

July Crisis

This is a magisterial new account of Europe's tragic descent into a largely inadvertent war in the summer of 1914. T. G. Otte reveals why a century-old system of Great Power politics collapsed so disastrously in the weeks from the 'shot heard around the world' on 28 June to Germany's declaration of war on Russia on 1 August. He shows definitively that the key to understanding how and why Europe descended into world war is to be found in the near-collective failure of statecraft by the rulers of Europe and not in abstract concepts such as the 'balance of power' or the 'alliance system'. In this unprecedented panorama of Europe on the brink, from the ministerial palaces of Berlin and Vienna to Belgrade, London, Paris and St Petersburg, T. G. Otte reveals the hawks and doves whose decision-making led to a war that would define a century and which still reverberates today.

T. G. Otte is Professor of Diplomatic History at the University of East Anglia.

July Crisis

The World's Descent into War, Summer 1914

T. G. Otte



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***In memory of
August S., killed in action, 1 September 1916,
Henry S., missing in action, presumed killed,
12 April 1918,
two great-grandfathers, who fought on opposite sides.***

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

‘And so they’ve killed our Ferdinand’, said the charwoman to Švejk . . . ‘Which Ferdinand, Mrs Müller?’, he asked . . . ‘Oh no, sir, it’s His Imperial Highness, the Archduke Ferdinand, from Konopište, the fat churchy one . . . They bumped him off at Sarajevo, with a revolver, you know. He drove there in a car with his Archduchess.’

JAROSLAV HAŠEK¹

The First World War has cast a long shadow over the twentieth century, and beyond. One hundred years on, the horror of the conflict still commands attention, and will probably never cease to do so. How and why the civilized world, seemingly so secure in its material and intellectual achievements, could have descended into a global conflict has continued to intrigue not just historians, but also the general public. It has certainly puzzled me ever since I first developed an interest in the past. And the more I studied the period of the long nineteenth century, the more it became clear to me that the answer, in so far as there can be one, is not to be found in *les forces profondes*, the vast impersonal forces, that some think shape historical processes, but, rather, that the reasons, in so far as they can ever be fathomed, may be glimpsed in the doings of men (and they were all men in 1914), their flaws and failings, their calculations and miscalculations. It would be difficult to improve on Marx’s insight that people make their own history, if not under circumstances of their choosing. Politics more especially are subject to the ambiguities of free will and the play of the contingent. In that lies hope for the future; but it is also a reminder of man’s shortcomings. What follows here is an attempt to make sense of the events of Europe’s last summer.

People also matter in a less abstract sense. In the course of researching and writing this book I have incurred debts of gratitude to various people, and it is a great pleasure to acknowledge this debt. Anyone working on the origins of the First World War will be acutely conscious of the immense intellectual debt that is owed to those who have laboured in

¹ J. Hašek, *The Good Soldier Švejk* (London, 1973 [orig. 1921]), 4–5.

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this particular vineyard before. To an extent the footnotes bear testimony to my debt to the wider scholarly community. A number of friends and colleagues, however, need to be singled out for special thanks. Keith Neilson once more proved a trusted source of advice and help. He made time during his own busy schedule to read the whole manuscript of this book, and it is immeasurably better for it. There was little that escaped his hawk-eye. I am grateful to Bruce Menning, who generously shared with me his thoughts and ideas about the late imperial Russian military, and who patiently answered my many questions. Chai Lieven kindly sent me a copy of Basil Strandtmann's unpublished memoirs, and was the source of invaluable insights into the nature of the Russian state. Pursuing the Russian theme, my colleague at UEA, Peter Waldron, offered various thoughts and suggestions, for all of which I am grateful. I owe a special debt also to Roy Bridge, who volunteered his services as my very own '*k.u.k. Erzprivilegiierter Haus-, Hof-, und Staatskopsist*', and from whom I have learnt so much about the Habsburg Empire over the years. I also greatly benefited from discussing Berchtold and Austro-Hungarian diplomacy with Sam Williamson. Lothar Höbelt, as always, came up trumps when I was stuck for an answer. I am grateful to Alma Hannig for sharing with me her thoughts on the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. My colleague Jan Vermeiren provided insights into Ambassador Tschirschky and his entourage. Guenther Roth very kindly provided me with a copy of one of Kurt Riezler's letters. Zara Steiner and Erik Goldstein have been constant sources of encouragement and constructive criticism, and for that I am more grateful than they can know. Similarly, Vernon Bogdanor has kept me thinking about Asquith, Grey and the nineteen men around the Cabinet table in Downing Street. His judicious comments ensured that I was not satisfied with the obvious answers. It is a pleasure to acknowledge my gratitude to Simon Kerry for his thoughts and material on Lord Lansdowne. Sven Bergmann, as ever, was ready to pinprick my carefully formed ideas, and for that I thank him, too. Researching 1914 meant reading innumerable numbers of old books, and pulling yet another weighty tome off my shelves all too often reminded me what a gap my friend and fellow bibliomaniac Hans Seelig has left. I am grateful to Arnold Rosen for letting me talk about a subject about which I care so much. Over the years I have benefited also from conversations with Holger Afflerbach, Chris Clark, Laurence Cole, Mark Cornwall, Günther Kronenbitter, Andrew Lambert, Margaret Macmillan, John Maurer, Annika Mombauer, William Mulligan and David Stevenson. I am grateful to all of them.

