

## THE ISSUE

### SIR EDWARD GREY'S STATEMENT TO THE HOUSE

In the House of Commons, on Monday, Aug. 3, Sir Edward Grey, who was received with loud and prolonged cheers, said:

Last week I stated that we were working for peace, not only for this country, but to preserve the peace of Europe. (Cheers.) To-day, though events have moved so rapidly that it seems difficult to state with technical accuracy the state of affairs, it is clear that the peace of Europe cannot be preserved. Russia and Germany have declared war upon each other. Before I proceed to state the position of His Majesty's Government I would like to clear the ground, so that the House may realize, before I come to state to the House what our attitude is with regard to the present crisis. First let me say very shortly we have consistently worked with a single mind, and with all the earnestness in our power to preserve peace. The House may be satisfied on that point. We have always done it, and in these last years, so far as His Majesty's Government is concerned, we should have no difficulty in proving it. Through the Balkan crisis we worked for peace. (Cheers.) With the co-operation of the Great Powers, we were successful in working for peace in the Balkan peninsula. It is true that some of the Great Powers had difficulty in adjusting their points of view, and much time and labor was expended before they could settle their difficulties. But peace was secured, because peace was their main object, and we willingly gave time and trouble to render a settlement of their differences possible. In the present crisis that has not been possible, because there has been little time, and because there has been a disposition in some quarters, upon which I will not dwell, to force things rapidly to an issue, to the great risk of peace. As we now know, the result of that is that the policy of peace, so far as the Great Powers are concerned, has failed.

#### Efforts For Peace.

I do not want to dwell on that, or say where the blame seems to lie, or which Powers were most in favor of peace, and which were most disposed to risk their interests and endanger peace. I want to approach this crisis from the point of view of British interest, British honor—(overwhelming cheers)—and British obligation—(renewed cheers)—free from all questions as to why peace has not been preserved. We shall publish papers as soon as we can with regard to what took place last week when we were working for peace, and when these papers are published I have no doubt that to every human being they will make it clear how strenuous and genuine and whole-hearted all our efforts for peace were. Well, I come first to the question of our treaty obligations. I have assured the House, and the Prime Minister has assured the House more than once, that if any crisis such as this arose we should come before the House of Commons and be able to say to the House that it was free to decide what the British attitude should be; that we would have no secret engagement—(hear, hear)—which we should spring upon the House. I will deal with this point first.

#### The Alliance and the Entente.

There have been in Europe two diplomatic groups, the Triple Alliance and what has come to be called the Triple Entente. The Triple Entente was not an alli-

ance; it was a diplomatic group. The House will remember that in 1908 there was a crisis, also a Balkan crisis, arising on the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Russian Minister came to London and I told him definitely then, this being a Balkan crisis, I did not consider that the public opinion in this country would justify us in promising anything more than diplomatic support. More has never been asked from us, more was never given, more was never promised. Well, in this present crisis, up till yesterday, we had also given no promise of anything more than diplomatic support. Well, now, to make clear this question of obligation to the House, I must go back first to the Moroccan crisis of 1906. That was the time of the Algeiras Conference. That was a difficult time for the Government, because a General Election was in progress. Ministers were scattered over the country, and I spent three days a week in my constituency and three days in the Foreign Office. I was asked the question whether, if that crisis developed into a war between France and Germany, we would give armed support. I said then that I could promise nothing unless I was sure of the whole-hearted support of public opinion here when the occasion arose. I said that, in my opinion, if war was forced upon France upon the question of Morocco, a question which had just been the subject of agreement, that if out of that agreement war was forced upon France at that time, in my opinion the public opinion of the country would rally to the support of France. (Cheers.)

#### No Promise.

But I made no promise. I expressed that opinion in the same words to the French and German Ambassadors at the time, without making any promise. That position was accepted by the French Government, but they said at the time to me, and very reasonably, "If you think it possible that public opinion in Great Britain might, when a sudden crisis arose justify you in giving to France armed support which you cannot promise in advance, unless between military and naval experts some conversations had taken place, you would not be able to give that support even if you wished when the time comes." There was force in that contention, and I agreed to it, and authorized those conversations to take place, but on the distinct understanding that nothing which passed between the naval and military experts of either Government in any way restricted our freedom as to whether or not we should give that support when the time arrived. On that occasion a general election was in progress, and I had to take the responsibility of what I did, because the Cabinet could not be summoned. Those conversations took place between the naval and military experts.

#### Letter to French Ambassador.

Some time afterwards, in 1912, the matter was discussed with the Cabinet, and it was decided that we ought to have a definite understanding in writing. It was only to be in the form of an unofficial letter that the conversations were not binding upon the freedom of the Governments. On 22nd November, 1912, I wrote a letter I will read to the House to the French Ambassador, and I received from him a letter in similar terms in reply. This letter will be known to the pub-