

INFORMATION TRANSMISSION IN OPEN AND CLOSED
POLITICAL SYSTEMS: GREAT BRITAIN
AND GERMANY IN 1914

by

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B.A., University of British Columbia, 1969

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of
Political Science

We accept this thesis as conforming to
the required standard

✓
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September, 1970

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to research a hypothesis concerning the policy formation processes of an open and of a closed political system. The paper opens with a discussion of the theoretical roots of the project. Particular attention has been paid to J.N. Rosenau's pre-theory of comparative foreign policy, and works by authors such as R.B. Farrell, Raymond Aron, and Alexis de Tocqueville on the differences between open and closed political systems. The hypothesis we tested was derived from the writings of R.B. Farrell. It reads:

In a closed polity bureaucrats are less likely to provide information contradicting the leadership's known positions than in an open polity.

In the second chapter the method of study, the case study, is introduced and discussed. Great Britain and Germany just prior to the First World War were chosen as examples of an open and a closed system. Their suitability as cases for this research project is critically analysed. Data on size, wealth, and political accountability are presented.

In the third chapter four leaders are identified and their policy preferences outlined. The four are Edward Grey in Great Britain, Emperor William II, Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs von Jagow

in Germany. The fourth chapter discusses the kinds of messages which were being sent to these various leaders. We expected that in the case of Germany the content of these messages would be less contradictory of the positions of the above-mentioned German leaders than in the case of Britain and Sir Edward Grey.

The conclusion of the study is that in the particular cases of pre-War Britain and Germany the hypothesis is not supported. In the final chapter explanations of why this might be so are suggested, two new hypotheses are formulated, and the findings are related briefly to the theory from which the paper originated.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Professor Ole Holsti, whose guidance and criticism helped me a great deal in researching and writing this paper.

I would also like to thank Miss Iza Fiszhaut, of the U.B.C. Library who went out of her way on several occasions to help me find various research material.

Neither of these people, of course, are responsible for any errors or distortions in this paper.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is as accurate as it is trite to describe the times in which we live as both dangerous and disturbing. The problems facing mankind are overwhelming. Often during the past decade the actions of men and of states have brought us to the brink of catastrophe in the form of nuclear war. The Cuban missile crisis was perhaps the most frightening incident in this regard. Yet the threat of nuclear warfare, while it is perhaps the most obvious, overriding dilemma today, is only one of a myriad of international issues confronting political scientists, politicians, and the aware public. Hundreds of people are being killed daily in smaller conflicts such as the ones in Vietnam and the Middle East. Two-thirds of the world's population lives on the edge of starvation. The population explosion threatens to bring even more people to that unhappy state. In the western world at any rate pollution of the air, earth, and sea is rapidly destroying man's environment. The list is so familiar as to be collectively a cliché.

Faced with difficulties of such magnitude and urgency the temptation is strong to assume the poetic role of crusader. The demand is for action now. Advocates of various causes range from the lunatic Minutemen bent on

destroying by force the system which they see as responsible for the world's ills to sober-minded professors intent on solving immediate problems through legitimate or semi-legitimate channels of social and political action.

The political scientist with a special interest in international relations is perhaps especially susceptible to the attraction of political activism. He is, after all, more acutely aware of the enormous, pressing problems that exist in the international sphere. And, indeed, some political scientists have tended to concentrate on contemporary policy formation and promulgation. We might cite here James Eayrs as an example.¹

Professor James N. Rosenau argues, however, that difficult as it may be, at least some political scientists should devote their energies to the analysis of long range trends and patterns rather than to the solution of immediate problems. He points out that one is only able to identify general tendencies and underlying patterns by retaining a somewhat detached view of current affairs. According to him such an approach will eventually be of more value than one which concentrates upon particular events, for "in the

¹James Eayrs, Right and Wrong in Foreign Policy, Toronto, The University of Toronto Press, 1966.

long run [it] is likely to contribute to the clarification and solution of immediate policy problems."²

To illustrate his argument, he refers to the Vietnam war. Certainly this is one of the most important problems in the world today and one which has attracted a great deal of popular attention. Yet the investigator who concentrates solely on providing bases for policy decisions which might bring an end to that conflict, will not have contributed significantly to our understanding of, for instance, "why large superpowers get involved in distant conflicts or why small nations make commitments that contest the presence of superpower influence in the area."³ In order to analyse and perhaps prevent or end similar conflicts which might occur in the future one would need to have accumulated knowledge of this more general type.

This is not to say that all political scientists worthy of the name should approach the study of international affairs this way. It is only argued that at least some investigators should maintain a detached view most of the time and that most observers should do so some of the time. Rosenau writes that "it is desirable for some researchers

²James N. Rosenau, Untitled, unpublished manuscript copy of the first three chapters of a forthcoming book, p. I-6.

³Ibid., p. I-9.

to maintain the adaptive perspective [detached view] [and] it is equally appropriate for the majority to focus on immediate problems. . . ." ⁴ Attractive as the heroic role may be his argument is cogent and persuasive.

Several political scientists have taken up the challenge of analysing foreign policy and international relations in the more general way which Professor Rosenau advocates. The actions and interactions of states have been explained with reference to numerous variables from the personalities of political leaders, to the internal political structure of states and the nature of the international political system. ⁵ However, these pioneering efforts have so far been somewhat uncoordinated and non-comparative. Each researcher chooses his own terms of reference and if there are other similar works it is more often the result of accident rather than planning. No uniform way of consolidating and weighing the importance of the variables has been set down. If the gathering of knowledge about international relations is to be truly cumulative, an organizational framework, a pre-theory will have to be established.

Professor Rosenau has been in the forefront in attempting to formulate such a quasi-theoretical structure into

⁴Loc. cit.

⁵See, for example, the great variety of articles published in James N. Rosenau, ed., International Politics and Foreign Policy, second edition, New York, The Free Press, 1969.

which explanatory variables such as the idiosyncracies of decision-makers, societal traits, and systemic characteristics can be "plugged" and evaluated. Essentially his efforts have been directed at explicating and organizing the implicit philosophies which have guided empirical research up until now. To this end he has identified general types of countries and general types of variables influencing foreign policy formation. He has then proceeded to rank the variables in accordance with their importance in each type of country.⁶

There are a number of problems with the Rosenau pre-theory, however. Many of his categories are difficult to understand. Some of his definitions are imprecise and ambiguous. It is not at all clear just how the variables fit together and how they are related to foreign policy behaviour. Moreover, the plan is so complex that it would be nearly impossible to operationalize all or even most of it. Rosenau himself admits this difficulty. By his own count there are no fewer than twenty-nine parametric, independent, dependent, and intervening variables. Added to these are the many more specific indicators suggested. He writes:

⁶See the chart in James N. Rosenau, "Pre-theories and theories of Foreign Policy," in R.B. Farrell, ed., Approaches to Comparative and International Politics, Evanston, Ill., Northwestern University Press, 1966, pp. 90-91.

In short, the adaptive framework is very complex indeed. So many combinations of individual, intervening, and independent variables are possible that the task of tracing the factors that give rise to a particular location on the adaptive-maladaptive scale staggers the researcher's analytic capacities.⁷

It is probably more realistic to view the Rosenau scheme as a source of inspiration rather than as a practical plan for research. While the pre-theory may as yet be inapplicable as a whole, its author has provided us with some well-reasoned arguments in favor of the systematic, comparative study of foreign policy and he does offer some interesting suggestions for further research, both in terms of reworking the theory and in terms of empirical inquiry. For this essay we have chosen to move from Rosenau's theoretical scheme to a rather limited factual investigation.

Professor Rosenau has presented us with three sets of parametric variables describing types of nations: large-small, developed-underdeveloped, and open-closed.⁸ From these

⁷Rosenau, Unpublished manuscript, pp. III-40-41.

⁸Rosenau chose the size, economic, and accountability parameters for three reasons: (1) Empirical evidence suggests that these three variables account for a great deal of the variance in foreign policy output; and, in addition, the three parameters are "essentially uncorrelated" amongst themselves; (2) All three parameters are highly stable and therefore comparisons over long periods of time should be possible; (3) The eight genotypes resulting from the combination of the parameters raise important and interesting theoretical questions. For further information, see pp. III-4 and 5 of the manuscript.

variables he has derived eight genotypical states.⁹ We propose to focus on one of these sets of parameters and to compare the foreign policy processes and outputs of two of his genotypes.

The set of parametric variables which aroused our curiosity was the open-closed classification, being, as Rosenau points out, roughly equivalent to democratic-authoritarian. Dominated as the world is today by two superpowers, one democratic and the other authoritarian, it would seem that any knowledge about the differences in foreign policy formation and output between these two types of states would be both important and interesting. After reviewing some of the theoretical literature on open and closed political systems one hypothesis was chosen as suitable for this research project.

The hypothesis was derived from R.B. Farrell. In an article appropriately entitled "Foreign Policies of Open and Closed Political Societies" he writes:

For closed systems Professor Fainsod has suggested that in the process of data gathering and transmission "when the views of the leadership are well-known, the words which subordinates throw back at it tend to confirm its beliefs rather than challenge its analysis".¹⁰

⁹The eight genotypes are shown in Table 1. This table was taken from the Rosenau manuscript, p. III-2.

¹⁰R.B. Farrell, "Foreign Policies of Open and Closed Political Societies," in Farrell, ed., op. cit., p. 187.

Table 1

The Eight Genotypical Actors

<u>Parameter Combinations</u>	<u>Labels</u>
1. large, open, developed	democratic superpowers
2. large, closed, developed	authoritarian superpowers
3. large, open, undeveloped	democratic great powers
4. large, closed, undeveloped	authoritarian great powers
5. small, open, developed	democratic middle powers
6. small, closed, developed	authoritarian middle powers
7. small, open, underdeveloped	democratic small powers
8. small, closed, underdeveloped	authoritarian small powers

Thus, our hypothesis reads this way:

In a closed polity bureaucrats are less likely to supply information contradicting the leadership's known position than in an open polity.

Examining this hypothesis would seem to offer not only the possibility of discovering some significant differences in the foreign policy formation processes of open and closed systems but also, by inference, a number of things about the foreign policy outputs of such systems. For instance, a number of theorists have stated that open systems tend to be less effective in the setting and pursuit of foreign policy

objectives because of the conflicting opinions amongst policy makers and the general public. Alexis de Tocqueville has written that:

. . . a democracy can only with great difficulty regulate the details of an important undertaking, persevere in a fixed design, and work out its execution in spite of serious obstacles. It cannot combine its measures with secrecy or await their consequences with patience.¹¹

Raymond Aron, a more modern theorist, says that:

. . . diplomatic tactics are more flexible as regimes are more authoritarian.¹²

Numerous other political writers such as Walter Lippmann,¹³ George Kennan,¹⁴ and R. Barry Farrell¹⁵ have also implied, some more explicitly than others, that statesmen in nations ruled by authoritarian governments have some distinct advantages in the field of foreign relations. The argument

¹¹Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, New York, Vintage Books, 1960, volume 1, p. 243.

¹²Raymond Aron, Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations, New York, Frederick Praeger, 1967, p. 282.

¹³In Walter Lippmann, The Public Philosophy, Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1955.

¹⁴In George F. Kennan, American Diplomacy, 1900-1950, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1951.

¹⁵In R.B. Farrell, op. cit., pp. 167-208.

is made that political leaders in closed systems, unhampered by the divergent views of their bureaucrats, as our hypothesis would seem to suggest, are more easily able to make the quick, deliberate, arbitrary, and perhaps secret shifts in policy necessary for the successful conduct of foreign affairs.