I am immensely grateful to Michael Watson, prince of editors. He and his team at Cambridge University Press have helped me to see this project through to fruition with their customary courtesy, efficiency and

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patience. I must also acknowledge my gratitude to Stuart Proffitt, who took an early interest in this work and who has greatly helped me to refine my thinking, as did Bill Hamilton.

Whatever may be worthwhile in this book has enormously profited from the assistance of my friends and colleagues. Whatever its failings, omissions and shortcomings, they are mine alone.

My greatest debt, as always, is to Joanna and Gwendolen. Between them, they somehow managed to keep me sane and made sure that there was no July crisis in the summer of 2013.

T. G. O.

North Norfolk, September 2013

ABBREVIATIONS

AHR	<i>American Historical Review</i>
BayD	<i>Bayerische Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch</i> , ed. P. Dirr (Munich, 1922)
BBBP	<i>Bescheiden Betreffende de Buitenlandse Politiek van Nederland</i> 3rd ser., 1899–1919, ed. C. Smit (8 vols., The Hague, 1957–74)
BD	<i>British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914</i> , ed. G. P. Gooch and H. W. V. Temperley (11 vols., London, 1928–38)
BDS	<i>Graf Benckendorffs Diplomatischer Schriftwechsel</i> , ed. B. von Siebert (3 vols., new edn Berlin and Leipzig, 1928)
BelD	<i>Belgische Dokumente zur Vorgeschichte des Weltkrieges, 1885–1914</i> (5 vols., Berlin, 1919)
BIHR	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
BJIS	<i>British Journal of International Studies</i>
BL	British Library, London
BMH	<i>Berliner Monatshefte zur Kriegsschuldfrage</i>
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
CEH	<i>Central European History</i>
CJH	<i>Canadian Journal of History</i>
CSH	<i>Cultural and Social History</i>
CUBA	Columbia University, Bakhmetiev Archive, New York
CUL	Cambridge University Library, Cambridge
DA	<i>Diplomatische Aktenstücke zur Vorgeschichte des Krieges 1914: Ergänzungen und Nachträge zum Österreichisch-Ungarischen Rotbuch, 28 Juni bis 27 August 1914</i> , ed. Republik Österreich, Staatsamt für Äusseres (3 vols., Vienna, 1919)
DD	<i>Die Deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch</i> , ed. K. Kautsky, M. Montgelas and W. Schücking (4 vols., Berlin, 1919)
DDF	<i>Documents Diplomatiques Française</i> , 3rd ser., 1911–1914, ed. Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (11 vols., Paris, 1929–36)

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DDI	<i>Documenti Diplomatici Italiana</i> , 4th ser., 1908–1914, ed. Ministero degli Affari esteri (12 vols., Rome, 1964)
DDS	<i>Documents Diplomatiques Suisses</i> , v, 1904–1914, ed. H. Lüthy and G. Kreis (Berne, 1983)
DGB	<i>Deutsche Gesandtschaftsberichte zum Kriegsausbruch</i> , ed. A. Bach (Berlin, 1937)
DSI	<i>Der Diplomatische Schriftwechsel Iswolskys</i> , ed. F. Stieve (4 vols., Berlin, 1924)
DSP	<i>Dokumenti o Spoljojnoj Politici Kraljevine Srbije</i> , ed. V. Dedijer and Ž. Anić (7 vols., Belgrade, 1980)
ECE/ ECE	<i>Eastern and Central Europe/Europe Central et de l'Est</i>
EEQ	<i>East European Quarterly</i>
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
ESR	<i>European Studies Review</i>
FA	<i>Foreign Affairs</i>
FH	<i>French History</i>
GP	<i>Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette</i> , 1871–1914, ed. J. Lepsius, A. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy and F. Thimme (40 vols., Berlin, 1922–7)
GR	<i>Germanic Review</i>
GWU	<i>Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht</i>
HHStA	Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Vienna
HJ	<i>Historical Journal</i>
HZ	<i>Historische Zeitschrift</i>
IBZI	<i>Internationale Beziehungen im Zeitalter des Imperialismus</i> , 1st ser., 1911–14, ed. O. Hoetzsch (5 vols., Berlin, 1931–6)
IHR	<i>International History Review</i>
IWM	Imperial War Museum, London
JBS	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
JCEH	<i>Journal of Central European History</i>
JCH	<i>Journal of Contemporary History</i>
JK	<i>Julikrise und Kriegsausbruch 1914</i> , ed. I. Geiss (2 vols., Hanover, 1963–4)
JMH	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
JMilH	<i>Journal of Military History</i>
KA	<i>Krasny Arkhiv</i>
LN	<i>Un Livre Noir. Diplomatie d'avant-guerre d'après les documents des archives russes, novembre 1910 – juillet 1914</i> (2 vols., Paris, s.a.), ed. R. Marchand
LSE	London School of Economics
LUR	<i>Laurentian University Review</i>

