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SUPPLEMENT TO "THE CONTINENTAL TIMES"

COMPLETE TEXT

OF

THE SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE REICHSTAG

BY THE

Imperial German Chancellor, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg,
on August 19th 1915.

INTRODUCTION

BY R. L. ORCHELLE.

In these exalted days of tremendous deeds, the fitting utterance is not lacking. It comes to us not from the Gothic halls on the Thames, nor from the banks of the Seine, nor from that doomed and terror-stricken city in the mists of the Neva. No, in these capitals, war and shaken with a great fear, the tongues of the statesmen are smitten with the same evil as the tongues of the poets. The singers find no true inspiration in a cause for which the leaders of the people—such leaders!—find no true justification.

The German Chancellor has spoken epoch-making words, at what future historians may describe as the most momentous period in the history of the world. Clearly, resolutely, with that unshakeable and serene assurance which truth alone can give a man or a nation, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg states the case for Germany—justifies it—gives it the grandeur of a mighty crusade, the sanctification of a sacrificial cause, the glory of a vast and universal ideal.

These ringing words, in which there is German oak as well as German iron, have already reverberated through the world. They have gone clashing up against the tents of Germany's enemies and left an abiding and haunting echo in the hearts and heads of those responsible for the descent upon the world of this huge historic woe. Slowly but surely, and despite all distortion and dissembling, they must also make their way into the great, twilight mind of the helpless, deluded masses, "until these peoples demand peace from those who are guilty."

With that fearless, almost defiant frankness so characteristic of the Germans, the Chancellor has spoken of the criticisms levelled against him for maintaining a policy that had little to conceal. The German people, overwhelmed at first by the revelations of the wide-spread plot against them, were inclined to attribute to certain shortcomings in their diplomacy. "Our diplomats should have foreseen this giant conspiracy", was their cry, "and frustrated it." Let it be granted that in the matter of intrigue, of craft, of cunning dissimulation and subterranean corruption, the German character has much to learn from the English, French or Russian. These evil attributes are the stock-in-trade of traditional diplomacy. I will venture to say out-worn, antiquated, unsuccessful diplomacy. It is almost certain, that in the future traditional diplomacy is damned—unless the blind peoples by their credulity and weakness, deserve the yoke their unscrupulous masters will incessantly seek to forge upon them. No, the war will not end in diplomacy—it will end diplomacy—as some one has said. And if Germany achieve her great task of freeing the fettered sea from the coils of the grey old Kraken, her glory will be the greater if she is also able to establish the open standards of von Bethmann-Hollweg in place of the darkling and secret "understandings" of Sir Edward Grey. The diplomacy of the British statesman is that of the weak but cunning intriguer—it is feminine, Latin, calculating—that of the German is the calm, assured attitude of the strong man abiding the more surely in his right because he knows he cherishes no wrong against others. That there is danger in such a course has been made sufficiently clear to the Germans, and it augurs well for the future of their nation that they have begun to unlearn their sentimentality.

If the same science, analytical acuteness and systematic organization which characterize so much of German life be henceforth applied in a positive, creative sense to the field of foreign relationships, brilliant results may be expected.

The world is now witnessing the terrible denouement of the magnificent and masterly diplomacy of the Entente. It seemed so simple, so sure, and yet after all it was so tragically futile, so naive, so criminally short-sighted!

The might of Russia rolls back into its native haunts, a vast exodus of semi-civilized peoples, and Europe is saved from the curse of Muscovite mediaevalism. The seas of the future, by Germany's strong sword and high ideal, may know no rule but their own. France may yet find the pearl of a national wisdom at the bottom of the terrible chalice she must drain.

"The day will come," said the German Chancellor, "when history shall deliver its judgment." Of that there can be no doubt, and little doubt as to what that verdict will be. Great vistas open before the Germany of to-morrow. But the greatest honor which history will confer upon her will be this: that she fought not only for herself but for humanity—and that even her enemies drew a new strength from her spirit.