However, lack of information could put an authoritarian political leader at a great disadvantage. His country's success in foreign relations would be highly dependent upon his personal idiosyncracies. Unless he himself was very perceptive and attuned to the vicissitudes of international affairs he could be prone to making erroneous judgements and disastrous decisions. It would seem likely that while the political leaders in more open polities might find it more difficult to make positive decisions and to pursue long range plans they would also be less likely to make serious mistakes or pursue dangerous policies. R.B. Farrell writes:

It is perhaps possible that a totalitarian society which assigns the power of making the great foreign policy decisions to a very small number of men and at the same time partially insulates them from many of the mechanisms of criticism and control found in open society may, by so doing, encourage them to undertake bold, high-risk policies.¹⁶

Internal dissension can act not only as a stumbling block but also as a safeguard. Success in foreign policy might be more

¹⁶Ibid., p. 206.

closely linked to abundance of information than to the ability to make decisions quickly.

Even if decision-makers in closed systems are able to make their quick, deliberate shifts in foreign policy accurately and to the immediate advantage of their own state in spite of lack of information, their actions may have destabilizing effects on the international system. A certain amount of predictability is necessary if constructive change is to take place, and constructive change would presumably be to the long-run advantage of all states, whether open or closed. What may seem to be a highly effective policy brilliantly executed in an arbitrary fashion by an authoritarian decision-maker might in fact turn out to be highly disruptive in terms of the system as a whole and perhaps eventually for that decision-maker's polity.

Moreover, in the modern world, complicated and fraught with danger as it is, it seems highly unlikely that any decision-maker could operate successfully, either in the short or the long run, on the basis of only agreeable information. Therefore, if closedness does in fact result in disagreeable information being kept from political leaders, then closedness is probably disadvantageous for the state directly in the short run and for the state by way of the disruption of the international system in the long run. With these possible implications in mind, let us proceed to lay the groundwork for our investigation.

CHAPTER 2

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

There are two approaches which one could use to try to support or disprove the hypothesis presented in the Introduction. One would be the general examination of information transmission and policy formation in a number of closed and open political systems. The other would be the more detailed analysis of the relationships between bureaucrats and policy-makers in one example of a closed system and one example of an open system. The latter course, the case study, has been chosen for this paper for two reasons; one being the necessity of keeping the length of the paper within reasonable bounds and the other being the lack of enough good data for a study of greater breadth.

The case study, a study limited in space and time, has a number of advantages and disadvantages.¹ In a paper of this length the case study approach should allow and encourage a more detailed examination of the relationships suggested by our hypotheses than a study which included several examples of open and closed systems. An in-depth case study should help establish in the mind of the researcher

¹For a good discussion of the case study approach and its difficulties, see G.D. Paige, The Korean Decision, New York, The Free Press, 1968, pp. 3-18.

a sounder understanding of the possible empirical differences in policy formation between open and closed systems. It seems likely that the case study approach would suggest alternative hypotheses and explanations about open and closed systems. In addition, it offers the possibility of at least supporting or partially discrediting the researcher's own hypothesis. Finally the use of particular examples in an attempt to shed some light on a general proposition will increase the researcher's knowledge of the case under study and this knowledge could very well prove useful in the future.

The disadvantages of the case study, however, are perhaps more obvious than the advantages. The first problem facing the researcher is the problem of representativeness. Each case is in a sense unique and atypical. By limiting himself to one particular example, therefore, the researcher precludes the possibility of lending strong support to his hypothesis. Any generalized statements must be tempered by the knowledge that one must carry out further research on a number of similar cases before one can argue definitively in favor of or against this particular generalization. This difficulty can be mitigated somewhat by approaching the case study with a number of genotypical categories, such as Rosenau's, in mind, and by emphasizing those characteristics which appear to be general rather than unique. One cannot, however, avoid the problem altogether. With this limitation

in mind, therefore, we plunge onward in the hope of illuminating to some degree, our hypothesis, gathering and adding to our knowledge about the particular case chosen, and providing some suggestions for further research.

As a case study for this paper we have chosen the examples of Britain and Germany just preceeding the first World War; that is, between June 15, 1914 and August 4, 1914. These two nations and this particular time period offered a number of advantages. First, data on the events leading up to the War are readily available. Both Britain and Germany have published extensive compilations of documents in English. These document collections are virtually complete and include private letters, diplomatic correspondence, military instructions, government memoranda, and notations. In addition, there are a large number of secondary sources available, both in terms of commentaries and biographies. These have been written by scholars, government and military personnel, and political leaders.

Secondly, during the period from the end of June until the beginning of the War in early August, the events leading up to the catastrophe engaged the interest of all types of government personnel. There were numerous communications between diplomats and foreign ministers, foreign office personnel and military leaders, bureaucrats and

politicians. All of these messages, with the exception of a few private conversations and perhaps telephone calls, have been recorded and are included in the aforementioned document collections. Few other cases could offer this wealth of authoritative data.

Third, Britain and Germany in 1914 fit reasonably well into the genotypical categories suggested by Rosenau. The two countries were quite similar in terms of wealth and size, thus enabling the researcher to control these two variables. The Statesman's Yearbook, for instance, lists the area of Great Britain in 1914 as 121,633 square miles, including Ireland,² and the area of Germany as 208,780 square miles.³ Britain's population (April 2, 1911) is given as 45,370,530⁴ and Germany's population (Dec. 1, 1910) is listed as 64,925,993.⁵ In 1913, actual government revenue in Britain was £188,801,999 and actual government expenditure was £188,621,930.⁶ The comparable figures for Germany are £184,801,660 and £184,801,660.⁷ It would appear, then, from these rough figures that while Germany was somewhat

² Statesman's Yearbook, 1914, pp. 112-13.

³ Ibid., p. 889.

⁴ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 888-9.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 889-900.

larger in terms of geographic size and population, Britain was wealthier than Germany, giving Britain a higher per capita income than Germany.

Another source, Paul Studenski, confirms this supposition. In his book The Income of Nations he points out that Helfferich estimated that in 1912 Germany's per capita income was 555 marks as compared with 815 marks for Great Britain.⁸ A chart in the same book shows the National Income of the United Kingdom as £2,250M. or £49.0 per capita and the National Income of Germany as £2,100M. or £30.9 per capita.⁹

It seems clear from these figures that Britain was somewhat richer than Germany. By 1914, however, Germany was, though second to Britain, a relatively wealthy well-developed nation. Its finances were in excellent shape according to the Commercial Attache to the British Embassy at Berlin, Sir F. Oppenheimer. He writes:

Germany stands today in a position of exceptional financial strength . . . The financial situation of the German money market has never been stronger than today; it is eminently

⁸Paul Studenski, The Income of Nations, New York, New York University Press, 1958, p. 144.

⁹Ibid., p. 147.

ready, should the occasion arise, to assist the smooth working of the measures which are known as Germany's financial mobilization.¹⁰

W.A. Cole and P. Deane write that:

By 1913 a nation of more than 66 million people, three-fifths of them townsmen, Germany was the leading industrial country in Europe.¹¹

Virginia Cowles agrees. In her book The Kaiser, she writes:

Germany was more prosperous than at any time in her history. Although the population had increased during the twenty-six years of the Kaiser's reign from 41 to 66 million, Germany's wealth had risen far more rapidly. Her manufacturing output had trebled and her national income doubled. She led all Europe in chemistry and applied science; her railway system was the best in the world; she had surpassed Britain in the production of pig iron, was close behind her in coal and had beaten all competitors in the supply of potash.¹²

Germany, then, was evidently a relatively affluent nation. In spite of some differences we feel no qualms about placing Britain and Germany in the same general categories of wealth and size. In Rosenau's terms both nations could be described as "large, developed" countries.

¹⁰G.P. Gooch and W. Temperley, eds., British Documents on the Origins of the War (hereinafter referred to as B.D.), London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1926, vol. XI, p. 207.

¹¹W.A. Cole and P. Deane, "The Growth of National Incomes," in W.J. Habakkuk and M. Postan, The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Cambridge University Press, 1965, vol. VI, p. 17.

¹²V. Cowles, The Kaiser, New York, Harper and Row, 1963, p. 305.

Britain and Germany in 1914 were somewhat different in terms of the political accountability of their respective governments, however. At this point it would be worthwhile to set down some of the criteria by which one might judge openness and closedness. Rosenau suggests that one could "measure the accountability parameter in terms of the number of parties represented in the national legislature, with open actors being those having, say, two or more parties represented and closed actors being those with only one-party legislatures or without any formal legislative body at the national level."¹³ R.B. Farrell suggests a whole series of criteria which he suggests could be used to define openness and closedness. These criteria are listed below in Table 2.¹⁴

These criteria are only suggestions and are not meant to be followed rigorously.¹⁵ Rosenau's proposal, for

¹³ Rosenau, Unpublished manuscript, p. III-3.

¹⁴ Farrell, op. cit., p. 168.

¹⁵ For instance, Farrell writes in Ibid., pp. 168-9: "It is probable that no political system has fully fallen within the model form of constitutional democracy or totalitarian dictatorship. Many political systems fall somewhere between the types described. . . . It nevertheless may be useful here, for purposes of analysis, to examine some political systems which come closer to the two extremes, even though it may be correctly argued that in one respect or another they do not completely qualify."

Table 2

<u>Open</u>	<u>Closed</u>
1. competitive regular electoral contests.	1. an official ideology.
2. legalized two or multi-party organizations aimed at offering alternative government leadership.	2. a single mass party consisting of a relatively small percentage of the total population.
3. a high degree of toleration for autonomous groups in politics.	3. a system of terroristic police control.
4. an acceptance of constitutional restraints on governmental power.	4. near-complete party control over all means of effective mass communications.
	5. similar control over all means of armed combat.
	6. central control and direction of the entire economy typically including most associations and group activities.

instance, fails to take account of situations where, although there are two or multi-party legislatures, they do not exercise any effective control over the government of the nation as a result of constitutional restraints or inefficient organization. The criteria suggested by Farrell, which he attributes to Friedrich, are suitable mainly in the modern context, particularly the criteria of closedness.

One would not hesitate to define the Absolute Monarchies of the Middle Ages as closed political systems, and yet they were not marked by official ideologies, mass parties, or terroristic police control as we understand these things. Farrell's measures of closedness are, then, dated. His and Rosenau's criteria do, however, provide us with a rough guide for categorizing Britain and Germany as either open or closed, and we shall use them in this more general way.

There should be little disagreement with the classification of Britain in 1914 as a relatively open polity. There had been regular elections for over a century by the beginning of the War. The two major parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, had both been in existence for a long period of time and both had, at one time or another, formed the government of England. The arbitrary powers of the monarchy had been so curtailed that by 1914 the King was merely a ceremonial figurehead as Kaiser William II of Germany was to discover, much to his chagrin.¹⁶ Constitutional restraints on government power had been accepted as more or less legitimate since the signing of the Magna

¹⁶ See Max Montgelas and Walthur Schucking, eds., Outbreak of the World War, German documents collected by Karl Kautsky (hereinafter referred to as K.D.), New York, Oxford University Press, 1924, pp. 321-22.

Carta in 1215. Although suffrage was not yet universal it was fairly broad and the trend towards universality was clear in the reform proposals submitted by the Liberal government, the implementation of which was postponed because of the War until 1918. The press was free to report on and criticize government actions, restricted only by libel laws. The government leaders were responsible to the members of their own party and, through Parliament, to the electorate. All proposed changes in the law were subject to the approval of the combined Houses.

