‘All of us here, that is to say those in the know, are somewhat tense; the Austrian note has been handed over today in Belgrade; it is supposed to be very harsh. What will the Serbs do? Undoubtedly this will depend on whether they have Russia behind them or not. Austria has probably only granted them 48 hours, so that we will perhaps see more clearly in 2 to 3 days.’ Moritz Lyncker, chief of the military cabinet, records the mood on board the Kaiser’s ship, 23 July 1914.[[1]](#footnote-1)

By 6PM on 23 July 1914, Austria-Hungary’s ultimatum to Serbia had reached the end of its journey. The journey had been long and, in many respects, confused. It had taken several weeks to develop, and came a full twenty-five days after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and Sophie. Hungarian opposition, the military complications caused by harvest leave, and the opportunity presented by the Franco-Russian summit, all delayed the construction and delivery of the ultimatum. The length of time it took to take this step also enabled rumour and gossip to swirl, informed by panicked reports from certain officials, who had decoded important Austrian communications or been privy to a leak. The ponderous way in which Vienna constructed the ultimatum meant that every European capital had worked, in its own way, to prepare for it. For most contemporaries, the key point would not be the act of the ultimatum, but that document’s demands and the evidence Vienna put forward to justify them.

We do not need to rehash each of the ten points in the ultimatum. It is enough to summarise that the ultimatum was directed against those societies in Serbia which its government had allowed to flourish. Vienna did not insist on total submission, or the cession of Serbian territory. Instead she demanded the dissolution of these organisations, in addition to the arrest or dismissal of figures linked to the assassination, and the suppression of organs known to disseminate anti-Habsburg or irridentist propaganda. Of most significance was the demand that Habsburg officials must police this purge to ensure it took place, as the Serbian government was not trusted to carry this out itself. This demand, represented in points five and six of the ultimatum, proved the most unacceptable to Belgrade.

It did not matter in the end that Serbia accepted eight out of ten demands; the ultimatum had been designed to provoke war, after all, even if some figures like Stefan Tisza hoped to the end that war would not be necessary. Indeed, Tisza’s role in slowing down the whole process identifies this Hungarian as perhaps the most consequential figure of the early phase of the crisis. He has also become among the most forgotten participants in the crisis. Once matters escalated, and the Serbian reply was deemed unacceptable, Tisza still maintained that there was a chance to preserve peace. He wrote to his daughter shortly after the Serbs had given their unacceptable reply, and the Austrian delegation had left Belgrade:

These days, as you know, I must visit Vienna quite often. We must react seriously to the insolence of the Serbs; we cannot simply swallow it. The business may come to an end without war; and I pray to God that it will; but I cannot give you full assurance that we shall not end up in a war. You know, my little angel, with what loving and understanding sympathy we would surround you in that case. Let us trust in God that such a trial will be avoided; but if it is His will to visit it upon us, we shall have to trust in His help with double faith.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Few had such faith that peace could be preserved, even before the Serbian reply was known. Before the ultimatum had been delivered, Berlin was assuming that a war between Austria and Serbia was the most likely outcome. The German Foreign Minister, Gottlieb von Jagow, and his undersecretary Arthur Zimmerman worked in the days before 23 July to prepare the ground for this localised conflict. On 18 July, to take one instance, Zimmerman disseminated a statement on behalf of the German Foreign Ministry. It took stock of Austria’s position, the dispositions of the British and Russians, and pressed the necessity of Vienna’s firm policy, even if Berlin was not fully appraised of what this entailed. Because of Austria’s ‘indecisiveness and incoherence,’ Zimmerman asserted, ‘it had become the true sick man of Europe, just as Turkey had been, for whose partition Russians, Italians, Romanians, Serbs and Montenegrins were waiting.’ Zimmerman insisted that Germany would not mobilise, and would emphasise the danger which revolutionary Serbia posed to Russian society. It was claimed that ‘bluff is the preferred tool of Russian policy, and that the Russian likes to threaten with his sword, but in the last moment he will not draw it on behalf of others.’

Zimmerman had good grounds for this assumption – if the crisis was taking place in 1913, that is. By now Russo-German relations had markedly deteriorated, exacerbated by the Liman von Sanders crisis and the public press war between them. But Zimmerman showed more concern for Italy than for Russia or the Entente. He recommended Austria grant Rome concessions, perhaps in Albania or the Trentino, to ensure the maintenance of the Triple Alliance and to guard against Italian opportunism. Zimmerman regretted the slow pace of Austria’s demarche, but acknowledged there was little to do but wait on its ally’s actions; indeed, Zimmerman accepted that Vienna had the initiative and Berlin was compelled to follow her. He also used the term ‘blank cheque’ in this statement, the first time a German official had done so by this point. It was assumed that France and Britain would restrain Russia – they would not mobilise the Entente for the sake of Serbia’s punishment.