Gentlemen:

Great events have happened since last we met in session. Every attempt made by the French to pierce our western lines, though carried out in defiance of death and at the utmost sacrifice of human life, has been shattered by the tenacious endurance of our valiant troops. Italy, our new enemy, who fancied she might make an easy conquest of those alien possessions which she coveted, has been repulsed in the most brilliant manner, despite her numerical superiority and despite the ruthless sacrifices of human lives which she did not scruple to make—and make doubly in vain. Unshaken and unshakeable stands the Turkish army at the Dardanelles. We send greetings to our faithful allies. To-day, assembled under this roof, our thoughts turn likewise to the exalted ruler of the Danubian Monarchy, who yesterday entered upon the eighty-sixth year of his life.

Everywhere—wherever we have seized the offensive, we have beaten the enemy and hurled him back. In conjunction with our allies we have freed almost all Galicia and Poland, we have freed Livonia and Courland from the Russian yoke. Ivan-gorod, Warsaw and Kovno have fallen. Far distant in the land of our enemies our lines have built up an impenetrable wall. We

possess powerful armies which are now free to strike fresh blows. Proudly and fearlessly and with the firmest faith in our magnificent troops we may regard the future.

In the very midst of the terrors of war we think gratefully of that humanitarianism, rich in deeds, which has been shown us by neighboring neutral states, not only during the return of civilians from enemy lands, but also during the exchange of invalid prisoners of war. During the second exchange of prisoners of war with France, all classes of the Swiss population from Geneva to the German frontier, vied with one another in the ancient spirit of hospitality in their endeavors to make our brave warriors forget, as far as possible, the sorrows that lay behind them. For the second time the Netherlands have bestowed their generous care and help upon the seriously-wounded that have returned from England. The exchange of prisoners with Russia which is now taking place for the first time and which occurs along great stretches of Swedish territory, proves how the government and the people of that land are unsurpassed in their philanthropy and kindness. To these three nations I would express the heartfelt gratitude of the German people. I would at the same time utter a word of special gratitude to His Holiness the Pope. He has

toiled indefatigably in the matter of the exchange of prisoners and upon many other humane tasks. He has conferred enduring honor upon himself in the execution of these measures and he has but recently contributed to alleviate the sufferings of the people of East Prussia by means of a most generous donation.

Gentlemen, our opponents take upon themselves a monstrous and bloodstained burden of guilt in their attempts to deceive their people as to the true situation. When they cannot deny their defeats, our victories serve as excuses for heaping new calumnies upon us. We were victorious during the first year, they declare, because we had long and treacherously prepared for the war, whilst they had lived on in an innocent love of peace, totally unprepared. Well, gentlemen, they spoke differently before the war. You may recall the warlike articles circulated in the press by the Russian Minister of War during the spring of 1914, articles in which he gave praise to the Russian army's complete preparation for war. You may recall the haughty and in many ways provocative language used by France during recent years? You are aware that whenever France gratified the Russian need for money, she stipulated that the greater part of the loan was to be used for purposes of war armaments?

And England, gentlemen? On the 3rd of August of last year, Sir Edward Grey spoke in Parliament as follows:

"For us with a powerful fleet, which we believe able to protect our commerce, to protect our shores, and to protect our interests, if we are engaged in war, we shall suffer but little more than we shall suffer even if we stand aside."

He who speaks thus in a spirit of almost gruesome business matter-of-factness on the very eve of his own declaration of war, he who directs not only his own policy, but the policy of his friends according to this, must surely do so merely because he is aware that he and his allies are ready.

To be sure, gentlemen, it is not difficult to understand that our opponents should again and again endeavor to absolve themselves from the guilt of this war. I have presented the inner history of these things before the Reichstag both at the beginning of the war and again last December. All that has since transpired has been only a confirmation of all this. The myth that England entered the war merely on behalf of Belgium has, in the meantime been abandoned even in England, for that contention could no longer be maintained. Can it be possible that the smaller nations still believe that England and her allies are waging this war for the defense of these smaller peoples, for the defense of freedom and civilization? England has done her utmost to fetter the trade of neutrals upon the seas. Goods from Germany or to Germany may no longer be transported, even upon neutral ships. England will not permit it. Neutral skippers upon the high seas are forced to take English crews aboard their vessels and to obey their commands. England arbitrarily occupies Greek islands because this most conveniently serves her military purposes. In conjunction with her allies she is now endeavoring to force neutral Greece to cede portions of her territory in favor of her allies, so as to draw Bulgaria to their side. And in Poland, gentlemen?