We do not deny here, however, that there may have been some sort of informal elite which tended to occupy positions of authority within the British government. It is doubtful if any democratic nation has ever avoided completely the phenomenon of elite rule in the very loose-knit sense of the term. A.J. Hale writes about Britain:

England has always been governed by political oligarchies Editors, statesmen, and officials were the products of the same public schools and universities, and they moved in the same social circles. All bore the trademark of the British ruling class.¹⁷

However, without going into a highly detailed discussion of the "interlocking directorships" of British

¹⁷ Aron J. Hale, Publicity and Diplomacy, New York, D. Appleton-Century Co. Inc., 1940, p. 8.

politics in 1914, another essay in itself, we feel that because of Britain's long history of parliamentary government, because there were clearly groups which offered the electors alternative governments, because suffrage was widespread, because the government was subject to open criticism of its policies, and because most Britons enjoyed the personal freedoms of a democratic state, Britain can be safely classified as a relatively open polity.

Classifying Germany as a closed system presents a more difficult proposition. The situation here is far more ambiguous. Germany had many of the features of what most people would recognize as an authoritarian monarchy. The Reich constitution of 1871 established the German Emperor as the principle head of state. His powers had a dual basis: ". . . as Emperor he controlled foreign and military affairs, and appointed the Imperial Chancellor," the chief government minister, and "as King of Prussia he ruled the domestic affairs of his state,"¹⁸ the most powerful in the German federation. Sigmund Neumann describes the Emperor's powers in more detail.

He had the right to make peace and to declare "defensive" war. He was the commander in chief of the army. . . .

¹⁸ A.J. Heidenheimer, The Governments of Germany, New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1961, p. 9.

The Emperor appointed the Reich officials of the diplomatic corps, the judicial and civil administration, and above all, the Chancellor, chief figure of the Second Empire. The latter was the Kaiser's confidant and could not be compelled to resign by even the most obstinate parliament. The principal legislation was prepared by the Federal Council and the cabinet, members of which were chosen by the Chancellor and were responsible solely to the sovereign.¹⁹

The Kaiser, the Chancellor, and the Bundesrat (Federal Council), then, were vested with a great deal of constitutional authority.

However, the constitution of 1871 did provide for an elected assembly, the Reichstag. In addition, the suffrage in Germany was very widespread. Neumann writes:

. . . the electoral system provided for direct, secret, universal suffrage for every male citizen over twenty-five; in fact the suffrage was more democratic than that of the United States or Great Britain.²⁰

But the only real power given to the Reichstag was that of approving the budget. Even this authority was curtailed by a measure known as the Septennat, which excluded the military expenses from the annual scrutiny.²¹ Moreover, Bismark so

¹⁹S. Neumann, "Germany," in T. Cole, ed., European Political Systems, New York, A.A. Knopf, 1959, pp. 343-44.

²⁰Ibid., p. 345.

²¹Loc. cit.

dominated the elected assembly while he was Chancellor that it still had not fully recovered its self-confidence and authority by 1914. Neumann writes that he "had a theory of the constitutional gap (Luckentheorie)" which "enabled him to circumvent parliamentary control over the budget in case of disagreement between monarch and chamber and to spend at his discretion in 'the interest of the state'."²² A.F. Heidenheimer describes in greater detail Bismark's clever and ruthless 'iron-handed' tactics.

For in pursuit of his policy of killing parliamentarianism through Parliament, the Iron Chancellor sought both to limit the Reichstag's powers to nonessentials, and to harass and discomfit the legislative parties so that they would fearfully respond to his wishes. He largely succeeded in depriving the Reichstag of ministers whom it could hold responsible for policy, and he almost succeeded in depriving it of its most basic power, that of approving the budget. . . In this way the legislature was placed in a position where it could neither affect the tenure of the Chancellor and his ministers, nor effectively hamper passage of the most important pieces of legislation. Furthermore, the Constitution prohibited simultaneous membership in the government and the legislature, thus setting a legal barrier to the introduction of parliamentary government.²³

Bismark was forced to retire in 1890 after several clashes with William II. The new Emperor, unlike his predecessor, wanted "to be his own Chancellor,"²⁴ and after

²² Loc. cit. ²³ Heidenheimer, op. cit., p. 8.

²⁴ Wolfgang Treue, Germany Since 1848, Bad Godesberg, Inter Nationes, 1968, p. 59.

Bismark's demise he appointed a series of relatively weak, ineffectual men to the chancellorship.²⁵ Freed from Bismark's domination, the Reichstag did regain some of its lost power. In 1909, for instance, as part of the embarrassing Daily Telegraph affair,²⁶ the Reichstag forced the Emperor to make an apologetic statement and overthrew the cabinet of Chancellor von Bulow. The election of 1912 placed a definitely anti-government majority in the Reichstag.

Yet the Emperor and his ministers were able to ignore most protests from the Parliament. For instance, Neumann writes of one case in which "the government was censured by an overwhelming vote of 293 to 54 for high-handed treatment of civilians by the military caste" but "the action was merely ignored by the Chancellor."²⁷

Before we draw any conclusions about Germany in 1914 we should note that the nation was not characterized entirely by Farrell's other criteria of a closed system. While the government did influence the economy in some ways, such as by encouraging the cartel system, it did not maintain the

²⁵Neumann, op. cit., p. 341.

²⁶For an account of the Daily Telegraph interview, see V. Cowles, op. cit., pp. 256-279, passim.

²⁷Neumann, op. cit., p. 354.

kind of control that is now exercised, for instance, by the Soviet government. The government of Germany did maintain official news outlets, the Wolff Telegraphic Bureau for official communications, the Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung for semi-official statements, and the Kolnische Zeitung for inspired articles and trial balloons.²⁸ But the press on the whole was allowed to express dissenting opinions and to disseminate criticisms of the regime. In fact, Hale estimates that there were 4,000 daily and weekly newspapers in Germany in 1914.²⁹

Pre-war Germany was not an "ideal" example of a closed political system. But power clearly was concentrated in the hands of a few individuals who were neither officially responsible to nor actually responsive to the demands of the majority of the population. Positions of effective political power were not open to a broad range of citizens who competed in elections in order to gain office. In addition, we should not think of "open" and "closed" as dichotomous categories, but as the extreme opposite ends of a continuum. From the evidence presented above it would seem that we could justly place Britain more towards the "open" end than Germany. We keep in mind, though, the qualification that

²⁸Hale, op. cit., p. 9.

²⁹Ibid., p. 43.

Germany in particular is an ambiguous case and that we have placed it towards the "closed" end of the political spectrum on the basis of a rather brief (though not, we feel, entirely inadequate) examination of the structure and function of its political organizations, for the purposes of this analysis.

At this point it would seem appropriate to insert a general description of how the investigation was planned and how it was conducted. The evidence presented in support of and in opposition to the hypotheses will be mainly anecdotal. After some thought, study, and consultation it was decided that such an approach, combined with various interpretations of the documents contained in secondary sources, would prove just as accurate and informative as a more rigorous statistical analysis. In addition, the anecdotal style of investigation is less tedious and time-consuming. Here is a plan of the analysis in point form as it was carried out:

1. The leaders of Britain and Germany in the field of foreign relations were identified.
2. Each leader's general policy position was outlined in fair detail.
3. The various messages and notes addressed to or delivered to the leaders were examined to see if they were at variance with the leaders' expressed policy positions. We expected that there would be less variance in the case of Germany than in the case of England.
4. The conclusions suggested by the investigation were outlined.

We might also add a few words here about the meanings we have attributed to various words and phrases within the hypotheses. Perhaps first it would be useful to repeat our previously-stated proposition.

In a closed polity bureaucrats are less likely to provide information contradicting the leadership's known position than in an open polity.

"Bureaucrats" are those people who hold non-elective government or civil service positions of authority. This category includes deputy ministers and their assistants, private secretaries, military personnel, and diplomats and their staffs.

"Leadership" refers to persons holding top-ranking elective and non-elective government and civil service positions who appear to have played a particularly important decision-making role in the situation under investigation. Their importance could be measured by a fairly detailed study of the amount and type of communications which they receive and dispatch. The categories "bureaucrat" and "leader" are not entirely exclusive and one person might be classified first as a bureaucrat and secondly as a leader, depending upon the focus of the analysis at any particular time. Thus von Bethmann-Hollweg, the German Chancellor, might be considered in one context a bureaucrat and in another, a leader. An elected official, such as Edward Grey, the British Foreign Minister, would not normally, however, be considered a bureaucrat.

The "leadership's known position" has been determined by carefully examining all of that particular person's announcements, dispatches, conversations, and comments as presented in the collections of documents. Reference has also been made to secondary sources.

"Contradictory information" is conceived to be of a factual, interpretive, or prescriptive nature, or any combination of these categories. Where contradictions were present the researcher expected them to be quite clearly evident for the most part. If some doubt existed as to the intent and disposition of any particular message, that message was carefully screened within the context of previous messages from the same source and messages from the target of the particular communication to the communicant. Most of the analysis has been conducted using common sense and intuition as a guide.

Thus, having outlined our plans for this particular study, let us continue with the tale of the investigation.

CHAPTER 3

THE LEADERS AND THEIR POSITIONS

The first problem presented to us in researching this chapter was to discover which particular decision-makers to focus upon as leaders. The decisions as to whom should be classified as leaders were made according to two criteria: the institutional position of the decision-maker, and his apparent importance within the time period as demonstrated by the disproportionate number of messages which he sent and received. Hence four men have been chosen as leaders, one from Britain and three from Germany.

Edward Grey was the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Britain from 1905 until 1917. He was, therefore, certainly in a central institutional position at the beginning of and throughout most of the War. An examination of the documents firmly establishes him as the focus of diplomatic and political activity during the months preceeding the outbreak of hostilities. Of a total of 677 British documents, 463 or about 68% were addressed specifically to Grey. Of these 463, 440 came from British diplomats in foreign lands, 8 from other bureaucrats, and 15 from non-British sources. Grey himself sent some 131 dispatches and communications to various bureaucrats, both British and foreign. This last figure represents about 19% of all the documents contained in

the British collection. The total number of messages either sent or received by Grey equals 594 or about 87%. Even if Grey did not personally read or draft answers for some of the communications the sheer volume of them addressed to him and sent by him clearly establish the Foreign Minister as a central authority during the month before the War. In addition, the figures quoted above do not include the various minutes and conversations recorded in the British documents collection in which Grey also played a leading role.

Other British government officials such as cabinet ministers seem to have taken little interest in events on the European continent. They seem to have left the management of affairs there in Grey's hands. For instance, the Prime Minister, the Right Honorable Herbert Asquith, only made two contributions to the British document collection, both of them very short replies to questions addressed to him in the House of Commons. There are no direct contributions from Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty. The cabinet, the government, and the nation were, at the time of the ominous developments in Europe, thoroughly distracted by the Irish Home Rule question. Only after the delivery of the Austrian note to Serbia on July 23, 1914 did the nation's leaders begin to perceive the magnitude of the approaching crisis. Winston Churchill

eloquently describes the change which came over the Cabinet and is worth quoting at length.

