejection. This country, said Grey, was bound by no commitment which restricted their freedom to decide their own action in this crisis, though all that he revealed to the House of the Anglo-French military and naval conversations clearly implied an obligation of honour to assist France

[1] Cf. Brandenburg, op. cit., p. 505.

[2] *Vide* H. Nicolson, op. cit., p. 419.

against unprovoked aggression. "For many years", he went on, "we have had a friendship with France. But how far that friendship entails obligations let every man look into his own heart and into his own feelings. . . . The French Fleet is now in the Mediterranean and the Northern and Western coasts of France are absolutely undefended because of the feelings of confidence and friendship between the two countries. My own feeling is that if a foreign fleet equipped for a war which France had not sought came down the Channel and bombarded the undefended coast of France, we could not stand aside." British naval protection, he maintained, did not amount to a declaration of war. But it was clear that at some stage it would almost certainly involve war. Besides, to obligations of honour were to be added very cogent considerations of expediency. It was essential for England to maintain a balance of power in Europe, and though Grey carefully avoided the use of the phrase that was the theme of his speech. The German ultimatum to Belgium, carrying with it irrefutable evidence of a harsh, unprincipled use of power in the pursuit of power, simplified and yet in a sense disguised the issue. What was in debate till then was England's adherence to her traditional policy of preventing the domination of Europe by a single power. In the light of the ultimatum to Belgium Sir Edward Grey felt justified in recommending that there was no alternative but active participation on the side of France and Russia. "If France is beaten, if Belgium fell under the same dominating influence . . . consider what would be at stake from the point of view of British interests. If in a crisis like this we run away from those obligations of honour and interest as regards the Belgian treaty, I doubt whether, whatever material forces we might have at the end, it would be of very much value in face of the respect that we should have lost. . . . I do not believe, for a moment, that at the end of this war, even if we stood aside and remained aside, we should be in a position, a material position, to use our force decisively to undo what had happened in the course of the war, to prevent the whole of the West of Europe opposite us—if that had been the result of the war—from

falling under the domination of a single power." It was because of the invasion of Belgium that war with Germany was sanctioned by a united country, but it is well to remember that the cause for which splendid isolation had been abandoned, for which an Entente had been made first with France and then with Russia was that of preserving the European balance of power, and that it was for its maintenance, as Grey implicitly admitted in his memorable speech of 3rd August, that England was fighting at the last. Yet because of the violation of Belgian neutrality the wisdom of British policy in the preceding decade was not critically examined.

When on 4th August the British Ambassador paid Bethmann-Hollweg a farewell visit, he found the Chancellor "very agitated". The Chancellor protested that the step taken by Britain because of the German infringement of the neutrality of Belgium was "terrible to a degree". "Just for a word, neutrality, just for a scrap of paper," cried the German Chancellor, "Great Britain is going to make war on a kindred nation which desired nothing better than to be friends with her." What Britain had done was "unthinkable". "It was like striking a man from behind while he is fighting for his life against two assailants." For the invasion of neutral Belgium the Chancellor pleaded necessity; for strategical reasons "it was a matter of life and death".[1] In his speech[2] to the Reichstag on the same day, 4th August, the Chancellor reverted to his theme. It would have been disastrous to have awaited the French attack, so Germany invaded Belgium: "Gentlemen, we are now in a state of necessity, and necessity knows no law." That the invasion of Belgium was a violation of international law Bethmann-Hollweg admitted. But "the wrong" would be remedied when "our military aims have been attained". In the meantime he "who is menaced as we are . . . can consider only how he is to hack his way through". Before the exposure of Germany's psychological failure to understand the reactions of other peoples displayed in these utterances even the

[1] Sir E. Goschen to Sir E. Grey, *British Diplomatic Correspondence*, No. 160.
[2] Reprinted as appendix to German White Book.

immorality of German policy pales. How could the Chancellor be so surprised at the English reaction when it conformed almost precisely to what German ambassadors in London had indicated to the German Foreign Office for years past? As King George V said to the American Ambassador: "My God, Mr. Page, what else could we do?" When to traditional considerations of the balance of power was added a solemn treaty to defend Belgium's neutrality, what else indeed?