In Poland, Russia, that fellow combatant of the allies in their battle for the freedom of the nations, is devastating the entire land during the retreat of her armies. The villages and the wheat-fields are burnt down, the populations of entire cities and entire villages, Jews and Christians, are transported to uninhabited regions, or they perish in the morasses of Russian roads or in sealed and windowless luggage vans. Such is the freedom and the civilization for which our opponents battle against German "barbarism"! Surely England in protesting that she is the defender of the smaller states must be calculating upon an exceedingly poor memory on the part of the world. One need go back little more than a decade in order to find sufficient examples to explain the true significance of this role of protector.

In the Spring of 1902 the Boer Republics were incorporated into the British Empire. Then England's eyes turned toward Egypt. Egypt, to be sure, had been in the actual power of England for many years, but a formal incorporation had been opposed by the solemn promise of the British government to evacuate the land. This same England who so haughtily answered our proposal to preserve the integrity of Belgium in the event of England's neutrality, by declaring that she could not bargain concerning her obligations to protect Belgian neutrality, this self-same England did not scruple to bargain away to France her solemn obligations toward all Europe when, in 1904, she signed the well-known treaty by which England was assured of the possession of Egypt and France of Morocco. In 1907 it was Asia's turn. In accordance with the agreement with Russia, Persia was delivered over to an exclusive English sphere of interests in the south and to the freedom-loving rule of the Cossacks in the north.

This agreement shows how England was already stretching out her hand towards Tibet.

A country that pursues a policy such as this has no right to charge with lust of war, barbarism and greed of conquest a country which has guarded the peace of Europe for forty-four years, during a period in which nearly all the other states of Europe waged wars and conquered lands, whilst it devoted itself entirely to its peaceful developments. That is sheer hypocrisy!

Absolutely valid testimony as to the tendencies of English politics and the origin of the war has been furnished us in the reports of the Belgian Ministers which I have had published. They suffice to convince all who have not yet been convinced. Why are they doing their utmost to suppress the contents of these documents in London, Paris and St. Petersburg? Why does the enemy press, whenever it does refer to these reports, strive so strenuously to belittle the real significance of these documents and to put forward the vain pretext that they constitute no proof that the neutrality of Belgium had been forfeited by Belgium herself? That proof has already been established elsewhere. The people of the Entente nations need only inspect the publications which I have had issued in connection with the negotiations which the English military attaché carried on with the Belgian military authorities. We have an altogether different matter to deal with here. In these revelations we have to consider the Entente and the isolation policy of England. I can assure the public of England and France that they would find these documents well worth reading.

These Belgian reports make such interesting reading because they are so entirely unanimous in their verdicts upon English politics. Had it been only Baron Greindl, the Belgian Minister at Berlin, who criticized English policy so sharply, it might perhaps have been said that his views had been influenced by his sympathy for the country to which he was accredited, though such an assumption would be unjust to so non-partisan a diplomat. But the same decision is reached in the reports of his colleagues in London and Paris and their judgments are unanimous and of absolutely incontrovertible weight. Since so little notice has been taken of these reports in other lands, I will here venture once more to read a few specimen passages from these revelations.

Baron Greindl, in February 1905, wrote as follows:

"The real reason for England's hatred of Germany is the envy which has been called into being by the development of the German navy, German commerce and German industry."

Two years later he writes:

"The French encroachments have once more assumed the same proportions as those that prevailed during the worst days of the Second Empire, and the Entente Cordiale is to be blamed for this. These presumptions have even perceptibly increased since it has become plain that the negotiations between London and St. Petersburg to which France undoubtedly has been a party, might lead to an entente."

In another place he states:

"The policy carried out by King Edward under the pretence of saving Europe from an imaginary German danger, has evoked a French peril only too real—which is primarily inimical to us."

Count Lalaing, the Belgian Minister in London, declared on May 24th, 1907:

"It is clear that official England is pursuing a secret policy hostile to Germany, the purpose of which is isolation, but there is no doubt that it is very dangerous to poison public opinion in the way this is being done by the irresponsible press."