The discussion [on Ireland] had reached its inconclusive end, and the Cabinet was about to separate, when the quiet grave tones of Sir Edward Grey's voice were heard reading a document which had just been brought to him from the Foreign Office. It was the Austrian note to Serbia. He had been reading or speaking for several minutes before I could disengage my mind from the tedious and bewildering debate which had just closed. We were all very tired, but gradually as the phrases and sentences followed one another impressions of a wholly different character began to form in my mind. This note was clearly an ultimatum; but it was an ultimatum such as had never been penned in modern times. As the reading proceeded it seemed absolutely impossible that any State in the world could accept it, or that any acceptance, however abject, would satisfy the aggressor. The parishes of Fermanagh and Tyrone faded back into the mists and squalls of Ireland, and a strange light began immediately but by perceptible gradations, to fall and grow upon the map of Europe.¹

Clearly a European war was not the chief concern of either Churchill or the other members of the Cabinet, at least until that moment on July 24. Up to that time Grey was the only British government official who took an active interest in the possible consequences of the Sarajevo assassination and even afterwards he seems to have maintained a firm

¹Sir Winston Churchill, The World Crisis, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928, pp. 204-205.

control over British policy, relying on his departmental officials and cabinet colleagues for advice and support, but not leadership.

In Germany three men appear to have occupied positions of leadership and authority during the time period under investigation. The first person we have designated as a leader is the Kaiser, William II. As the constitutional and theoretically autocratic head of state he certainly meets our first criterion. In addition, an examination of the documents indicates he played an active role in initiating and influencing German policy. While he sent and received directly relatively few of the official documents found in the German collection (for instance, he sent out over his own signature only seventeen out of 879 documents) he commented on and revised dozens more. Indications are that almost all important information received by the Chancellor or the Foreign Office was submitted to him for comment, and that most official dispatches were given to him for his approval before they were sent. On occasion he took complete command and issued specific orders himself. The decision to have the German fleet return to its home base at Kiel in preparation for hostilities was the Kaiser's own, for instance. He was, therefore, an important force in German foreign policy and must be placed in the leadership category.

The German Imperial Chancellor, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg was also a very significant figure. As the Emperor's chief minister, officially responsible only to William II, he occupied an important institutional position. Moreover, he too took a lively interest in German foreign relations. Of the 879 documents in the German collection 60, or about 7%, were addressed directly to him, and 102, or about 12%, were sent out over his signature. Correspondence in which he was directly involved, then, account for nearly 20% of the total Kautsky collection, and he also had access to the information which flowed into the Foreign Office.

Edward Grey's equivalent in Germany, the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Herr Gottlieb von Jagow, also played a prominent role within the German government, although most commentators on the origins of the War and on German foreign policy have not paid as much attention to him as to the Kaiser and the Imperial Chancellor. He did, however, occupy an important government post, and looking at the documents we see that he was both the recipient and the source of many of the dispatches. Herr Jagow sent out some 148 messages, or about 17% of the total (879) and 32, or about 4% were addressed specifically to him. In addition by far the greatest number of documents in the Kautsky collection addressed to a single place, are those which were sent to the Foreign Office. Although these documents do not

designate a particular personal recipient, Jagow, as head of that office, must have handled many of these communications himself along with the Imperial Chancellor and the Emperor. His views, then, probably had an important bearing on the formation of German foreign policy and he must be considered one of Germany's leading public men, particularly with regard to the events preceeding the War.

We have, therefore, identified four government officials as leaders: Edward Grey in England, William II, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg, and Herr von Jagow in Germany. Now we shall have to examine and outline the position each of these men took with regard to the imminent War in general and on particular issues.

To try to decide how each of the four leaders mentioned above was predisposed towards the pre-War international situation and his country's foreign policy, all of his pronouncements, messages, and notes as recorded in the document collections were scrutinized and evaluated. In addition, secondary sources were consulted when it appeared that they had something to add. Below we have summarized our findings.

Edward Grey - British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

Throughout the time period (the end of June until the first week of August) Grey's position was marked by cautious optimism. Until the very last moment he was convinced that

if some sort of mediation could be arranged between the European Great Powers, a general war could be averted. He saw Britain's role as that of the calm, objective peace-maker, and he worked hard to encourage patience and restraint on the part of the disputing nations and their allies. In a communication to Sir F. Bertie, the British Ambassador to Paris, he wrote:

I spoke to M. Cambon today of my apprehension that Austria might be forced by her public opinion into some "demarche" against Servia owing to the feeling aroused by the murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand; and I said that, in such an event, we must do all we could to encourage patience at St. Petersburg.²

In a message to Sir H. Rumbold, British Charge d'Affaires at Berlin, he wrote:

I assured Prince Lichnowsky that I would continue the same policy as I had pursued through the Balkan crisis, and do my utmost to prevent the outbreak of war between the Great Powers He could assure his Government that I not only did not wish to disturb the peace, but would also do my utmost to preserve it.³

In another later note to Sir F. Bertie, he wrote:

I told M. Cambon of what I had said to Prince Lichnowsky yesterday as to the necessity of Austria making her demand as reasonable as possible and making public as strong justification as possible for it.⁴

²B.D., op. cit., p. 30.

³Ibid., p. 34.

⁴Ibid., p. 60.

Edward Grey made several concrete proposals for mediation. On July 22, 1914 he suggested that the Russian government communicate directly with Austria in order to work out some agreement by which Austria could demand some compensation from Serbia without bringing Serbia's ally, Russia, into the conflict.⁵ On July 24, 1914 he proposed that four Great Powers, Germany, France, Italy, and Great Britain, work together to mediate the dispute. And on July 31, 1914 he suggested that Germany sound out Austria while Britain worked to restrain Russia.⁷ Each of these proposals was considered by the nations close to and involved in the pre-War conflict, but each was rejected for numerous reasons such as the mutual suspicions which existed between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, poor communications, and the general pressures of time and events.

Associated with this "dovish" emphasis on patience and negotiation was Grey's insistence that Britain was not committed, should a European war begin, to support either the Triple Entente or the Triple Alliance. In fact this position was a bit of political trickery which may have added to the confusion during the pre-War months. Although Grey repeatedly denied it, Britain was at least morally, if not legally, committed to supporting France in the case of

⁵Ibid., p. 64. ⁶Ibid., p. 78. ⁷Ibid., p. 215.

a German attack. Part of the reason for Grey's reluctance to take a firm stand in support of France was that the series of diplomatic and military meetings that had been conducted between the two countries had been initiated and continued without the consent and support of the Cabinet.

A. Cecil writes:

The matter seemed to him [Grey] so urgent, the pre-occupation of many of his colleagues with the General Election of 1906 so great, that he authorised these meetings without submitting the matter to the Cabinet. It was, consequently, no more than an inner circle of ministers together with the editor and military correspondent of the Times who knew, until some years later, that French and British military experts had been discussing the mobilisation of a British force to meet the contingency of a German attack upon France across the Belgian frontier.⁸

Later, he evidently regretted this bit of constitutional irregularity.

Nevertheless Grey continued until the very last moment to claim that Britain had no commitments, and that it could act as a disinterested, pacifistic mediator. On June 24, 1914, he wrote to Sir E. Goschen, the British Ambassador in Berlin:

It was quite easy for me to say [to Prince Lichnowsky], and quite true, that there

⁸A. Cecil, British Foreign Secretaries, London, G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1927, p. 321.

was no alliance; no agreement committing us to action; and that all the agreements of that character that we had with France and Russia had been published.⁹

Much later on, after the Austrian note had been delivered to Serbia and the situation was truly reaching crisis proportions, Grey continued to insist that Britain was not committed to any kind of position vis a vis the other Great Powers. In a note to Sir. F. Bertie on July 29, he wrote:

If Germany became involved and France became involved, we had not made up our minds what we should do; it was a case that we should have to consider.¹⁰

On July 31 he reaffirmed to Sir Bertie that there was no pledge yet to intervene on the side of France.¹¹

Let us briefly review, then, Grey's "known" positions. He was always hopeful of solving the European problems without resort to violence. He repeatedly emphasized the possibilities of mediation and negotiation, and put forth several concrete proposals in this regard. He repeatedly affirmed Britain's official non-alignment in the European conflict.

⁹B.D., op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 180.

¹¹Ibid., p. 220.

William II - Emperor of Germany

The Kaiser of Germany, William II, was not nearly so consistent as Edward Grey. Virginia Cowles claims that his highly emotional nature took control of his words and actions after he received word of the Sarajevo assassination. She writes:

But now William II had changed. He seemed to have lost all control. He threw caution to the winds, and allowed a sense of outrage to direct everything he thought and said.¹²

In spite of his apparent instability there are a few identifiable attitudes which the Emperor repeatedly expounded and which were relatively constant, at least from the time of the assassination June 28, 1914 until the Serbian answer to the Austrian ultimatum on July 25.

Early in the game he proclaimed his loyalty, perhaps ruefully, to the Austrian regime. On July 5, 1914 he gave his infamous "blank check" of support to Austria-Hungary. Virginia Cowles quotes the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador at Berlin, Count Szogyeny, as writing:

His Majesty authorised me to report that in this case also we could reckon on Germany's full support. . . . His Majesty said he understood how hard Francis Joseph, with his well-known love of peace, would find it to invade Serbia; but if we had really decided that military action against Serbia was necessary, he would be sorry if we left unused the present moment which was so favourable to us.¹³

¹²V. Cowles, op. cit., p. 311.

¹³Ibid., p. 313.

On July 14, 1914, the Emperor reaffirmed this loyalty. To the Emperor of Austria-Hungary he wrote:

. . . you will find me and my Empire standing faithfully at your side in this dark hour, in full accord with our old and tried friendship and with the obligations of our alliance.¹⁴

Another of the Kaiser's attitudes which, while it may have been born in anger, remained strongly evident in his communications and notes at least until July 25, was his overt aggressiveness towards Serbia. From soon after the assassination he was in favour of some direct, hostile action against the "band of regicides." On June 30, in a notation, he writes: "The Serbs must be disposed of, and that right soon."¹⁵ He denigrated Serbian attempts at apology and assurance of compensation to Austria-Hungary. On a communication from the German Minister at Belgrade to the Imperial Chancellor explaining the Serbian position, the Emperor wrote words such as "Bosh!" and "Hot air!"¹⁶ On July 23 he again expressed his hatred of the Serbs by saying that "Serbia is nothing but a band of robbers that must be seized for its crimes."¹⁷

¹⁴K.D., op. cit., p. 90.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 163.

In addition to hating the Serbs the Emperor was also strongly suspicious and frightened of France and England, and particularly Russia, and perhaps with good reason. After all, articles hostile to Germany had been appearing in the Russian press for quite some time, and his suspicions that Britain and France had negotiated secret military agreements were eventually proven to be true. His fear is evident in numerous notations and messages. On June 13, where the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg writing to the Imperial Chancellor wrote "Russia is prepared" the Kaiser notes "Against us!".¹⁸ On June 14 he writes:

Well! At last the Russians have shown their hand! Whatever German still refuses to believe that in Russo-Galicia they are working at high pressure for an early war with us, or that we should adopt the necessary measures for self-protection, deserves to be sent at once to the mad-house at Dalldorf!¹⁹

On July 13 the German Minister in St. Petersburg, Pourtales, wrote to the Emperor:

This restraint [to admit the common danger to Russia and Germany of regicide] can only be explained by the unmitigable hatred of the Minister [Russian-Sazanov] for Austria-Hungary, a hatred which is clouding more and more all clear and calm judgement here.

The Emperor's comment was "Right!".²⁰

¹⁸Ibid., p. 53.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 54.

²⁰Ibid., p. 117.

