THE CAUSE OF THE WAR

In a nutshell, the cause of the war was the success of Germany (or Prussia) since 1864 in three successive wars of spoliation against Denmark, Austria and France, which led her people to believe that war was profitable and that they could obtain world power by force of arms. Germany realized that to overthrow Britain and gain supremacy she first must crush France. The opportunity for the attempt was afforded on June 28, 1914, when the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary was murdered on Austro-Hungarian soil by a Serbian. Germany knew that if she could persuade Austria-Hungary to make impossible demands on Serbia that Russia, the champion of the Slavs in the Balkans, would rush to the support of Serbia, and that if Germany in turn declared war on Russia, France was bound by treaty to assist Russia. In this way Germany would gain an excuse for destroying France and have a chance of obtaining vantage ground for later operations against Britain. But Germany did not count on Britain entering this war. She believed Britain would not keep her word to protect Belgium against invaders, and that even if she did her military strength could not be developed before the war was won by Germany. And so, to make sure of crushing France before the mighty Russian armies were ready to strike, Germany avoided the French fortresses along her frontier by sending her troops through the neutral territories of Belgium. The Belgian king, being a man of honor, resisted the invasion, and Britain at once acted on her pledge to maintain the independence of Belgium. That explains why on August 4th, 1914, the United Kingdom declared that a state of war existed between Germany and Britain.