The Belgian *Chargé d'Affaires* in London, M. Cartier, in March 1907, wrote:

"Since the conduct of Russian foreign affairs has been left to Iswolski, a remarkable rapprochement has taken place between the cabinets of London and St. Petersburg. The incident of the Dogger Bank, the English sympathy for Japan in 1904, the embittered rivalry in Persia, all that belongs to the past. The entire force of English diplomacy is directed towards the isolation of Germany."

Finally, Baron Guillaume, the Belgian Minister in Paris, writes on the 6th of January, 1914:

"I have already had the honor to report that it was MM. Poincaré, Delcassé, Millerand and their friends who invented that nationalistic, militaristic, chauvinistic policy and followed it. We have now confirmed a revival of this policy, which constitutes a danger for Europe—and for Belgium!"

Gentlemen, these reports of the Belgian diplomats coincide thoroughly in all the main particulars and give a clear picture of the policy of the Entente during the last ten years. In the face of such witnesses, all the attempts made by our opponents to ascribe to us the lust for war and to themselves the love of peace, are rendered null and void. Gentlemen, was German policy uninformed of these happenings or did it purposely close its eyes, in that it again and again endeavored to find a way out of the difficulty? Neither the one nor the other. I am well aware that there are circles that reproach me with political short-sightedness because I repeatedly endeavored to bring about an understanding with England. I thank God that I did this. Remote as were the hopes with which I sought again and again to renew these attempts, it is as clear as day that the fatality of this monstrous and murderous war-conflagration might have been prevented, had an honest understanding, based upon the preservation of peace, been achieved between Germany and England. Who in Europe would then still have ventured to wage war? With a goal such as this to strive for, would I have been justified in putting aside a task merely because it was a heavy task and one which proved fruitless time and again? Gentlemen, where the ultimate solemnity of the life of nations is concerned, where millions of human lives are at stake, I hold that with the help of God there is nothing that is impossible. I would rather have perished in the struggle than have evaded it. Permit me briefly to recall to your memories the course of events.

King Edward had conceived the personal furtherance of the English policy of isolating Germany to be one of his chief duties. I therefore had reason to hope that, after his death, the negotiations for an understanding which I had begun as early as August, 1909, might proceed under more favorable conditions. These negotiations dragged along until the spring of 1911, without result, when the interference of England in the discussions between Germany and France regarding Morocco, made clear to the eyes of all nations how the world's peace was threatened by Britain's entente policy and by Britain's resolve, backed up by her friends of the entente, to impress her will on the entire world. At that time, too, the English people were but scantily instructed as to the dangerous course pursued by the policy of their government. For after the crisis was happily past and they realized how narrowly they had escaped the precipice of a world-war, a feeling gradually began to express itself in many English circles that it would be desirable to

bring about a relationship with Germany which would preclude warlike entanglements. One perilous walk along the brink seemed to have been enough. This gave rise to the mission of Lord Haldane to Berlin in the spring of 1912. Lord Haldane assured me of the sincere desire for an understanding on the part of the English cabinet. But he felt a certain anxiety because of Germany's naval programme. I asked him whether an open understanding with us, an understanding which not only precluded a German-English war, but every European war, would not be worth more than a couple of German dreadnoughts? Lord Haldane personally seemed to incline towards this point of view, but asked whether we would not, as soon as our hands were left free against England, make an attack upon France and annihilate her? I replied that the policy of peace to which Germany had adhered for a period of more than forty years should have spared us a question such as that.

For surely, had we been planning for war, we had most excellent opportunity to evince our rage for it during the Boer war or the Russian-Japanese war. But there, as well as during all the phases of the Morocco crisis, we had done precisely the opposite and had proved our love of peace before the whole world. Germany, I assured him, sincerely desired to live on terms of peace with France and would attack France as little as she would attack any other power. After Lord Haldane's departure from Berlin, the negotiations were resumed in London. A few weeks ago I had the formulas of agreements which were proposed on both sides during these negotiations, published in the *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*. These documents are well worth the attention of our antagonists. But so far as I have seen, the English press, with a single exception, has ignored them. For that reason I would like once more to make brief mention of the facts.