By 4th August the long foretold and long expected conflagration had engulfed Europe, both East and West. All had acted in the way that their policy in earlier crises led observers to anticipate. The Central Powers and Triple Entente were at war, while Italy and Roumania for the time being remained neutral. In Vienna the war to extirpate the "nest of assassins" was thought to be so 'evidently just that it seemed to her people inconceivable that any country should place itself in her path'.[1] This illusion is understandable, but few of the sounds that echo down the long corridors of history strike a more saddening note than those wild cheers with which the capital of the Habsburgs welcomed the war which brought the Dual Monarchy to final disaster and the flower of Europe's manhood to an early grave. In St. Petersburg the solidarity of the Entente Powers when the fatal hour came was greeted with satisfaction and with relief. M. Paléologue, the French Ambassador, has recorded his thoughts as amid the high ceremonial of the Orthodox Church he prayed for the success of Allied arms. He felt reassured both because Britain was at war on the side of the Dual Alliance, and because Russia, so recently defeated in the Far East, seemed to have regained her confidence and her strength. But in truth the armies of the last Tsar of All the Russias, ill-armed, ill-led, ill-equipped, were marching to terrible defeats and to campaigns in which they were to suffer losses unsurpassed in modern times, and in which, be it also said, they were to add an undying page to the long history of human

[1] These were the words used by Sir M. de Bunsen, the British Ambassador, *British Diplomatic Correspondence*, No. 161.

endurance.[1] In London on the evening of 4th August Sir Edward Grey, as he gazed out sadly from the windows of the Foreign Office, said to a friend standing by, in words too expressive of the sentiments of the civilized world ever to be forgotten: "The lamps are going out all over Europe; we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."[2]

[1] Cf. Trotsky, op. cit., p. 42. He believes that the Russian army lost two and a half million killed—more than any army had lost in a national war till 1939–45.

[2] Op. cit., Vol. II, p. 223.

Chapter XII

EPILOGUE

FORTY-FOUR years elapsed between the Franco-Prussian War and the World War. This is a comparatively short period in European history and its brevity is proof that the emergence of the German Empire as the result of three short successful wars provided no final settlement of the problems of Central Europe. Moreover, while the unification of Germany gave a great impetus to nationalist movements throughout the Continent the means by which it was brought about afforded a dangerous, yet fatally easy, pattern for others to follow. Since Germany had been united by force and through union had achieved a predominant position in Europe, other nationalities aspired to attain a greater pre-eminence than they enjoyed, and to reunite their people in the one state by similar means. Nowhere was the influence of the Bismarckian solution of the German problem more profoundly felt than in South-Eastern Europe. All this was not hidden from Bismarck's eyes, and he seems to have understood its dangers, for he clearly foresaw that the world war would come from the East.

Bismarck had united Germany by blood and iron, by force and fraud, by a disregard of all moral considerations. If Hegel had placed the state above the law, if Neitzsche proclaimed that might is right, if von Treitschke wrote of "the moral sublimity of war" it was Bismarck who put their precepts into practice. Bismarck might warn the Germans of his own day that they had to live in Europe, and might remind them that in order to do this they must be on tolerable relations with their great neighbours. But the German people, and particularly the German rulers, accepted the principle as fundamental and

the warning as the offspring of transient circumstances that passed away as Germany's strength increased. The logic that they had learnt from the great Chancellor was that a State's needs constitute its rights, and if the realization of those rights can be achieved only by force a world Empire could be made by precisely the same means as had brought the German Empire into being. As Sir Charles Grant Robertson has so truly observed:[1] Germany "was grateful for Bismarck's achievements; Bismarck summed up for it all that was mighty in Germanism; the ends that Bismarck defined must pass with Bismarck himself; but Bismarckian methods and the Bismarckian gospel were imperishable and could not be superseded. . . . Bismarckianism, not Bismarck, was the model. In the magician's magic, more than in the magician himself, lay the essential secret of success." So the lesson was learned, and with the learning of it Germany was taught to disregard those moral limitations on power which from the earliest times have been held to be the essential condition of wise and honourable statecraft. But, as Hazlitt had so rightly discerned, the want of principle is power. Truth and honesty set a limit to national as to personal ambitions, and though the nemesis which in the long run overtakes all who disregard this limit is one of the lessons which history never tires of teaching, in the short run the advantage gained through its neglect by those who lust for power and for domination is sometimes overwhelming.

The first and fatal liability which the new German Empire inherited was the irreconcilable animosity of the most cultured nation in Europe. The forcible seizure of Alsace-Lorraine estranged the two Great Powers of Western Europe, and in so doing imposed a restriction upon German diplomacy which in the end undermined her predominant position in Europe by depriving her in one vital region of freedom of diplomatic manœuvre. The other liability which Germany forged of her own free will was the Austrian Alliance. This liability was not so heavy, and indeed some may question whether it was a liability

[1] Op. cit., p. 464.

at all. But in fact the Bismarckian solution of the German question placed the new German Empire in a very particular relationship to the venerable Empire of the Habsburgs, and in this association her policy became progressively more and more involved.