Foreign Minister Jagow operated under similar delusions. He rejected a Serbian request to moderate Vienna’s tone. He also pressed Berchtold on the importance of retaining Italian support. This message irked the Austrian Foreign Minister, who did not appreciate Germany’s recommendation that Austria should cede territory to protect its Italian flank. ‘Italy needed a strong Austria, not least as a protective wall against the Slavic tide,’ Berchtold maintained. She would not be compensated, and would only be informed on 23 July, as the ultimatum was delivered – Berchtold believed this was ‘entirely sufficient as an act of courtesy towards an unreliable ally.’ He conceived of plans to bribe Italian newspaper barons to tow the Austrian line, which he believed would be more effective. Berchtold consistently rejected German appeals for more information, particularly regarding Austrian war plans. On 5 July, when the blank cheque was drafted, Count Hoyos had spoken of the reduction and partition of Serbian territory – was this still on the table? This uncertainty and the Italian wild card meant that ‘it was therefore a vital interest of the German government to be informed in a timely manner where our path leads,’ according to Ambassador Szogyeny in Berlin. Berchtold remained unmoved, and instructed his officials to remain tight-lipped even when conversing with their German ally.

Berchtold was nonetheless aided by the German Foreign Office. Even if Berlin did not know precisely what Austria intended for Serbia, it knew what it did not want – a wider European war. In the days before 23 July, a circular from the German Chancellor instructed German ambassadors in the major Entente capitals to emphasise the strength and justice of Vienna’s case. This included exaggerated emphasis placed on the Austrian investigation, which had fingered some officials and shown evidence of plotting on Serbian soil, but had not linked the plot to the Serbian government. The message was to be uniform across these German embassies; ‘if she did not wish to forgo her position as a great power,’ the circular said, Vienna had to use ‘strong pressure and, if necessary, the deployment of military measures.’ Twinned with this emphasis on Austria’s just case was the pledge to localise the conflict: ‘We urgently desire the localisation of the conflict because any interference by another power, given the various alliance obligations, would have incalculable consequences,’ the circular explained.

The greatest potential for escalation came in what Russia would do in response. Berlin presented familiar arguments. Ambassador Pourtalès in St Petersburg was instructed to emphasise the conservative affinity which once linked Germany and Russia together, and to underline the revolutionary threat posed by Serbia to Europe’s legitimate dynasties. Berlin was encouraged by reports from the Russian capital, where the whiff of revolution was perceived a symptom of a weak society, which would crumble apart if the Tsar joined the war. The threat of realising the war which had been warned of for so long – with all its terrible consequences – was gauged a sufficient deterrent against Russian intervention. Berlin took what it wanted from scattered ambassadorial reports of Russian reluctance to fight, ignoring all other evidence to the contrary. The legacy of Russian retreats and its refusal to fight for Serbia in 1909 and 1913 suggested that the current confrontation would be more of the same.

Vienna was also operating under assumptions validated by recent experience. This recency bias inured Berchtold to the possibility that things would be different this time, or that the mood had already shifted in the Russian government. Berchtold was not blind to the risks involved in what he was doing; ‘given the unreliability and envy of our Italian ally, the hostility of Romanian public opinion and the weight of Slavophile counsellors at the court of the Tsar,’ Berchtold knew threading the needle would be difficult. But he insisted it was better to confront the danger posed to Austria now, rather than wait ‘until the flood tides come crashing over our heads.’ It was necessary that Serbia declare itself ‘for the past and for the future,’ and past diplomatic triumphs had proved that another such triumph would be insufficient; despite emerging victorious in standoffs over Bosnia and Albania, the Serbian threat had not diminished, and only military solutions would suffice. ‘I have the sense,’ Berchtold wrote to his ambassador in Italy, ‘of having been chosen by providence to join the ranks of those ministers who desired to pursue a policy of peace but had to make war…hopefully with more success as the last representative of this tendency.’ ‘We cannot back off now,’ Emperor Franz Josef agreed.