First, in order to attain a permanent understanding with England, we made a proposal based upon a treaty of mutual and unconditional neutrality. When this proposal was declined by England as too comprehensive in its scope, we suggested that this neutrality be confined to wars in which it would not be possible to say that the power to which neutrality had been assured, was the aggressor. This, too, was declined by England. In the meantime England had on her part, proposed the following formula:

"England will make no unprovoked attack upon Germany and pursue no aggressive policy towards her. Aggression upon Germany is not the subject and forms no part of any treaty, understanding or combination to which England is now a party nor will she become a party to anything that has such an object."

Well, gentlemen, I was of the opinion, that it was not customary among civilized states to attack other powers without provocation, or to join combinations whose plans included such attacks upon their neighbors, and that for this reason a promise to refrain from such unprovoked attacks could scarcely be said to meet the requirements of a solemn treaty between civilized nations. The English Cabinet was obviously of another mind, and thought to meet our representations by having the following words prefixed to the unchanged formula:

"The two powers being mutually desirous of securing peace and friendship between them, England declares that she will" . . . and so on, as I have already read to you.

This prefix, however could in no wise alter my judgment of the essence of the English offer. Even to day I am forced to believe that no one could have blamed me had I broken off all negotiations even at that period. But I refrained from taking such a step. I did all that lay within my power to secure the peace of Europe and the world. I consented to consider these English proposals and to discuss them, with the one stipulation that they be completed by the insertion of the following clause:

"England will therefore, as a matter of course, preserve a benevolent neutrality in case a war should be forced upon Germany."

I beg you, gentlemen, to consider these words: "in case a war should be forced upon Germany." I shall afterwards return to this point. Sir Edward Grey blankly refused to accept this addition. He was unable to exceed the limits of his formula, and, as he declared to our Ambassador, Count Metternich, chiefly because he might otherwise endanger existing friendships with other powers. This, so far as we were concerned, terminated the discussion. No commentary upon this need be made. England assumed it to be a sign of special friendship well worthy of being sealed in a solemn compact, that she would not attack us without cause, but would nevertheless keep a free hand in the event of her friends doing so! These negotiations, so far as I know, have never

been completely revealed in England, at all events only in fragments and then incorrectly. Mr. Asquith, the English Premier, referred to this subject in a speech at Cardiff on October, 2nd, 1914. I quote from an official version of his published speech, revised by himself. Mr. Asquith communicated to his hearers the English proposal not to make an unprovoked attack upon us—according to the text of the formula which I have just read you. He then proceeds as follows:

"But that was not enough for German statesmanship. They wanted as to go further. They asked us to pledge ourselves absolutely to neutrality in the event of Germany being engaged in war."

This declaration on the part of Mr. Asquith is a distortion of the facts. It is true that at the beginning of the negotiations we had demanded unconditional neutrality, as I have just said. But in the course of the negotiations we had limited our claims for neutrality to the event of a war being forced upon us. "Should war be forced upon Germany." This fact was concealed by Mr. Asquith from his auditors. I consider that I am justified in declaring that through this he has in the most unspeakable fashion, misled the public opinion of his country. Naturally, had Mr. Asquith given a complete presentation of the case he would not have been able to pursue the course he adopted in his speech, a speech well-trimmed to suit the feelings of his auditors. He says, and this is again the literal text:

"They asked us to pledge ourselves absolutely to neutrality in the event of Germany being engaged in war, and this, mind you, at a time when Germany was enormously increasing both her aggressive and defensive resources and especially upon the sea. They asked us, to put it quite plainly, for a free hand so far as we were concerned when they selected the opportunity to overbear, to dominate the European world."

It is simply inconceivable to me—and I would choose no other word—how so eminent a statesman as Mr. Asquith could have represented an event of which he was informed officially in detail in a manner so contrary to the facts as to draw deductions therefrom which are nothing less than a blow in the face of truth. And this representation of his was introduced by Mr. Asquith with such words as these:

"I wish to call not only your attention but the attention of the whole world to this when so many legends are now being invented and circulated."

I should like to ask: Who is it that invented legends and circulated them?

I have paid particular attention to this case in order that I might utter a protest against the untruths and the calumny with which our opponents wage war upon us. Although we were fully aware of the anti-German tendency of England's policy, we nevertheless with the utmost patience went to the extreme limits of conciliation. But stones were offered to us instead of bread. And yet by a most unexampled distortion of the facts, we are to be set in a pillory before the world. Even though our enemies may succeed in smothering established truth, in their unworthy incitement of nation against nation, or in the clash of arms, yet the day will come when history shall deliver its judgment. The moment had arrived in which an understanding between England and Germany would have guaranteed the peace of all the world. We were prepared to accomplish this. England rejected it, and nothing through all eternity will ever clear England from the burden of this guilt.