A final notable characteristic exhibited by the Emperor was his unwillingness to enter into any negotiations in an attempt to avert a clash between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. In a note made on July 10 he quoted Frederick the Great as saying:

I am against all councils of war and conferences, since the more timid party always has the upper hand.²¹

On July 24 he wrote:

I will not join in it [Grey's proposal for four power mediation of the dispute] unless Austria expressly asks me to, which is not likely. In vital questions and those of honor, one does not consult with others.²²

Flotow, the German Ambassador at Rome, wrote to the Foreign Office on July 27, the following:

Sir Edward Grey wants to unit the Ambassadors of Germany, France, Italy, and Russia in some action for the preservation of peace.

The Emperor's comment was "I will not go into anything."²³

The above mentioned attitudes were reasonably constant and unmistakeable until after the Serbian reply to the Austrian note on July 25. At that time his former hostile, aggressive stance towards Serbia all but disappeared. His comments on the Serbian reply were:

²¹Ibid., p. 94.

²²Ibid., p. 185.

²³Ibid., p. 238.

A brilliant performance for a time limit of only 48 hours. This is more than one could have expected. A great moral victory for Vienna; but with it every reason for war drops away, and Giesl might have remained quietly in Belgrade! On the strength of this I should never have ordered mobilization.²⁴

Virginia Cowles claims that the Emperor's reaction was an emotional one spurred by fright. She writes:

He [William II] saw at once that Germany and Austria were being placed in an invidious position by their uncompromising attitude towards the Serbian note. Even more significant, he once again was seized by fright. He had in front of him Grey's icy interview with Prince Lichnowsky, in which the Foreign Secretary insisted that the key to the situation lay in Berlin and that if Germany desired peace he was convinced that she could restrain Austria The dispatch had a profound effect on William II. He did not want a European war, only a European victory. And he suddenly saw that he was standing far closer to the edge of the precipice than he had imagined.²⁵

In a reversal of his previous line of thought and speech the Emperor even put forward his own peace proposal. His suggestion was that Austria be allowed to take Belgrade as a hostage until Serbia had met the promises of its reply. Once the promises had been fulfilled the causes of war would have disappeared. At that time, he himself would mediate between Austria and Serbia to restore peace to the area.²⁶

²⁴Ibid., p. 254.

²⁵V. Cowles, op. cit., p. 329.

²⁶K.D., op. cit., pp. 273-4.

William II's reservoir of pacificism and goodwill was, however, shallow. His mediation proposal and change of heart came too late. Austrian and Russian mobilizations were soon underway and the pace of events began to take control of the situation. On July 30, just five days after the Serbian reply, the Emperor, faced with Russian and Austrian mobilization, quit his role as mediator. By the morning of the thirtieth he had reverted to his previous belligerent suspicion, minus the bravado of his earlier statements. In an unusually long notation he expresses his conviction that Russia, France, and Britain had been following a secret policy of "circumscription" all along. He writes:

For I have no doubt left about it: England, Russia, and France have agreed among themselves - after laying the foundations of the causus foederis for us through Austria - to take the Austro-Serbian conflict for an excuse for waging a war of extermination against us.²⁷

In spite of the obvious inconsistency of his views, it seems to me that we would be fairly safe in assuming that the Emperor's "known position" is well expressed in the summation presented above of his pre-July 25 opinions: loyalty to Austria, aggressiveness towards Serbia, fear and suspicion of the other Great Powers, and hesitancy to confer. These were the views which he held for the longest single period of time just before the War, and they were essentially

²⁷Ibid., p. 350.

the ones which he reverted to after his brief change of heart.

Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg - Imperial Chancellor of Germany

Imperial Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg's position was more conservative than that of the Emperor. Although he was cautious and rather cool towards Germany's enemies he was not nearly so ready to believe that they were secretly plotting the demise of his nation. On June 16, he wrote to Lichnowsky, the German Ambassador in England, ". . . I do not believe that Russia is planning an early war against us."²⁸ While he tacitly agreed with the Emperor's "blank-check" of support for Austria-Hungary, he did not express his dislike of the Serbs in the same emotional, provocative way that William did. He wanted to see Serbia punished, but he was well aware of the dangers inherent in an Austro-Serbian clash. Therefore, he worked towards the localization of the conflict. On July 16 he wrote to the German Secretary of State of Alsace-Lorraine, Roedern:

In the event of an Austro-Serbian conflict it will be of the utmost importance to localize this difference.²⁹

²⁸Ibid., p. 55.

²⁹Ibid., p. 120.

Bethmann-Hollweg was not eager, however, for Germany to enter into any negotiations for the settlement of the dispute, at least not until after the Serbian reply to the Austrian ultimatum. He continued to urge France and Britain to restrain Russia in the hope of localizing the conflict.³⁰ After the Serbian reply on July 27, practical considerations and the realization that a general war was imminent forced him to reconsider the possibilities of negotiation. After receiving a communication from Lichnowsky indicating Grey's impatience he wrote to the Ambassador at Vienna:

Since we have already refused one English proposal for a conference, it is impossible for us to waive a limine this English suggestion also. By refusing every proposition for mediation, we should be held responsible for the conflagration by the whole world, and be set as the original instigators of the war. That would also make our position impossible in our own country, where we must appear as having been forced into war. Our situation is all the more difficult, inasmuch as Serbia has apparently yielded to a very great degree. Therefore we cannot refuse the mediator's role, and must submit the English proposal to the consideration of the Vienna Cabinet, especially as London and Paris continue to make their influence felt in Petersburg.³¹

As it became obvious that the conflict could not be isolated, and that the mediation attempts were too little, too late, Bethmann-Hollweg turned his attention more and

³⁰Ibid., pp. 209-10.

³¹Ibid., p. 256.

more away from trying to avoid the war, to trying to justify Germany's position and lay the weight of the blame upon Russia and its allies. In another telegram to the German Ambassador in Vienna, while emphasizing the importance of Austria making known to Germany and to the other Great Powers its plans, he again points out that the blame must lie with Russia. He writes:

It is imperative that the responsibility for the eventual extension of the war among those nations not originally immediately concerned should, under all circumstances, fall on Russia.³²

As the time grew short, the Chancellor made a series of last minute proposals designed to head off all-out conflict, or at least make it appear as though Germany were trying to avoid general war. On July 29, he proposed that Britain openly declare its neutrality in the conflict while Germany fought a defensive war against France and Russia, guaranteeing not to take any French European territory.³³ On July 30, realizing Britain would fight against Germany, he urgently proposed mediation of the conflict in Vienna.³⁴ The Austro-Hungarians, however, seemed determined to drag Germany into a European war, a fact which greatly angered the Chancellor. In a final, last-minute attempt to avert catastrophe, he proposed that England guarantee with its forces,

³²Ibid., p. 288.

³³Ibid., pp. 327-8.

³⁴Ibid., p.345.

France's neutrality while Germany contended with Russia on the eastern front.³⁵ This proposal was, of course, quite unacceptable to France and to England.

In spite of his high government rank and obvious activity in the events leading up to the War, the German Chancellor seems to have been much more of a bureaucratic type than a leadership type.³⁶ Many of his communications were simply second-hand transfers of information to and from the Emperor. He had a tendency to interpret things according to his own "wooden logic" but he seldom expressed a clear personal position as did the Emperor. He was concerned more with the details of tactics rather than with positive planning. His suggestions seem to be amalgams of other people's ideas rather than original, creative thoughts, except for some of his last-minute attempts to avert war, which, for the most part, were clearly ridiculous. We classify him as a "leader," then, with caution.

Nevertheless, let us summarize his apparent positions as indicated by the documents. Firstly, he was not so suspicious and fearful of the Russians as the Kaiser. Secondly,

³⁵Ibid., p. 452.

³⁶For instance, Neumann refers to Bethmann-Hollweg as an "acquiescent bureaucrat." See Neumann in Cole, op. cit., p. 354.

he believed that the Austro-Serbian conflict could be localized and he counted on Britain and France to restrain Russia. Thirdly, he was cool, but not opposed, to the idea of negotiation until the danger of Germany's position became obvious, and then he decided, at first reluctantly, and then desperately that Germany must positively encourage mediation in Vienna. Fourthly, should war break out he was determined that the blame should be attached to Russia.

Her von Jagow - German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs

The German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs propounded much the same positions as the Imperial Chancellor. Jagow was, however, even more of a bureaucrat, even more concerned with minor details. Many of his communications were simply reports of what had been happening or requests for information. He seldom gives his own personal views and usually refers to the decision-makers in any particular instance as "we," presumably referring to himself, the Chancellor, perhaps the Emperor, and the other members of the German government. At one point he was even required by the Emperor to make the momentous decision as to whether or not the government should send off the customary telegram of birthday congratulations to the King of Serbia!³⁷ One of

³⁷K.D., op. cit., pp. 95 and 97.

his duties seems to have been trying to get his diplomats to influence the foreign press in Germany's favor, sometimes with the use of outright bribes!³⁸

We shall not consider his opinions and positions in great detail, then, but we shall outline them. His most strongly held conviction seems to have been that the Austro-Serbian conflict should remain localized. Like Bethmann-Hollweg and the Emperor he counted on Britain to restrain Russia and France. He also felt that tactics were particularly important and that Austria should publish evidence to indicate its case against Serbia, and always appear to be the aggrieved party. That way Russia, and therefore Germany, could be more easily kept out of the conflict. Like the Chancellor he wanted to make sure that any responsibility for escalation of the conflict fell on Russia's shoulders. One of his other chief concerns was that Austria should make sure that Italy remained favorably disposed toward the Triple Alliance. He was also worried about the relatively petty matter of the alignment of the other Balkan states such as Bulgaria. In general he was convinced that Austria should take some firm steps against Serbia, but his enthusiasm here was tempered by a suspicion that, should the conflict escalate, Britain would fight against Germany along with Russia and France.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 99 and 111.

CHAPTER 4

INCOMING COMMUNICATIONS

Having now identified four political leaders and three known leadership positions (counting Bethmann-Hollweg's and Jagow's as essentially the same position) we turn to an investigation of the kind of advice which they received from those of lesser authority surrounding them. Did any of this advice contradict their own positions? We shall begin with Edward Grey. Perhaps it would be useful here to review in point form his general stance.

1. reasonably optimistic about reaching a peaceful solution.
2. emphasis on mediation and negotiation.
3. repeatedly stated that Britain was not bound to any side.
4. hesitant to make overt preparations for war.

We shall be looking, therefore, for proposals which obviously contradict any of these points.

To get a general picture of the type of information flowing between Grey and his advisors, a rough systematic survey of the British Document collection was carried out. A number from one to ten was randomly selected and served as a starting point. In this case the number was seven so we began with document number seven. After that, every tenth document up until July 24, the day after the delivery of

the Austrian ultimatum, was examined. After July 24 every fifteenth document was examined, mainly because it was roughly at that time that the volume of diplomatic correspondence per day increased sharply, and therefore it was felt that a smaller sample would be sufficient for our purposes.

Each document was categorized according to its source, its recipient, the date it was sent, the type of content it contained (i.e. factual, interpretive, prescriptive), and whether or not it contradicted Grey's policies. The sample size turned out to be 48 or about 7.2% of all the documents. The sample included communications from military sources, diplomats, foreign office bureaucrats, and foreign officials. Most were addressed to Grey, which is not surprising since about 68% of the total collection was addressed to him (in our sample 70.83% were addressed to him). The findings were rather surprising. None of the 48 documents examined contained any obvious or overt criticism or advice contradictory to Grey's policies. In fact, the majority of the documents were strictly factual in content, particularly those from diplomats stationed overseas. Their role seems to have been to inform rather than to advise.