In last minute discussions with Conrad von Hotzendorff, the chief of staff, on 23 July, Berchtold decided to inquire about the military situation. Conrad told him that ‘If we also have to fear Italy, then we shall not mobilise,’ acknowledging that war on three fronts – against Serbia, Russia and now Italy – would be a bridge too far even for the vengeful Habsburg Empire. But the breaks placed on these possibilities were not strong; they were even contradictory. It was assumed Italy would not intervene, since this would rupture the Balkan settlement agreed at the ambassadors’ conference in 1913, yet Austria’s march into Serbia was not considered in this vein. Austria had supported Italy faithfully during its war with the Ottomans over Libya, surely Rome would return the favour now? Germany had repeatedly urged Austria to provide some incentive to Italian neutrality, however painful, since this would guarantee the maintenance of the Triple Alliance, but this was never Vienna’s priority. Anxiety over Romania and Italy notwithstanding, the true threat came from Russia, and this remained understated. Since it was impossible to back down now, it was also impossible to imagine that Russian intervention would take place, otherwise Vienna would not move at all.

A demonstration of Austria’s firm resolve and military prowess would resolve these problems, the accompanying assumption went. Having the courage to confront the Serbian threat regardless of the complications would signal to Europe that Austria was serious, and she would gain plaudits for risking this gauntlet, rather than being punished for it. The assumptions and wishful thinking which had empowered Habsburg policymaking since 28 June thus continued until the final moments of peace. Still, there had been no attempt made to construct a viable diplomatic strategy, save for an approach to Bulgaria. Military preparations were even less fleshed out; the question of what to do with a defeated Serbia was never answered, and perhaps was impossible to answer in the face of so many variables.

That neither Conrad nor Berchtold insisted on a codification of Austrian war plans only underlines how deeply flawed the Habsburg scheme had been. If Vienna did not know how far it would go, how could Russia or Serbia be assured she would not go too far? The complacency and irresponsibility of this march towards the ultimatum was perhaps only matched by the blank cheque, which tied Berlin to a policy its ally could not fully articulate. Unlike previous confrontations, Berlin could not now restrain or control its ally’s behaviour; like Europe, Germany was forced to wait. As Thomas Otte put it, ‘Vienna remained in the driving seat, while Berlin had to make do with the role of an anxious passenger.’[[3]](#footnote-3) To push this metaphor further, Vienna was driving the car and had decided on the end destination; Berlin had been present for the journey, but was not able to advise on the route taken or the methods used to get there. It was both a comfort and a source of anxiety that this journey was about to come to an end.

The Franco-Russian summit had provided several warnings to Austria, if only Berchtold had deigned to read them. The Austrian Foreign Minister must have known that the ultimatum had become the subject of whisper and rumour, but so long as no concrete information was leaked, Vienna could proceed without issue. Some ominous warnings nonetheless reached him. On Tuesday 21 July, Berchtold received a telegram from Count Szapary in St Petersburg, recalling what the French President Raymond Poincare had said to him. The numerous veiled threats Poincare had thrown at Szapary, combined with the harsh tone and apparent awareness of Austrian plans contrasted sharply with the conversation Szapary had had with Sazonov only a few days before. Berchtold reasoned that Poincare’s outbursts had more to do with his being a hothead, and his insistence that Russia would stand firm was thought to refer to the strength of the entente in general rather than its ability to coordinate a response to an ultimatum to Serbia. As the Russians perceived all hostile Austrian action through the prism of German conspiracy, Sazonov’s conversation with ambassador Pourtalès was more substantial. Therein, Sazonov had clarified that ‘there must be no talk of an ultimatum’, which left little room for interpretation – the Entente were clearly aware that something important was coming. But Berchtold was not privy to Germany’s mail, and Pourtalès’ report did not reach Vienna for another week. Fortunately, or unfortunately then, Berchtold had gotten away with it, ignoring or avoiding the most blatant Entente warnings. These continued to arrive even after the ultimatum had been delivered, but in the moment at least, Vienna was lulled into a false sense of satisfaction and safety.