The Germans in Austria had a bond of racial interest with the German Empire from which they were excluded, and the Empire could not on any argument of policy or sentiment, or indeed of safety, remain indifferent to their destiny. The liability was created by the fact that the Dual Monarchy was not a German State but an Empire embracing many nationalities and governed by two ruling races. It was not possible for Germany to maintain her interest in the Austrian part of the Empire whilst refraining from any commitment in respect of its ambitions in the South-East. With every year that passed nationalism in the Balkans became more and more inflamed, and with the passage of time it became self-evident that the surging, relentless tide of Balkan nationalism must in the long run sweep away the bulwarks of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, weakened as they were from within as well as from without. The danger of internal disintegration was fully understood by Bismarck, who time and again warned the German people against becoming involved in the purely Balkan interests of the Dual Monarchy. Late in life, shortly after his dismissal, he wrote in the *Hamburger Nachrichten*: "Austria cannot hope to obtain Germany's support for promoting her ambitious plans in the Balkan peninsula." But Bismarck's critics might well have pointed out that Bismarck himself did not follow this prudent advice when he assented to, even encouraged, the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austrian troops after the Treaty of Berlin. Holstein was not slow to detect this illogicality and criticized Bismarck, not without justice, saying that when he had agreed to compensate Austria-Hungary with the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina he laid a mortgage on Germany which "she could only repudiate by making Austria an open foe and only redeem by supporting Austrian Balkanism to the last reserves of the German Army".[1] That is in fact what

[1] Cf. Grant-Robertson, op. cit., p. 482.

happened. It was a short step from the occupation of 1879 to the crisis of 1908–9 and to the murder at Sarajevo in 1914.

The position of the Habsburg Monarchy in the last years of its life was indeed an unhappy one. Her European situation had been fatally compromised. Her counsels were divided between the interests of the dynasty and the widely scattered and often conflicting interests of the many peoples who inhabited the Empire. This weakness was accentuated by the lack of vision of the ruling classes and by the frivolity and weakness of the Monarchy's administration. But even allowing for the decline in the fortunes of dynasty and Empire it was not reasonable to expect that when faced with what was believed to be a fundamental challenge to existence she would choose the path of abdication. Not only the vices, but also the virtues built up through centuries of tradition, predisposed her rulers to think that one last desperate fling was to be preferred to ignoble capitulation. The dynasty founded so many centuries ago by Count Rudolph of Habsburg; the dynasty to which in the golden days of the Emperor Charles V more than half of Christendom had owed allegiance and whose dominions had stretched from the orange groves of Aragon to the forests of Brandenburg, from the lowlands of Holland to the Adriatic coastline, could not reconcile itself even at the ebb-tide of its fortunes to ignoble dissolution before the challenge of upstart Balkan States. But with the loss of her interests in Germany and of her territories in Italy, Austria could look only to the South-East, and in the South-East the *raison d'être* that had once raised the Habsburg Monarchy to the pinnacle of its power no longer existed. The challenge of the Turk from which Vienna had once saved Europe was a thing of the past, and as the power of the ancient enemy dissolved so the Habsburg Monarchy itself was weakened. It is sobering to reflect that Aerenthal and Count Berchtold, men widely differing in temperament and ability, both felt that only one course was possible; to accept the challenge of the Slav nationalities and perhaps even to do more, by preventive war to forestall it. It was this fundamental, pessimistic recognition of the fact that

there was now no secure foundation for the supra-national state so much extolled by Lord Acton but in truth an anachronism in an age of triumphant nationalism that led Aerenthal into reckless diplomatic adventure, and the irresolute Berchtold to decide with fatal firmness that only war could hold out a hope of saving the dynasty or Empire. It is easy for historians to indict these statesmen; to denounce their aggression, without remembering how narrow was their field of choice. The Dual Monarchy was faced by a challenge which ultimately could not be escaped. No system of international government yet devised has discovered a way of escape, a procedure by which the transfer of sovereignty from one declining or disintegrating state to several successor nations may be peacefully effected. It may be that the dream that war would delay or dispel the challenge was an illusion, but Austrian statesmen did not labour under the great illusion that victory would be its own reward. They hoped nothing of victory save that it would enable the Empire to survive. "Who would not weep for it, were there not a whole world to be wept for?" as Carlyle wrote of the French Monarchy.