We did not stop our investigation here with this crude sample. The entire collection was scrutinized several times, and although the researcher readily admits to not having read every single document, the examination was fairly thorough.

Nothing was found to contradict our earlier impression concerning diplomats. They provided lots of information concerning events, newspaper reports, and meetings in the area where they were stationed, but very little advice. Perhaps we might insert here a couple of examples chosen in a randomish leafing through the documents.

Sir W. Rumbold to Sir E. Grey, July 2, 1914
(British Charge d'Affaires at Berlin)

It is officially announced that the Emperor has owing to a slight indisposition, given up the intention of going to Vienna to attend the funeral of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Great stress is laid in the press announcements on the fact that this decision has in no way been influenced by political considerations or by fear for the safety of the Emperor.¹

Sir R. Rodd to Sir E. Grey, July 26, 1914
(British Ambassador at Rome)

Your telegram No. 232 to Paris of 26 July: Austria and Servia. Minister for Foreign Affairs welcomes your proposal for a conference, and will instruct Italian Ambassador tonight accordingly. As regards second paragraph, while agreeing in principle, he thinks that it would be prudent that Italy in her position as an ally should refer to Berlin and Vienna before undertaking formally to request the latter to suspend all action. Austrian Ambassador has informed Italian Government this evening that Minister in Belgrade had been recalled, but this did not imply declaration of war.²

¹B.D., op. cit., p. 17.

²Ibid., p. 107.

Edward Grey did encounter some opposition to his policies from bureaucrats in the Foreign Office, however. Sir Eyre Crowe, the Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was perhaps the leading sceptic. Virginia Cowles refers to him as "a rabid Germanophobe who for years had been talking about 'the German menace'."³ He took a much more suspicious, militant line than did Grey. By July 24 he was urging the Foreign Minister to take a much firmer stand in support of Russia and France against Germany. He writes:

The point that matters is whether Germany is or not absolutely determined to have this war now.
(my emphasis)
There is still a chance that she can be made to hesitate, if she can be induced to apprehend that the war will find England by the side of France and Russia.⁴

He proposed that Britain announce that it would mobilize the Fleet as soon as any other power mobilized, a proposal with which Edward Grey immediately disagreed.⁵ From this point onwards, however, Sir Eyre Crowe persists in expressing his "hawkish" attitudes. On July 31 he writes:

This [the reported movement of the 1st Grenadier regiment of the Saxony army to the Silesian frontier] is decidedly ominous. Clearly, although Germany avoids the use of the word "mobilization" she is doing the thing.⁶

³Cowles, op. cit., p. 327.

⁴B.D., op. cit., p. 81.

⁵Ibid., p. 82.

⁶Ibid., p. 199.

and:

If and when, however, it is certain that France and Russia cannot avoid the war, and are going into it, my opinion, for what it is worth, is that British interests require us to take our place beside them as Allies, and in that case our intervention should be immediate and decided.⁷

The Assistant Under-Secretary's advisory efforts culminate in a long memorandum sent to Edward Grey on July 31. In it Sir Eyre argues most strongly in favor of Britain entering the war on the side of France and Russia. A few extracted phrases should be enough to indicate its tenor and direction.

The theory that England cannot engage in a big war means her abdication as an independent State. . . . The argument that there is no written bond binding us to France is strictly correct. . . . But the Entente has been made. . . . The whole policy of the Entente can have no meaning if it does not signify that in a just quarrel England would stand by her friends. This honorable expectation has been raised. We cannot repudiate it without exposing our good name to grave criticism.

I venture to think that the contention that England cannot in any circumstances go to war, is not true, and that any endorsement of it would be an act of political suicide.

. . . I feel confident that our duty and our interest will be seen to lie in standing by France in her hour of need.⁸

⁷Ibid., p. 201.

⁸Ibid., pp. 228-9.

Sir Arthur Nicolson, the British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, also expressed opinions which were more suspicious and aggressive than Edward Grey's, but they were not quite so obviously at variance with the Secretary's views as were Sir Eyre Crowe's. On July 27, 1914, for instance, he wrote:

The German attitude is, to my mind, an untenable one if Germany really, as she so profusely professes, desires peace. She declines to take or evades any action at Vienna. . . . We are witnessing a most cynical and desperate measure and Germany should, for her own reputation, show facts that she is not willing to associate herself with it or in any case will assist in mitigating its effects and limit its scope.⁹

The next day, commenting on a note to Grey, he wrote:

There have certainly been no indications that Germany has exercised any moderating influence at Vienna. It is going rather far to put the responsibility on Russia who has been willing to adopt any and every course likely to lead to peace. I suppose Germany wishes Russia to join with the other Powers in keeping the ring while Austria strangles Serbia.¹⁰

By July 29 Sir Arthur was beginning to doubt seriously the efficacy of negotiation to solve the crisis. On that day he wrote:

⁹ Ibid., p. 123.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 164.

I am of the opinion that the resources of diplomacy are, for the present, exhausted.¹¹

He felt it necessary, by July 31, to urge Edward Grey to order mobilization of the army, a suggestion which Grey, perhaps somewhat reluctantly, agreed to consider the next day.¹²

Sir Arthur Nicolson also disagreed with Grey that Britain was not committed to either one side or the other in the case of a European war. Virginia Cowles writes:

Yet the entente was not a military alliance, only a loose partnership. The danger that it might fall apart over some disagreement haunted Sir Arthur Nicolson, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State. Ever since 1909 he had begged Sir Edward Grey to place the facts before the Cabinet and try to persuade his colleagues of the urgent necessity for changing the character of the entente and undertaking firm military commitments.¹³

and:

Sir Arthur Nicolson, the Permanent Under-Secretary, declared repeatedly--perhaps deliberately to counteract Grey's vagueness --that if a European war broke out Britain was bound to range herself beside France and Russia.¹⁴

Britain's entente commitments were, then, evidently a bone of contention between the Foreign Office and the Foreign Minister.

¹¹Ibid., p. 166.

¹²Ibid., p. 227.

¹³Cowles, op. cit., p. 297.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 307.

Two other places one might look for disagreement with Grey's policies would be the armed forces and the Cabinet.¹⁵ Unfortunately, the military have contributed few communications to the British Document collection. Those notes which did originate at military sources are irrelevant to this investigation. However, one gets the impression from reading Winston Churchill's book The World Crisis that the military worked in subordination to and cooperation with the Foreign Office, and that while the armed forces were well prepared should war come, they were not eager to get involved.

The Cabinet, too, was certainly not desirous of war. Winston Churchill writes:

The Cabinet was overwhelmingly pacific. At least three-quarters of its members were determined not to be drawn into a European quarrel, unless Great Britain herself was attacked, which was not likely. . . . It was not until Monday, August 3, that the direct appeal from the King of the Belgians for French and British aid raised an issue which united the overwhelming majority of Ministers and enabled Sir Edward Grey to make his speech on that afternoon in the House of Commons.¹⁶

We must conclude, then, from our investigation at any rate, that there was some, but not overwhelming, opposition to Edward Grey's views concerning the pre-War months

¹⁵Although we note here that the cabinet members cannot really be considered bureaucrats.

¹⁶Churchill, op. cit., p. 211.

and Britain's role during that time. Sir Eyre Crowe and Sir Arthur Nicolson appear to have disagreed with Grey. The two civil servants, unrestrained by Parliament and the Cabinet, would have liked Britain to take a firmer stand. They certainly showed no hesitancy about questioning the Foreign Minister's policies. Given their positions, their opposition was probably quite important. There was not much opposition from other sources, however. The military appears to have been satisfied to remain on the alert and not take any initiative. The members of the diplomatic corps restricted themselves to providing mainly factual information. Interpretations and prescriptions appear to have been kept to a minimum in official dispatches. If any diplomats did hold views in opposition to those of the Foreign Minister, they do not seem to have allowed their personal opinions to influence greatly their official reports.

We would expect from our hypothesis that in Germany, there would be less disagreement amongst government leaders, bureaucrats, diplomats, and military men than in England. Such does not appear to have been the case, however. If anything, there was even more discord in Germany. The cautious government bureaucrats quarrelled with the emotional, unstable Emperor, and some of the diplomats disagreed with both the bureaucrats and William II. Let us examine the evidence upon which we base these observations.

To get an overview of the various types of information which was being transmitted we carried out a systematic sample survey of the German documents. This was conducted in exactly the same way as the survey carried out on the British material. The results however, were quite different. Of the 63 documents surveyed, roughly seven per cent of the total, nine were clearly contradictory of the Emperor's pre-July 27 positions. Of these nine, five had definitely been passed on to, if they were not addressed directly to, the Emperor, since he made marginal notations on them. And of the nine, six were written before the Emperor changed his position on July 27. The contradictory messages originated at a variety of sources: the Imperial Chancellor, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and some diplomats in the field. Let us move now to a more detailed consideration of the content of some of the documents.

We focus first upon the Emperor. We have already established that his position did fluctuate somewhat, but that it remained fairly constant up until July 25. He insisted on Germany's loyalty to Austria, he was aggressive towards Serbia, he was fearful and suspicious of the other Great Powers, and he was hesitant to enter into any conferences on the Austro-Serbian affair. What kind of information and advice did he receive from his subordinates?

The answer seems to be a great variety of different kinds of news and counsel. Most of the diplomats seem to have submitted their reports in accordance with what actually was occurring and their own interpretations of events rather than with a view to confirming the Emperor's opinions. For instance, Count Pourtales, the German Ambassador at Petersburg, sent some messages which substantiated the Emperor's suspicious view of Russia and some which portrayed the Russian Ministers and people as quite pacific and amicable. The very first document in the Kautsky collection is a note from Pourtales on an anti-German editorial which appeared in a Russian newspaper and which Pourtales says "emanates from the local Ministry of War."¹⁷ He encloses a copy of the editorial. In a later communication on July 13, he writes:

But the deep hatred of Austria-Hungary that is felt here [Petersburg] very soon began to assert itself and the indignation at the revenge exercised against the Serbs in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy superceded within a few days all expressions of sympathy for the aged Emperor Franz Joseph and his realm . . . Not only in the press but among social circles one met with almost nothing but unfriendly criticism of the murdered Archduke with the suggestion that in him Russia had lost a bitter enemy.¹⁸

On July 21 the Count reported a conversation with the Russian Foreign Minister Sazonoff in which the minister

¹⁷K.D., op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 116.

indicated that he did not think Serbia should be heavily reprimanded, that the Serbian government was behaving quite properly, and that Russia would not allow Austria to make severe demands on Serbia. This report evidently aroused the Kaiser's anger towards Russia and he flared up with such comments as "Damnation!" and ". . . Russia . . . the perpetrator and advocate of regicide!!!"¹⁹ In a message addressed to the Chancellor and submitted to the Emperor on July 26 Pourtales reports that the Russian Foreign Minister "broke into the most unmeasured accusations and insinuations against the Austro-Hungarian Government." Sazonoff apparently declared his belief that Austria meant to "devour" Serbia and that "in that event . . . Russia will go to war with Austria."²⁰

Not all of Pourtales messages which reached the Kaiser portrayed the Russians as dangerous enemies, however. In that same communication of July 26, for instance, the Ambassador writes:

My general impression is that in spite of the very much excited mood in which Mr. Sazonoff finds himself, he wishes to temporize above all things . . .²¹

A note of July 24 contradicted the Emperor's fear of a strong French-Russian alliance against Germany.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 161.