Considering the long road to get to this point, the delivery of the ultimatum by Austrian Ambassador Vladimir Giesl von Gieslingen at 6PM on 23 July 1914 reads like something of an anticlimax. Giesl had already delayed his delivery by an hour, to make doubly sure the French had departed St Petersburg and would not be able to coordinate their next steps. As the Serbian Prime Minister was in the countryside, campaigning for the country’s elections the following month, Giesl would have to make do with the deputy premier, Laza Pacu. The official account from the ambassador read as follows:

I gave him [Pacu] the note and added that the term for the answer had been fixed for Saturday [25 July] at 6PM and that if by that time I had received no answer or an unsatisfactory one, I should leave Belgrade with the entire legation… Pacu, without reading the note, answered that the elections were being carried out and some of the Ministers were absent from Belgrade. He feared it would be physically impossible to assemble a complete Council of Ministers in time for taking what he must believe to be an important decision… I answered that in our age of railways, telegraphs and telephones and given the size of the country, it could only be a question of a few hours to assemble the Ministers, and that in the forenoon I had advised to inform [Prime Minister] Pasic. But this was an internal Serbian concern, that I had no right to judge. Nothing more was discussed.[[4]](#footnote-4)

This cold, dispassionate recollection of such a seismic moment in history seems to suggest that Giesl fulfilled his mission stoically, without incident. However, when Ambassador Giesl was interviewed by the historian Luigi Albertini in the 1950s, he recalled a far more dramatic scene. Deputy Premier Pacu, Giesl then said, initially refused point blank to accept the ultimatum at all. This prompted Giesl to reply that he would place it on the table, and ‘Pacu could do what he liked with it.’[[5]](#footnote-5) It may be tempting to accept this version of the story, since it contributes to a sense of tragicomedy and anticlimax – after weeks of blundering, the Habsburgs could not even deliver the ultimatum correctly. But this more colourful account is provided by Giesl only, and lacks supporting evidence. Certainly, the fact that Pacu did not speak French somewhat blunted the impact of the ultimatum, which was written in that language. Whatever happened in that short meeting between these two figures, we do know that Laza Pacu attempted to inform the country’s commanders, railway authorities, and his fellow politicians.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Pacu gathered what ministers of the Serbian government remained in Belgrade. This Cabinet, still devoid of its Prime Minister, went through each of the ten points in some detail. Pacu was personally shocked as the details were translated for him; he had expected Berlin to restrain Vienna, and evidently lacked the foreknowledge of the blank cheque. Once the assembled ministers overcame their shock, they studied the ultimatum ‘in deathly silence, because no one ventured to be the first to express his thoughts.’ But the Minister of War broke the silence, declaring ‘We have no other choice but to fight it out.’ All present agreed that Pasic must be recalled from his campaigning immediately. Pacu got through to Pasic just as the wily political veteran was contemplating a short break in his electioneering; perhaps Thessalonica would be a good place for a vacation? Pacu’s urgent call brought these plans into sharp relief, yet Pasic did not snap to attention and rush to Belgrade. ‘I told Laza [Pacu] that when I get back to Belgrade, we shall give the answer. Laza told me from what he had heard that it was to be no ordinary note. But I stood firmly by my reply.’ Only when Prince Regent Alexander wrote to Prime Minister personally did Pasic agree to return to Belgrade. Arriving by train at 5AM on 24 July, a cloud of anxious gloom now hung over the Serbian capital, and the clock continued to run down.

Even before Pasic reached Belgrade, conversations had taken place which set the stage for what occurred later. Deputy Premier Pacu met with the Russian chargé d’affairs in the evening of 23 July, who stood in as ambassador since Nikolai Hartwig’s replacement had yet to be appointed. Prince Alexander also met with the chargé d’affairs once Pacu had left. The two agreed it would impossible to accept the ultimatum, and Alexander declared that he would place his trust in the Tsar, ‘whose powerful word alone could save Serbia.’ This Russian official had his third meeting with a senior Serb the next morning, when Nikola Pasic paid him a visit, and an extension to the 48-hour deadline was suggested. From these conversations we might deduce that Serbia intended to fight, but the record contains additional evidence suggesting that the choice was not automatic. As recently as October 1913, after all, Serbia had backed down in the face of an Austrian ultimatum. Was Russia guaranteed to stand by her this time? And what of France, whose political leadership was then at sea and virtually unreachable?

By the end of 24 July, Pasic’s decision was to hold back until Russia’s position was certain; in the meantime, he instructed the Serb ambassador in St Petersburg to ascertain the government’s view, and the Prince Regent also telegrammed the Tsar, lamenting that ‘Serbia could not defend itself,’ and requesting his input on the ultimatum, ‘whose acceptance shall be advised by Your Majesty.’ Was the Serb government preparing to accept the unacceptable? From this tone, it seems clear that Belgrade based its response to the ultimatum on what Russia advised.[[7]](#footnote-7) This was already a bad sign for Vienna; her Serbian foe had wasted no time appealing to its formidable ally, and this suggested that Serbia expected Russia to fight for her. In subsequent episodes we will assess this Russian response, but for now, let’s leave Serbia’s government suffering under the ultimatum bombshell, as we turn back to Austria.