It was in this wise, gentlemen, that the episode of Lord Haldane's mission came to an end. Soon after this, Sir Edward Grey and M. Cambon, the French Ambassador in London, made as is well known, their exchange of letters, the text of which implied an Anglo-French defensive alliance, though this, in consequence of the common agreement between the General Staffs and the Admiralties on both sides, developed into an offensive alliance. This fact was also concealed from the country at large by the British Government. It was only when it was too late, that is to say, on the 3rd of August of last year, that this fact was finally disclosed. Until then, the English Ministers had repeatedly declared in Parliament that England's hands were entirely free in the event of a European conflict. That may have been the case according to the letter, but not according to the reality, in view of the agreements between the two Admiralties by which the northern coast of France was to be placed under the protection of England. The same tactics were followed by the English government when it opened its negotiations with Russia during the spring of 1914 with regard to a Marine Agreement wherein the Russian Admiralty cherished a desire to bestow upon our province of Pomerania the blessings of a Russia invasion to be carried out with the assistance of English ships. Thus, gentlemen,

the complete ring of the Entente with its avowed anti-German tendencies was closing more and more completely. The seed sown by King Edward had begun to sprout. We were forced to meet this condition of affairs by means of the great military bills of 1913. You are aware, gentlemen,—but I will again emphasize the fact—you are aware that, clearly and fully cognizant of the seriousness of the international situation, we constantly strove, in addition to carrying on negotiations with England, to improve our relations with Russia in every way possible. I have repeatedly spoken upon that point here in the Reichstag, never having concealed anything in all our policies from the representatives of the people. Toward Russia, whose policy was of the most decisive importance for the conclusions of France, I have always been actuated by the conviction that friendly relations with each individual member of the Entente must at least reduce the general tension, and that every year of peace gained would tend to lessen the danger of a universal explosion. We had arrived at an understanding with Russia in regard to various separate questions. I would remind you of the Conference at Potsdam. The relations of the one government to the other were not only correct, but supported by mutual confidence. But the general situation was in no wise improved by this. It had been poisoned at the very roots, since the chauvinistic idea of *revanche* in France and the warlike Pan-Slavic strivings for expansion in Russia, instead of being assuaged by England, were continually stirred and goaded into fresh life through the anti-German policy of the British Cabinet, as shown in its adherence to the idea of the Balance of Power. The tension became so great that the first great and serious strain was bound to lead to a rupture.

Thus, gentlemen, the summer of 1914 arrived. I have depicted the separate events on August 4th. The constant misrepresentations and attacks on the part of our enemies oblige me even here to refer once more to a certain point. The statement that the whole war might have been avoided if I had agreed to accept the suggestion of Sir Edward Grey and take part in a conference for the regulation of the Russian-Austrian question at issue has again of late been repeatedly made in England. Here are the real facts. The English proposals for a Conference were delivered here by the English Ambassador on the 27th of July. The English Blue Book also shows that the Secretary of State at the Foreign Office in the conversation in question with Sir Edward Goschen—a conversation in which the Secretary designated the means proposed as unsuitable,—had communicated to the English Ambassador that, according to his information from Russia, M. Sazanoff was inclined to consider a direct exchange of opinion with Count Berchtold. He was of the opinion that a direct conversation between St. Petersburg and Vienna might lead to a satisfactory result. For that reason it was best to await the results of this conversation. Sir Edward Goschen communicated this to London and received a telegraphic answer in which Sir Edward Grey used these words:

"As long as there is a prospect of a direct exchange of views between Austria and Russia, I would suspend every other suggestion, as I entirely agree that it is the most preferable method of all."

Thus Sir Edward Grey accepted the German point of view at that time, and expressly withdrew his proposal of a conference for the time being.