²⁰Ibid., p. 214.

²¹Loc. cit.

Apart from these purely formal testimonials of honor, it can not be said that the reception accorded to the French guest here was a particularly warm one. Whoever reads nothing but the nationalistic local papers and extravagant reports of the celebration by the very numerous French journalists . . . will gain quite a mistaken impression of the spirit that reigned here during the period of the Presidential visit. Every impartial observer would have to testify to the striking indifference exhibited by the great mass of the general public toward the visit.²²

On July 27 he reported a quiet, pacific mood prevailing in Petersburg. He wrote:

The declaration that Austria had no intention of making any territorial acquisitions, and our energetic refutation of the insinuation that we had prodded Austria on with the idea of fomenting a conflict, has plainly had a quieting effect here... Mr. Sazonoff is now evidently striving to find a way out In general, there is little war enthusiasm to be remarked here . . .²³

There have been some suggestions that Pourtales' reports were not accurate. For instance, the Russians had been making military preparations since July 25 and yet he reports a peaceful mood prevailing there in the note quoted just above. It is difficult to say for certain, though, whether or not he was purposely distorting his messages to please the Emperor.

Most of the other German diplomats reported events with no apparent desire to placate or stimulate the Emperor.

²²Ibid., p. 211.

²³Ibid., p. 301.

It is notable, though, that while the British representatives seem to have offered little in the way of personal advice, their German equivalents expressed their own opinions, both to their own government and to the representatives of other governments, more frequently.

For instance, on June 30 Heinrich von Tschirschky, the German Ambassador at Vienna, wrote a note to the Imperial Chancellor that was passed on to the Emperor. At one point he says:

I take the opportunity of every such occasion to advise quietly but very impressively and seriously against too hasty steps [with regard to the Serbs].²⁴

The Ambassador's initiative elicited an acid response from the Emperor.

Who authorized him to act that way? That is very stupid!²⁵

On July 4 von Tschirschky offered some advice to his own government.

In my humble opinion our press should restrain itself as much as possible, and avoid giving offence here at the present moment by unsolicited advice.²⁶

Some of the other diplomats, notably Pourtales and Schoen in Paris, had a tendency at times to introduce their

²⁴Ibid., p. 61.

²⁵Loc. cit.

²⁶Ibid., p. 78.

own personal interpretations into reports. But the most obvious example of a German representative who coloured his communication with his own opinions was the Ambassador to London, Prince Lichnowsky.

Prince Lichnowsky was a noted British sympathizer and he submitted many messages which contradicted the Emperor's views about Britain. There is some doubt, however, whether many of these messages ever reached the Emperor. Of the total of seventy-two documents sent by Lichnowsky to the Foreign Office or the Imperial Chancellor, only eight are commented on by the Emperor. We can not know, of course, whether or not the Emperor read only those eight he commented on or whether he read many more, preferring not to comment. There is some evidence to suggest that Jagow and Bethmann-Hollweg might have deliberately kept some of Lichnowsky's telegrams from the Emperor. One of the Ambassador's messages points out strongly that the Serbian reply to the Austrian ultimatum was likely due to Russian influence, that Britain was becoming increasingly impatient, and that the "key to the situation could be found in Berlin."²⁷ Concerning this communication Jagow had asked in a note directed to the Chancellor: "Shall this telegram be submitted to His Majesty? It ought hardly to be kept from His Majesty?"²⁸ The telegram

²⁷Ibid., p. 244.

²⁸See note 3 in Ibid., p. 264.

was eventually sent to the Emperor, but one is left wondering whether or not other messages came under such consideration and were kept from him.

On another occasion the Chancellor submitted a telegram from London to William II which stated boldly that "the only possibility of avoiding a general war lay 'in the acceptance of Sir Edward Grey's proposal to hold a conference a quatre here; and the localisation of the conflict so hoped for in Berlin was wholly impossible and must be dropped from the calculations of practical politics'".²⁹ But before he gave this message to the Emperor, the Imperial Chancellor deleted the final sentence which read:

I would like to offer an urgent warning against believing any further in the possibility of localization, and to express the humble wish that our policy be guided solely and alone by the need of sparing the German nation a struggle which it has nothing to gain from and everything to lose.³⁰

This was hardly a patriotic statement and would have seemed unusual to say the least to the Emperor. In addition, Virginia Cowles points out that it "did not quite square with Bethmann's rosy optimism."³¹ After showing it to the Emperor the Chancellor annotated the document: "Submitted to

²⁹ Cowles, op. cit., p. 325.

³⁰ Loc. cit.

³¹ Loc. cit.

His Majesty. His Majesty disapproved of Lichnowsky's point of view."³²

There is some evidence, then, that the bureaucrats in the Foreign Office and the Imperial Chancellor were hesitant at times to submit to the Emperor messages which contradicted his expressed wishes and attitudes. The support for this supposition is rather tenuous, however. The two examples of the possible withholding of information which we have mentioned above were the only ones which we were able to find. What we do know is that information and advice which did not conform to the Emperor's ideas was being written down and submitted to the Berlin authorities, and in many cases was reaching the Emperor.

The diplomats abroad were not the only ones who dared to disagree with the Emperor. We have already noted that the Imperial Chancellor's position was somewhat different from that of his sovereign. There were occasions when an open breach occurred between these two men. The principal confrontation occurred over a very particular issue arising out of their differing points of view. The issue was the return of the German fleet to its base at Kiel. Bethmann-Hollweg, with his more cautious, pacifistic outlook, did not want to arouse the ire and suspicion of the British, French

³²Loc. cit.

or Russians. He was trying to keep the situation calm and the Austro-Serbian conflict localized. On July 25, in direct conflict with what he knew were the Emperor's wishes he wrote to William II:

I venture most humbly to advise that Your Majesty order no premature return of the Fleet.³³

Again on July 26 he wrote:

. . .I venture most humbly to suggest to Your Majesty to order the High Seas Fleet to remain in Norway for the present. . .³⁴

Each of these telegrams greatly angered the Emperor as can be seen in his notations. He was suspicious of the British and the Russians and afraid that they might launch some kind of an attack against Germany. Therefore, he was determined to gather his fleet together in case war broke out. On the bottom of Bethmann-Hollweg's July 26 note he writes:

My Fleet has orders to sail for Kiel,
and to Kiel it is going to sail!³⁵

In a later telegram he clarified the reasons for his orders.

In order to avoid the danger that my Fleet might be surprised by war while widely scattered in Norwegian harbours and far from its base, I gave orders yesterday noon, after learning from telegram 127 that the Serbian

³³K.D., op. cit., p. 202.

³⁴Ibid., p. 223.

³⁵Loc. cit.

mobilization was already in full swing, that the Fleet, after completing the necessary coaling, should concentrate and begin the journey home.³⁶

Disagreements did not only occur between the Emperor and his Ministers. There was some discord between Lichnowsky in London and Bethmann-Hollweg and Jagow in Berlin. We recall that the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs held similar views, not overly suspicious and aggressive like the Emperor, and yet not overly enthusiastic towards the Triple Entente either. They were concerned with localization of the Austro-Serbian conflict, with tactics, and with appearances. Yet Lichnowsky's pro-British views were too much even for them at times.

For example, on July 16 Prince Lichnowsky sent a telegram to the Imperial Chancellor (which was not commented on by the Emperor, by the way) which contained such expressions as:

It is well-known that the leading military authorities in Austria have been urging for a long time the establishment of the prestige of the Monarchy by means of a war.

The military correction of Serbia would therefore never possess the purpose or have the results of a satisfactory solution of the extremely difficult southern-Slav problem. . .

The question that troubles me is whether it is advisable for us to support our ally in a policy or, in other words, to stand as

³⁶Ibid., p. 227.

guarantors of a policy which I regard as mere adventure, inasmuch as it will lead neither to a radical solution of the problem nor to the annihilation of the Greater-Serbia movement.³⁷

Here was a member of the German civil service severely questioning his government's policies on the Austrian alliance and the course that should be followed towards Serbia. Such an indiscretion was worthy of a reprimand and Lichnowsky received one from Jagow. The Foreign Minister sent off a strongly-worded statement of the German position to Lichnowsky and ended it with:

If these arguments in favor of our policy are, perhaps, not sufficient to convince you, I know, nevertheless, that you will stand behind them.³⁸

Lichnowsky was not, however, to be easily stifled. He wrote back on July 23:

Many thanks for your letter of the eighteenth, which, however, was unfortunately not able to convince me completely.³⁹

Throughout the book the Ambassador in London continues to present his own pro-British version of events in spite of the remonstrances of his superiors.

There are very few entries in the Kautsky document collection from civil service or military personnel.

³⁷Ibid., p. 124.

³⁸Ibid., p. 132.

³⁹Ibid., p. 188.

Zimmermann, the German Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs does contribute a few communications but they are mainly straightforward instructions. The only time we get a hint of his policy preferences is in a note to the Imperial Chancellor on June 27. In it he seems to be expressing a position more or less similar to the Emperor's and more radical than that of Bethmann-Hollweg. He wrote:

In this conference, as was to be expected, Lichnowsky was once again put completely into swaddling clothes by Grey, and allowed his conviction that he was dealing with an honorable and truth-loving statesman to be strengthened anew. There is nothing left to do but to give Lichnowsky some naturally very cautious hints concerning the secret but absolutely reliable reports we are getting from Petersburg, which permit no doubt at all to arise as to the existence of permanent political and military agreements between England and France or concerning the initiation already in progress of transactions between England and Russia directed toward similar results.⁴⁰

Although we cannot be sure, we might infer from this statement that some disagreement existed between the Chancellor and the Under-Secretary.

The military, too, appears to have been aligned with the Emperor, much to Bethmann-Hollweg's concern. On June 16 he wrote:

Since His Majesty the Emperor, as I may remark quite confidentially, has already identified himself with this tendency of thought [the

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 59.

necessity for increased armaments] I look forward anxiously to the outbreak of a new armament fever in Germany during the summer and fall.⁴¹

E.T.S. Dugdale, writing an editorial introduction to some of the documents in his collection, contends that the Emperor and the military were agreed on policy matters and were working at cross-purposes to the Chancellor and the Foreign Office. He writes:

. . . the Chancellor and the civilian elements in the German Government were trying their best to keep on good terms with the Entente Powers. The decision, however, was not in their hands. The Emperor gave his confidence exclusively to the Chiefs of the War Office and Admiralty, Moltke and Tirpitz, and kept the Chancellor⁴² in the dark as to the aims of German policy.

While this account may be overstated, it does indicate another source of dissension within the German government.

In a note to the Imperial Chancellor on July 29, the Grand General Staff gave their version of the political situation.⁴³ It was clearly at variance with the Chancellor's own views. They expressed extremely harsh criticism of Serbia and Russia, referring to them as partners in crime. Austria on the other hand is portrayed as the aggrieved

⁴¹Ibid., p. 55.

⁴²E.T.S. Dugdale, German Diplomatic Documents: 1871-1914, London, Methuen and Company, 1931, vol. IV, p.352.

⁴³K.D., op. cit., pp. 306-308.

party, rightly seeking a just revenge. All the blame for escalation of the conflict is placed upon Russia, which is described as "moving hand in hand" with France in preparation for a European war. The military men urged quick mobilization of the German forces. While the Chancellor felt it would be wise tactically and for appearance's sake to lay the blame on Russia, he never shared the enthusiasm for Austria-Hungary's revenge nor the suspicion and fear of Russia and France that was expressed in the military report. The report contained opinions which were more like those expressed by the Emperor.