If Vienna was to have the Serbian war it wanted, it was essential that Europe was prepared in advance with the justification for Austria’s actions. In line with this effort to make Europe more amenable to Austrian actions against Serbia, Berchtold authorised his subordinates in the Foreign Office to draw on any leverage they could find. Here Count Hoyos, Berchtold’s chief of staff and prime mover behind the blank cheque, wrote a letter to an old friend who we will get to know a bit better in the next background episode, Viscount Haldane. Haldane was a former British Minister of War, and implemented key reforms in what became the BEF. He had also formed a friendship with Hoyos when the latter served in Austria’s embassy in London a decade before. From this old partnership, Hoyos hoped to be able to appeal to Haldane’s trust, and to convince him of Austria’s urgent need to act against Serbia. The fifteen page telegram Hoyos sent Haldane had been written several days before on 15 July, but it was only sent on 23, arriving alongside that cache of documents presented by the Austrian ambassador which announced Austria’s ultimatum. The impact Hoyos’ telegram had appears to be negligible, but it still makes for a fascinating glimpse into the psyche of Austrian contemporaries. We do not need to present the entire fifteen pages, but a portion of the telegram read as follows:

I learned to value your sense of justice during my stay in England and feel sure that you will judge the difficulties which have driven Count Berchtold to the step he has taken with impartiality and be able to realise, apart from European politics and the present groupment of powers, in an unbiased manner, that no other way was open to us but to try to force Serbia to renounce her ambitions and to suppress the agitation against us in her country.

With this appeal to their past friendship, Hoyos then attempted to make his case:

The assassins all came from or had been in Belgrade, three of them have confessed, independently from the other, that they received bombs and revolvers from a Serbia officer belonging to the Pan Serb secret society, [Serbian Defence] and that Serbian frontier guards and customs officials helped them to smuggle the bombs while crossing the border and to get to Sarajevo safely. About 70 people were in the plot and our poor Archduke had six more bomb throwers and assassins waiting for him in case he escaped the first two.

Having described the Serbian threat, Hoyo elaborated on the true source of this danger. It was not the Serbian government that was ultimately responsible for the assassination, Hoyos asserted, but Russia:

And behind all these deadly intrigues looms Russia as the protector of the Southern Slavs, as the missionary of militant orthodoxy in Galicia and Hungary, as the aggressive force, whose political aims and ambitions coincide with those of Serbia and also with those lately to be traced in Romania. All to destroy Austria-Hungary to bar any interference in the future, when Russia decided to go to Constantinople and further. That is how matters really stand and that is why we can hesitate no longer but must try to break through the chain of iron that is being forged to bind and destroy us.

Hoyos’ description of this sense of Austrian encirclement reminds us that explanations of the First World War have tended to underline German fears of the ‘ring of steel’ which surrounded her. Hoyos’ perception of a ‘chain of iron’ served a similar purpose; Vienna, like Berlin, was surrounded by nefarious foes determined to endanger her security and threaten her interests. This existing context, in Hoyos’ view, presented Austrian policy with acute challenges, but these were thrown into even sharper focus with the assassination:

All these symptoms have been watched here carefully for some time, the murder of the Archduke brought a slow and steady development to a hasty climax and if we are now taking matters in hand seriously, even at the risk of a general European war breaking out, we do so fully conscious that our country’s existence is in danger and that Austria would be signing her own death warrant, if she continued passively enduring while her enemies are scheme to break her up as old iron. I trust and hope that this will be realised in England.

The British would certainly have understood the idea that a nation forced into a corner would be forced to fight for its prestige and position rather than allow both to crumble. But a different question was whether this would translate into British acceptance of the Austrian demarche. Hoyos attempted to pre-empt British horror at the act by explaining in more detail why Russia posed such an existential threat to Austria-Hungary, adding a warning that Britain would not do well in a world dominated by a confident, expansionist Russia, as Hoyos concluded:

Many I know who have suffered from the uncertainty of the political situation of the last two years will blame us for disturbing the peace of Europe, but they should consider that this uncertainty cannot cease as long as Russia and her friends in the Balkans remain convinced that we are going to pieces and that they will get a large share when this happens. It is this false impression which creates the unstable atmosphere from which we have all suffered in the last years. And lastly Englishmen should realise what the whole world would look like if the Russian daydreams came true, if Russia held the Balkans and Constantinople in undisputed sway and need fear no one in her back and flanks, when once she followed the example of Alexander the Great and turned her eyes towards India.