However, unlike Sir Edward Grey, I did not permit matters to rest with the platonic wish that a direct conversation might ensue between Vienna and St. Petersburg, but did everything within my power to persuade the Russian and the Austrian-Hungarian governments to discuss their differences by an exchange of opinions between their respective cabinets. I have once before declared in this very place that our endeavors at mediation especially in Vienna, had been carried on in a manner, which, as I stated at the time, "went to the extreme limits of all that was compatible with our relations as an ally." Since this activity of mine as a mediator in the interests of preserving the peace, has been repeatedly called in question in England, I shall prove by the evidence of facts that all these accusations are without foundation.

On the evening of July 29th, the following communication of the Imperial Ambassador at Petersburg reached Berlin:

"M. Sazanoff, who has just requested me to see him, communicates to me that the Vienna Cabinet had replied with a categorical refusal to consider the desire he had expressed to enter into direct conversations. There was therefore nothing left to do save to return to the proposal of a conversation of four, as made by Sir Edward Grey."

Since the Vienna government had in the meantime declared itself prepared for a

direct exchange of views with St. Petersburg, it was clear that there must be some misunderstanding. I telegraphed to Vienna and made use of the opportunity once more to make a clear announcement of my own conception of the situation as a whole. My instructions to Herr von Tschirschky were as follows:

"The communication of Count Pourtalés is not in accordance with the representations which Your Excellency has made of the attitude of the Austrian-Hungarian government. Apparently there is some misunderstanding which I beg you to explain. We cannot expect Austria-Hungary a willingness to negotiate with Serbia, with whom she is already in a state of war. But the refusal of all interchange of opinion with St. Petersburg would be a grave mistake. We are indeed prepared to fulfil our duty as an ally, but should Austria-Hungary ignore our advice, we must nevertheless decline to be drawn into a world-conflagration, through Austria-Hungary ignoring our advice. Your Excellency will therefore at once and with all emphasis and earnestness express yourself in this sense to Count Berchtold."

Herr von Tschirschky in answer to this communicated on July 30th:

"Count von Berchtold states that, as Your Excellency assumes, there has indeed been some misunderstanding in question, and that on the part of Russia. Having already received word of this misunderstanding also through Count Szapary, the Austrian-Hungarian Ambassador in St. Petersburg, and having at the same time followed our urgent suggestion that he enter into communication with Russia, he had at once given the necessary instructions to Count Szapary."

Gentlemen, I made all this known to the British press, when excitement in England increased shortly before the outbreak of the war, and serious doubts as to our endeavors to preserve peace became audible. And now after the event, that press makes the insinuation that this occurrence had never taken place at all and that the instructions to Herr von Tschirschky had been invented in order to mislead public opinion in England. You will agree with me that this accusation is unworthy of an answer. I would also allude at the same time to the Austrian Red Book which merely confirms my presentation of the case and shows how after the aforesaid misunderstanding had been cleared up, the conversations between St. Petersburg and Vienna had begun to take their course, until the general mobilization of the Russian army brought them to an untimely end. I repeat, gentlemen, that we have supported the direct discussion between Vienna and St. Petersburg with the utmost emphasis and success. The assertion that we, by refusing to accept the English suggestion of a conference, must accept the blame for this war, belongs to the category of those calumnies under cover of which our enemies endeavor to hide their own guilt. The war became unavoidable only through the Russian mobilization. Once more I would establish this fact beyond all dispute. I have permitted myself to enter somewhat fully into certain diplomatic occurrences, in order to oppose those floods of accusations which are designed to blacken the clean conscience and serene mind of Germany. But we shall finally emerge as victoriously from this battle against vilification as we shall from the great struggles upon the battlefields.

Our troops, gentlemen, and those of Austria-Hungary, have reached the borders of Poland in the east and to both falls the duty of governing the land. Geographical and political conditions have for centuries compelled Germans and Poles to battle against one another. The memory of these ancient contrarieties does not decrease our respect for the passion, the patriotism and the tenacity with which the Polish people, amidst great sufferings, have defended their ancient and western civilization and love of freedom against Muscovitism, nor for the spirit they have displayed under the heavy affliction of this war. I shall not attempt to emulate the hypocritical promises of our enemies, but I hope that our occupation of the Polish frontiers to the east, will form the beginning of a period of growth which will serve to do away forever with the old differences between Germans and Poles and will lead this country, now liberated from the Russian yoke, towards an auspicious future in which it may cultivate and develop its own intrinsic national life. The country which we have occupied we shall govern justly, and as far as possible, with the help of its own inhabitants. We shall endeavor to remove those hardships which war inevitably brings and to heal those wounds which Russia has inflicted upon the country.