The problem presented by the conflict between the Dual Monarchy and the Balkan nationalities is one of those problems which remind one of John Morley's saying that in history there is such a thing as an insoluble problem. For it is hard to escape the conclusion that at some time a localized war in South-East Europe was inevitable. "The wind of doom," of which the Greek tragedians wrote, was destined to sweep away an old order powerless to avert a fate whose finality was learned little by little with a cumulative sense of impending disaster, as once the meaning of the dread prophecies of Apollo had been unfolded slowly to the doomed King of Thebes.

For Austria the war which was welcomed by cheering crowds in Vienna was believed to be a war for survival. For Russia the war was a war for prestige. Neither dynasty nor State, recently recovered from defeat in the Far East and threatened by revolution at home, felt they could afford to stand aside while their

Slav clients were overwhelmed. It can well be argued that a great Empire should have been great enough to disregard considerations of prestige, but it must always be remembered that Russia, which had suffered defeat followed by diplomatic humiliation, had become doubly sensitive to any challenge to her pride. It was this sensitiveness, this consciousness of weakness, that led to the premature mobilization of Russian forces, and thereby contributed to the breakdown of whatever last forlorn hopes of reaching a peaceful settlement remained. And behind the national arguments of statesmen, there did exist in Russia a fundamental primordial force which impelled her to think of a final struggle between Slav and Teuton as a trial of strength between two mighty races of men which must some day come about.

The war was not in the interests of an Imperial House whose tyrannical, inefficient government could hope to survive neither victory in a bitter, prolonged conflict, nor defeat. To the Pan-Slav cause the dynasty had given its qualified allegiance, but the triumph of Pan-Slavism was not a dynastic interest. That Bismarck had long since recognized. "Pan-Slavism", he wrote in 1880, "with its revolutionary aims is a danger to both the Germanic Powers, to Austria even more than to us, and in the greatest measure of all, to the Empire and Dynasty of Russia. The Slav world in revolution, whether or not it is led by the Russian Emperor, will always be allied with republican elements. . . ."[1] But even had the dangers been perceived as clearly in St. Petersburg—of which there is no evidence—what choice was left to the last Tsar of All the Russias? His position was too weak, whatever his misgivings, to withstand the dominant emotion of the hour.

The war could have remained a localized Balkan war had Germany, recognizing the realities behind events in South-Eastern Europe firmly resolved that she would do all in her power to avert a European conflict. But the ways of the rulers of Germany, to recall the second of the quotations on the title-

[1] *Die Grosse Politik*, IV, p. 16; Dugdale, Vol. I, p. 154.

page, were not "the ways of peace". Deliberation, not any overshadowing doom, determined her policy. The German conception of the coming war was not of a localized Balkan but of a European war and her military plans rigid and unadaptable had been laid on that assumption. Partly owing to her central geographical position and partly owing to a proper awareness of her strength Germany viewed the European scene as a whole. She had absorbed Bismarck's lesson that she was a great Continental power and that every change within the Continent affected her position vitally. Her confidence in her strength was not ill-judged. More than four years of war, in which at the end almost the whole world was arrayed against her, alone brought her to defeat, and within twenty years of defeat she was prepared for a second and greater trial of strength. This evidence of her power shows how easily in 1914 she could have afforded to take an independent line, not unduly influenced by pressure from Vienna. Indeed it was her very strength that placed upon Germany an overwhelming responsibility. Had she been prepared not merely in the last weeks before the outbreak of war, but throughout the whole period since the Treaty of Berlin, to lessen diplomatic tension in the West, war could have been localized. But far from easing the strain, she accentuated it by brutal diplomacy, by heightening tension in every major crisis and by wielding with reckless disregard of consequences the threat of war, with the result that in the end it was the tension in the West which brought forward the day of the Eastern war. Her responsibility is all the greater in that the political situation in Western Europe was not dynamic. There lay there the seeds of no "inevitable" conflict. Even after the four years of war no fundamental change took place in the map of Western Europe. But in the East it was very different. Three historic empires had disappeared, and where there had been seven states in 1914, thirteen emerged as a result of the Peace Settlement five years later.

In the West it was to become the fashion, once victory had been won, to say that victory had meant nothing, but to one

hundred million people in Eastern Europe the fruits of victory were real even if short-lived—they were the liberation and independence of the new nation states. And even in the West, despite the disillusion of the nineteen-twenties, they were not intangible but they were different in kind. From the Western point of view the war has been fought negatively to prevent German domination in Europe, positively to preserve a European balance of power, and, to recall Lord John Russell's definition, the balance of power meant the independence of the smaller states of Europe. Both ends for a short time were achieved. These contrasted consequences of the war in West and East suggest the fundamental cause of conflict lay in the East and that its extension to the West was the outcome of Germany's desire for domination.