There was little unity of attitude or point of view amongst German government personnel just preceeding the War, then. The Emperor and the military appear to have held hostile, aggressive opinions. The Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs were much more cautious and pacific. And yet communications containing all shades of opinion appear to have flowed quite freely to the Emperor, the Chancellor, and the Foreign Office staff. Most diplomats submitted relatively routine reports and yet there is no evidence to suggest that information contradicting the government position or the Emperor's point of view was consciously suppressed by Germany's foreign representatives. If anything, they appear to have submitted personal interpretations and their own ideas, whether they were dissident or not, more often than their British counterparts. Prince

Lichnowsky represented the extreme here, of course. His ideas were so different from the general flow of feelings in Germany that his reports aroused the ire of both the Emperor and the Foreign Office.

There was open disagreement, too, amongst the domestic government officials. The Imperial Chancellor injected his more cautious personal views into his remarks addressed to the Emperor. At one point the pair even had direct confrontation over the return of the German fleet. The military seem to have sided with the Emperor and made their position clear to the Imperial Chancellor. The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs also appears to have held more radical opinions and on at least one occasion he expressed them to Bethmann-Hollweg.

We found some flimsy support for the supposition that certain disagreeable messages were kept from the Emperor. However, the documentation here is very unsatisfactory indeed, and no conclusive inferences can be drawn from it.

Faced with the evidence as summarized above we can only conclude that our hypothesis has come through the battle of investigation severely battered and scarred, if not defeated.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We opened this paper with a discussion of the Rosenau pre-theory and various other ideas about open and closed political systems. Now we must summarize and explain what we have learned in this small empirical inquiry and try to indicate the linkages between the facts we have discovered and the theory with which we began. First, the summary.

During the month and a half just preceeding the outbreak of the First World War, one government politician, Edward Grey, appears to have dominated British policy formation with regard to the European situation. Until the sending of the Austrian ultimatum on July 24, the rest of the government was more concerned with the situation in Ireland than with the possibility of a European war. The policies advocated by Grey were essentially positive and pacific. He continued from the first hint of crisis until the last moment to search for a peaceful solution to the Austro-Serbian problem. He emphasized the possibilities of mediation and negotiation. He repeatedly stated that Britain was not bound to either side. He was reluctant to make any overt preparations for war until the conflict seemed almost sure to occur.

In Germany we discovered three leaders, or perhaps it would be simpler to speak of two known leadership positions, one advocated by the Emperor and the other by the Imperial Chancellor and the Foreign Minister. William II was quite militant. He expressed great suspicion of the Triple Entente powers, and he was very aggressive towards Serbia. He assured Austria-Hungary of Germany's loyalty right from the beginning of the Austro-Serbian affair. He was very hesitant about entering into any negotiations aimed at softening the blow that Austria meant to deal Serbia. These were his views up until the Serbian reply, when, perceiving that further militancy was likely to provoke an all-Europe war, he became much more pacific. His pacifism did not last long, however, and he soon returned to his former positions.

The Imperial Chancellor and the Foreign Minister were more conservative than the Emperor. They wanted to see Serbia punished but they also wanted to make sure that the conflict remained localized. Therefore they were more willing to confer with the other Great Powers about the situation. While they were anxious about the roles Britain, Russia, and France would play, they did not project the defensive aggressiveness of the Emperor. Tactics and appearances were of great importance to them. Should war break out they were determined that the blame should not fall on Germany.

From our hypothesis it is evident that we expected there would be more disagreement with Sir Edward Grey's position than there would be with the Emperor's views or those of Bethmann-Hollweg. Such was not the case, however. Not only did German diplomats and bureaucrats seem to offer personal interpretations and opinions more frequently than their British equivalents, but there were several instances where subordinates clearly expressed disagreement with their superiors. The very fact, as we have just mentioned above, that the top ranking government ministers held general policy positions different from their Emperor is the most obvious indication of controversy within the German regime. We found that the Chancellor expressed disagreement with some of the Emperor's plans, and that diplomats, particularly Lichnowsky in London, expressed dissident opinions to the Emperor and the Chancellor. While there was some discord between the British bureaucrats and Sir Grey it was certainly no greater than that which occurred in Germany. Therefore, our hypothesis was not supported in this particular case.

We might now try and speculate about some of the reasons why the hypothesis was not supported. In Chapter 2 we mentioned the problems associated with the case study. A hypothesis cannot stand or fall on the basis of evidence gathered about only one case, unless that hypothesis refers only to that particular case. Since our hypothesis referred

to phenomena which we would expect to find common in most open and closed political systems, we cannot draw the obvious conclusion that the proposition is incorrect. It was only shown to be incorrect in the case of Britain as compared with Germany during the month and a half before the First World War.

Therefore we must examine our chosen case to see if there might be any special reasons why the hypothesis would not be supported. We had some difficulty classifying Germany as a closed system. It was certainly not a totalitarian system, and yet it was not what we would normally think of as an open or "democratic" nation. The authorities at the top did not really dominate the rest of the population, they simply ignored them. The people criticized the government but they did not, constitutionally or factually, control it. Perhaps Germany in 1914 might be better classified as a transitional polity. In comparison to Britain, Germany had had a relatively short history as a united nation. It had not yet emerged from the monarchical system, although the beginnings of democratic rule were evident. Britain, on the other hand, had possessed the institutions of democratic rule, if not the practice of democracy in terms of universality of suffrage and equality of access, for a long time. In other words, while Britain was an established democracy, Germany was an imminent democracy. The signs were there.

The German Reichstag was just beginning to free itself of the bonds of a conservative, pro-government majority before the War. It seems likely that if the War had not intervened, the Reichstag would have grown even more powerful and perhaps would have forced a change in the constitution.

If we accept this thesis that Germany was more of a transitional polity than a closed polity the discrepancy between our expectations and our results could be partially explained. In a society faced with impending change, where the powerful no longer assert themselves in a ruthless and arbitrary fashion, where the masses no longer fear to criticize and publicly attack the powerful, where roles are uncertain, and where a certain amount of confusion is evident, it would seem likely (in theory at least) that differing opinions would come to the fore, perhaps even more likely than in a well-established open system where communication channels and positions are relatively stable. Such confusion as we mention was certainly evident in Germany. For instance, it seems that there were at least three different men, the Emperor, the Imperial Chancellor, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in charge of Germany's international political business, whereas in Britain the Foreign Minister was clearly responsible for his field.

Perhaps we could, then, suggest two other hypotheses about information transmission in open and closed systems.

These are meant as general suggestions for further research and we shall not try to define them in operational terms here. First we might modify our own hypothesis. It might have been more accurate to hypothesize that in closed polities, where the leadership actively represses dissident opinion bureaucrats will be less likely to provide the leadership with information contradicting its known position than in open polities. Secondly, based on the theoretical argument which appears in the preceding few paragraphs we could hypothesize that in societies which appear to be in the process of major political transformation, bureaucrats are more likely to provide dissident information to the leadership than in well-established, relatively stable societies. There are a number of definitional problems here and the hypotheses might have to be reformulated somewhat before they could be tested. But in the main, they express some of the theoretical inferences that could be drawn from this study.

The proposition that Germany was more of a transitional polity than a closed polity can only partially explain the fact that our hypothesis was not supported. There are a number of other factors which we could not control but which may have affected our results. One such factor was the Emperor's personality. It is clear from the documents and the secondary sources that he was highly changeable and prone to take extreme positions. He allowed himself to

be swayed by his emotions. Because he was so aggressive and occasionally irrational he must have made it difficult for his more sober advisors not to disagree with him. This no doubt biased the results in favor of the null hypothesis. However, we should note here that there was still some disagreement between the more conservative Bethmann-Hollweg and Lichnowsky, and that discord was not entirely limited to the relationships between the Kaiser and his ministers.

On the other hand, it may have been difficult for British bureaucrats to disagree with Edward Grey's positions. In general he was in favor of negotiation and peace. This could be interpreted as the equivalent of being in favor of "motherhood." In other words, nearly everybody is in favor of the kinds of positions which he advocated. Perhaps this might account for the fact that there was so little disagreement with his policies.

One other factor that may have affected the outcome of our investigation is the nature of the situation. The month and a half before the War, and particularly the final week, was undoubtedly a period of unusual tension in European international relations. The increased strain probably caused the Emperor to be more irritable and extreme than usual. Professor Ole Holsti has shown that as the pre-War crisis became more acute, the incoming messages

became more stereotyped in content.¹ Perhaps in the British case this meant that there was less dissent than usual. That might also have biased the results.

After all these qualifications and explanations is it still possible for us to generalize from our results to the theory with which we began this paper? Certainly we cannot contend that Professor Farrell and Professor Fainsod were wrong. The results of our analysis may have cast some shadow of doubt on the universality of the proposition we have investigated, but, as we have explained above, it may be that the hypothesis still holds true for most comparisons of open and closed systems. Only further research can determine the validity of the proposition. We might, however, tentatively suggest some of the theoretical implications of our findings, keeping in mind that the results of this investigation are by no means conclusive.

If in fact a free flow of information can be maintained within a closed political system then perhaps the suppositions which we presented in the Introduction about closedness being a disadvantage in foreign policy formation are incorrect. If authoritarian political leaders can preserve all the advantages of closedness, secrecy, flexibility, and alacrity in decision making, and yet avoid

¹Ole R. Holsti, "The 1914 Case," Bobbs-Merrill Reprint Number PS-392, reprinted from APSR, vol. LIX, no. 2 (June 1965), pp. 375-376.

impeding the passage of information, be it agreeable or otherwise, then it would seem that they might be more successful in the field of international relations. However, the differences here between open and closed systems would probably be minimized because by allowing themselves to be receptive to all shades of opinion on major issues authoritarian leaders, assuming that they perceive and act in a rational manner, would be forced to consider the possible consequences of their decisions. It seems likely that this factor would serve as at least a partial restraint, and that the possibilities for quick, arbitrary judgements would be somewhat reduced.

In addition, by allowing the free expression of opinion, the leadership in a closed polity would probably encourage the growth of competing factions within the governing elite, at least to some extent. This seems to have been the case in Germany, although we use this example with caution. The Emperor and the military appear to have advocated one position and the more conservative bureaucrats another. Competition between two such groups would probably result in increased confusion and decreased efficiency in the field of foreign policy formation within the closed society. Germany does not seem to have had a very effective, single-minded foreign policy during the month and a half before the War, perhaps partially for the above mentioned reason. A balance

between free flow of information and very efficient foreign policy would appear to be difficult to attain. Whether these ideas are correct or not, they do suggest some areas for further study.

We might also be led by our investigation to look for variables other than openness and closedness which could conceivably influence information flows. For instance, perhaps the personality of the leadership has more to do with the free passage of information than openness or closedness. An authoritarian leader who was nevertheless fairly receptive might inhibit the flow of information much less than a harsh, repressive, democratic leader. One could investigate this proposition by choosing cases in which information is known to have been withheld and comparing them with cases in which it is known to have been offered freely.

These, then, are just a few suggestions for further research in the area of information transmission. We are a long way yet from filling in Rosenau's grand design. But he has presented us with some worthwhile ideals. We must work toward them, at least in general, if we are to build up a truly useful reserve of comparable, detailed knowledge about foreign policy and its formation.

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