The longer this war lasts, the more will it leave behind it a Europe shattered and bleeding from a thousand wounds. The world which is then to arise shall not and will not be such as that of which our enemies dream. They are

struggling to restore the Europe of former days, a Europe with an impotent Germany at its centre to serve as the playground of alien machinations and ambitions, and, whenever desirable, as the battlefield of Europe, a Germany in which small, weak States await the nod and beck of foreign powers; a Germany with a shattered industry, and a limited trade in its own home markets, and without a fleet capable of sailing the seas unless by the gracious leave of England; a Germany that would be a vassal state of the gigantic Russian Empire ruling the east and the south-east of Europe, and uniting all Slavs under the sceptre of Moscow. Such were the dreams dreamt in London, in Paris and St. Petersburg — at least at the beginning of the war.

No, gentlemen, this colossal international war, which causes the joints of the world to gape, will never bring back the conditions of the past. A new order of things must arise. If Europe is ever to enjoy the blessings of peace, this can be accomplished only by means of the strong and unassailable position of Germany. The antecedent history of the war is written in a sinister language. For over a decade the thoughts and endeavors of the Entente powers have been solely and wholly bent upon the isolation of Germany, and its exclusion from all participation in the affairs of the world. A policy such as this was bound to lead to disaster. The English policy of the Balance of Power must disappear, for it is this which serves as a forcing-house for wars — as Bernard Shaw has recently declared.

Of infinite significance in this connection is the remark made by Sir Edward Grey to our Ambassador, Prince Lichnowsky, as he parted from him on the 4th of August. There was even a certain emphasis in the voice of the English Foreign Minister, when he declared that the war which had broken out between England and Germany would permit him to perform greater services for us after the conclusion of peace than would have been possible for him had England remained neutral. No doubt that behind the vision of a defeated Germany, his eyes already beheld the gigantic figure of a victorious Russia, in which event a weakened Germany would once more have been good enough to serve as the vassal and auxiliary of England. Gentlemen, Germany must so build up her position, so fortify and strengthen it, that the other powers shall never again venture to think of a policy of strangulation.

Not only for our own protection but for the welfare of all the nations of mankind, we must achieve the freedom of the seas, not in order, like England, to command them as a monopoly, but in order that all other nations may be served equally by them. It is not we who threaten the little nations. Our desire is to be and to remain a refuge for the peace and the freedom of the nations, great and small. And do not confine this remark merely to the peoples of Germanic race. How hard the diplomats of the Entente are toiling to convince the Balkan nations that the victory of the Central Powers would plunge them into servitude and that on the other hand, the triumph of the Quadruple Entente will procure them liberty, independence, increase of territory and economic prosperity! It is only a few years since Russia in her lust for power created the Balkan League under the cry "The Balkans for the Balkan Peoples!" But she dropped it in order to favor the Servian breach of treaty with Bulgaria. It is the German and the Austrian-Hungarian victories in Poland that have freed the Balkan states from the Russian aggression. There was a time when England served to protect the Balkan States, but as the ally of Russia she can only be the oppressor of their independence. Even now she is letting them feel the weight of her selfish hand.

I would conclude, gentlemen, with a brief summary. There is scarcely another great nation which in the course of the last centuries has suffered such sorrows as the German, and yet we might almost love this destiny which has spurred us on to tremendous achievements. When the empire was unified at last, every year of peace proved to be a distinct gain, for it was without war that we made our greatest progress. War was no necessity to us. Germany has never striven to obtain the mastery of Europe. Her ambition was to stand foremost in the peaceful rivalry of the nations in all the tasks of progress and civilization. This war has revealed to us the greatness of which we are capable when supported by our own moral force. This power which is conferred upon us through our inner strength we can use in no other sense than that of liberty. We cherish no hatred for the peoples whose governments have hounded them into the war against us. But we have put by our sentimentality. We shall hold out in this war until these peoples demand peace from those who are really guilty, until the road is clear for a new Europe, a Europe freed from French intrigue, from Muscovite lust of conquest, and from English tutelage.