The English view, consistently advocated in the last crisis, was that given time, given the opportunity for a conference at which differences could have been discussed, war might have been averted. Stated in such unqualified language, the validity of this conclusion seems extremely doubtful. It is true that a European war might have been averted, but whether a conference could in fact have solved the problems of the Balkans is uncertain and unlikely. No conference could have agreed to a transfer of territory, which would in effect have reconciled actual sovereignty in South-East Europe with political reality. No machinery of international government devised after two world wars has the authority or the right to contemplate anything so far-reaching as this. And even the first assumption that a European war could have been avoided was conditional on an innate reluctance on the part of all the Great Powers to embark on war. It did not take into account the possibility that one Great Power, the greatest military power in Europe, considered that in 1914 a favourable moment for war had come and was determined to wage it. The reluctance to believe in the evil motives of others, on which Bülow had commented early in the century, guided Grey in the last days of peace. If it had been a question of giving time so that passions might cool his

efforts might have been crowned with success. But when one of the Great Powers at least had formed a cool and deliberate intention to wage war at a moment selected by itself, such an approach was foredoomed to failure. But the lesson was not learnt, and the British conception of how the League of Nations should work and the visits of Mr. Chamberlain on the eve of a Second World War showed once more that British statesmen remained reluctant as ever to credit others with evil intentions.

It was a commonplace in 1919 to attribute to Germany sole responsibility for causing the war. When fuller documentary evidence became available this simple view could no longer be sustained. Germany's responsibility was seen to be not so much in causing the war as in enormously extending the area of conflict. But once the verdict of the victors was questioned the pendulum swung wildly in the other direction. All the Great Powers were held to be equally responsible because all had indulged in the nefarious game of power politics. At the most responsibility was nicely graded. None were to be condemned and none to be acquitted. Final responsibility lay not with the national states but with the absence of international law and of the machinery for the peaceful settlement of disputes. What was fundamentally responsible was power politics in a world where international anarchy prevailed. All that could be easily remedied. In these inter-war verdicts there was much justice and more illusions which a Second World War has finally dispelled. The greatest of the illusions was the belief that international order could be maintained provided institutions existed for its maintenance. It was not understood that the institutions were valueless unless there was a will to work them. When the will did not exist then peace could no more be preserved by a League of Nations or a United Nations Organization than by the conventions of the old diplomacy. Between the failure to will peace and indulgence in designs for war at a favourable moment the step is a short one. In this respect nothing was more short-sighted than the wholesale condemnation of the concept of the Balance of Power. It is true that a Balance of Power is not

sufficient to maintain peace; it is equally true that where no balance exists peace will not normally be long maintained. For few indeed are the nations to whom unchallenged predominance is not a temptation to aggression, veiled or open, on one pretext or another.

One fundamental problem, clearly revealed in the years before the First World War, has been consistently shirked both by the statesmen of that time and by the artificers of later systems of international organization. It is a law of history that power shifts from one State to another; that empires rise and fall and that, as Bacon observed, "upon the shivering and breaking of a great State and Empire you may be sure to have wars. . . ." In South-Eastern Europe it was the dissolution of the Turkish Empire, the impending disintegration of the Dual Monarchy, which made war inevitable under the old order. How is that result to be averted? Fundamentally it is not a question of disputes between states but of a transfer of sovereignty in order to reconcile institutional with political realities. In 1914 the peaceful abdication of authority was not to be contemplated. Will it be in the future? If not, is it to be enforced?

The immediate antecedents of the First World War were European. Ever since Bismarck's day, emphasis on Continental politics had been the guiding consideration of German statesmen. But the factor which they had not taken into serious account was the one which in the end brought German plans to ruin. It was the New World, which came to redress the balance of power in the Old. The overseas Dominions, united in their allegiance to the British Crown, all without exception came in on the side of the Allied powers on the declaration of war, and in its third year the United States of America abandoned her policy of isolation. Their peoples were not interested in the Balkan conflict between the national states and the non-national empire, but they were concerned with what they believed to be a deliberate intention by Germany to wage war at a moment so favourable that it might ensure German hegemony not only in Europe, but in the world. It was the invasion of Belgium

that impressed those parts of the world which hitherto had remained detached spectators of the grim diplomatic tension in Europe that the conflict was one in which a more than European issue was at stake. Far removed from the scene of conflict, the English-speaking peoples overseas believed that the triumph of Imperial Germany would have involved a fatal and irretrievable step on a road that led to human bondage. Nothing that has happened in the years since they fought and died in Europe suggests that in this they were mistaken.

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INDEX