

member of this House or any man in this country can escape the conviction—that there was a deliberate determination in the first place to force war upon Serbia, regardless of any humiliation to which she might consent or of any consequences which might result from that war. I say that such is my deliberate conviction. The most imperious demand ever made upon any free nation in the world was made by the Austro-Hungarian monarchy on Serbia on the 23rd day of July. It was not to be called an ultimatum, as they afterwards explained; it was to be called a 'demarche,' with a time limit, and under the time limit the reply to that demand made on the 23rd July, had to be delivered not later than six o'clock on the evening of 25th July. I have a summary of the demand and of Serbia's answer under my hand, and I say that a perusal of that demand and of the answer which Serbia gave to it impresses us with the truth of what Sir Edward Grey stated when he said:

It seemed to me that the Servian reply already involved the greatest humiliation to Serbia that I had ever seen a country undergo.

All demands, demands of the most extreme character, were conceded, except one, and that was rejected only conditionally; and the demand which was not conceded was one which would have given to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy for the time being control almost of the Servian judicial system, in so far as inquiry was to be made into certain matters connected with the regrettable assassination of the unfortunate Archduke. If the reply was not considered satisfactory, Serbia offered arbitration or a reference to the Hague tribunal. The reply of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy to that humiliating submission of Serbia was that the answer was not worthy to be regarded, and it was followed by an almost instant declaration of war. Well, as you know, the British Government, and particularly the Foreign Minister, upon whom this tremendous responsibility rested, made every possible attempt at mediation even after that. On the 26th and 27th days of July he asked the great powers of the world to join in mediation, and every one of the great powers consented to that mediation except the Government of Germany. The Government of Germany accepted it in principle, but after that there was merely inaction and evasion.

In the end the efforts at mediation were absolutely fruitless. All pacific action was

evaded, and the question arose as to what should be the course of Great Britain with regard to the war. Great Britain sought by every possible means, by negotiation and otherwise, that war should be carried on under such conditions that her intervention would not be necessary. And the great question which arose at once was as to the neutrality and independence of Belgium, and to have that neutrality and independence respected by the great powers of Europe, particularly Germany and France, both of whom, in common with Great Britain, had guaranteed that neutrality, first of all in 1831, afterwards in 1839, and again, so far as Germany and France were concerned, during the period of the Franco-Prussian war. I need not read the disposition of the treaty. It provided that Belgium should for all time to come be an absolutely neutral and independent country. That was guaranteed by France; that was guaranteed by Great Britain; that was guaranteed by Germany; that was guaranteed by all the great powers of Europe. So great was the interest of Great Britain in this regard during the Franco-Prussian war that she negotiated two treaties at that time, one with the North German Confederation and one with France. The treaty which she negotiated with the North German Confederation provided that the neutrality of Belgium should be respected, and if the neutrality of Belgium were not respected by France during that war, then Great Britain bound herself to fight with the North German Confederation against France in defence of Belgian neutrality. She concluded also another treaty with France by which in the same terms she bound herself with France that if the North German Confederation during that war should violate the neutrality of Belgium, she would fight with France against the North German Confederation in support of Belgian independence and Belgian neutrality.

I cannot resist the conclusion, and I do not think that any man who reads these documents can resist the conclusion, that it was the deliberate intention of the Government of Germany, formed many years ago, to violate the neutrality and independence of Belgium in case war should break out with France. Every man in this country, every man throughout the world, knows that plans of campaign are not made after war breaks out. Plans of campaign are made long in advance, and the German plan of campaign which has been carried out in