Hoyos was perceptive enough to recognise that Austria would be viewed as the main provocateur, but like many Germans, he overestimated the extent to which a fear of Russian triumph would adjust British policy. As the Kaiser would later discover, British officials had made their bed by 1914, and arguments warning against supporting the Russian universal monarchy only compelled them to support Russia with greater vigour. Haldane, the target of this telegram, was thus unmoved by its arguments. ‘This is very serious,’ Haldane wrote in the margins, ‘Berchtold is apparently ready to plunge Europe into war to settle the Serbian question.’ Haldane gauged that Berchtold ‘would not take this attitude unless he was assured of German support,’ but he discerned that ‘Hoyos’ letter is clearly intended to prepare us for the ultimatum and is an attempt to scare us into neutrality with the Russian bogey. The one hope is that Bethmann Hollweg’s influence in Berlin will prevail.’[[8]](#footnote-8)

Haldane had gotten the German Chancellor badly wrong in this respect. Although Bethmann Hollweg was desperate to contain the war, he was prepared to stand by Austria and risk world war if Russia did not back down. On previous occasions, Anglo-German diplomacy had resolved intermittent crises in the Balkans, since both powers had few interests to defend there. This time though, it was in Germany’s interest to defend Austria’s quest for justice and retribution against Serbia. By supporting its beleaguered ally, Berlin could hope to preside over a revival of Habsburg fortunes, and thus a strengthening of the Triple Alliance. British officials thus realised too late that this crisis would be quite unlike the others. Then again, considering the fact that a few days before the ultimatum was sent, King George had declared ‘the cry of civil war is on the lips of the most responsible and sober-minded of my people,’ it was safe to say that Britain was then acutely distracted by the Home Rule question and the possibility that Ireland might erupt into civil war, a conflict which might extend to segments of Britain itself.[[9]](#footnote-9)

With Britain consumed with fear of civil war and the violent breakdown of the union, and with France or at least the French public obsessed with the ongoing Caillaux affair, there was good reason to feel optimistic in Vienna that the Entente would not be in a position to support Russia. Russian awareness of these constraints would, in turn, mollify the Tsar, and compel him to recommend moderation to Serbia, for fear of fighting a war against the Central Powers by himself. These predictions, which rank among the most positive, bordering on naïve, were formed on the basis of correct information, but the conclusions drawn amounted to wishful thinking. It did not seem to occur to the Austrian government that by orchestrating this conspiracy – particularly by denying repeated request for information and by scheming to ensure the ultimatum arrived while the French and Russian governments were apart – contemporaries in allied capitals would feel deceived.

That Austria worked to take advantage of Entente weakness would not be viewed charitably, as the desperate ploy of a regime which felt it had no choice, but would instead be identified as evidence of a plot to flummox the Entente. Austria’s enemies could condemn the deception, and point to an insidious plot to destroy the Kingdom of Serbia. The calculated ploy to block Entente collusion and obfuscate their intentions until the final moment would not have helped Vienna’s image, but war had answered all such objections before. Nothing succeeds like success, as the saying goes, and perhaps any objections to its methods or aims would be subsumed in a triumphant campaign. But before the war could be declared, Berchtold and his colleagues would have to wait and see how Serbia and the rest of Europe would react. After so many ponderous delays and embarrassing asides, the ultimatum had finally been delivered. All the speculation on how matters would develop would now be put to the test by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov. This is all to come, but in the next episode, we conclude our set of background episodes to contextualise the Anglo-German story, and investigate how this occasionally symbiotic, occasionally hostile relationship played such a central role in the cataclysm which was to come.

1. 23 July 1914, Lyncker to his wife in Mombauer, *Documents*, p. 312. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Quoted in Samuel Williamson Jr., *Austria-Hungary and the Origins of the First World War*, p. 204. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Otte, *July Crisis*, p. 217; pp. 214-221. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 23 July 1914, Giesl to Berchtold in Mombauer, *Documents*, pp. 311-312. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, p. 459. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Martel, *Month that Changed the World*, p. 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Clark, *Sleepwalkers*, pp. 460-462. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. 23 July 1914, Hoyos to Haldane in Mombauer, *Documents*, pp. 313-314. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Martel, *Month that Changed the World*, pp. 160-161. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)