xvi / Abbreviations

MAE	Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris
MGM	<i>Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen</i>
MÖStA	<i>Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staats-Archivs</i>
NLS	National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
NRO	Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton
OGD	<i>Official German Documents Relating to the World War</i> , ed. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2 vols., New York, 1923)
ÖUA	<i>Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914</i> , ed. L. Bittner, A. F. Pribram, H. Srbik and H. Uebersberger (9 vols., Vienna and Leipzig, 1930)
PA	Politisches Archiv, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv
PAAA	Politisches Archiv, Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin
PAL	Parliamentary Archive, House of Lords, London
PCC	<i>Paul Cambon: Correspondance, 1870–1924</i> , ed. H. Cambon (3 vols., Paris, 1940–5)
P&P	<i>Past & Present</i>
P&S	<i>Politics & Society</i>
RGVIA	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-istoricheskii Arkhiv, Moscow
RH	<i>Revue Historique</i>
RHD	<i>Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique</i>
RIS	<i>Review of International Studies</i>
SEER	<i>Slavonic and East European Review</i>
SocR	<i>Sociological Review</i>
SR	<i>Slavonic Review</i>
SSEES	School of Slavonic and East European Studies, London
TNA	The National Archive (Public Record Office), Kew, London
(PRO)	
WiH	<i>War-in-History</i>

PRINCIPAL *DRAMATIS PERSONAE*

The Sarajevo assassins

Nedeljko Čabrinović, Vaso Čubrilović, Trifko Grabež, Danilo Ilić, Mehmed Mehmedbašić, Cvijetko Popović, Gavrilo Prinčip.

Austria-Hungary	
Kaiser Franz Joseph	Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary
Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Este	Heir to the Habsburg throne
Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg	Wife of Franz Ferdinand
Ludwig, Freiherr Ambrózy von Séden	Embassy Counsellor, Rome
Leopold, Graf Berchtold von und zu Ungarschitz	Common Foreign Minister
Leon, Ritter von Biliński	Common Finance Minister
István, Freiherr Burián von Rajecz	Hungarian Minister at the imperial court
Franz, Freiherr Conrad von Hötzendorf	Chief of the General Staff
Otto, Graf Czernin von und zu Chudenitz	Embassy Counsellor, St Petersburg
Ottokar, Graf Czernin von und zu Chudenitz	Minister, Bucharest
Johann, Graf Forgách von Ghymes und Gács	First Section Chief, Foreign Ministry
Georg, Freiherr von Franckenstein	Embassy Counsellor, London
Major-General Wladimir, Freiherr Giesl von Gieslingen	Minister, Belgrade
Franz, Freiherr von Haymerle	Embassy Counsellor, Berlin
Alexander, Graf Hoyos	Section Chief, Foreign Ministry
Admiral Carl Kailer von Kaltenfels	Deputy Chief, Naval Staff
General Alexander Ritter von Kroatina	Common War Minister
Karl, Freiherr von Macchio	Section Chief, Foreign Ministry
Albert, Graf von Mensdorff-Pouilly-Dietrichstein	Ambassador, London
Kajetan Mérey von Kapos-Mérey	Ambassador, Rome
Franz, Freiherr von Matscheko	Counsellor, Foreign Ministry
Berthold Molden	Viennese journalist
Alexander, Freiherr Musulin von Gomirje	Section Chief, Foreign Ministry
Johann, Markgraf von Pallavicini	Ambassador, Constantinople
General Oskar Potiorek	Governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina

xviii / Principal *dramatis personae*

(cont.)	
Austria-Hungary	
Josef Redlich	Professor of Law and <i>Reichsrat</i> Deputy
Ivan Skerlec von Lomnicza	<i>Ban</i> (Viceroy) of Croatia
Wilhelm, Ritter von Storck	Legation Counsellor, Belgrade
Major-General Karl Graf Stürgkh	Austrian Prime Minister
Friedrich, Graf Szápáry von Szápár	Ambassador, St Petersburg
Nikolaus, Graf Szécsen von Temerin	Ambassador, Paris
Ladislaus, Graf Szögyény-Marich	Ambassador, Berlin
István, Graf Tisza de Borosjenő et Szeged	Hungarian Prime Minister
France	
Raymond Poincaré	President of the Republic
Camille Barrère	Ambassador, Rome
Philippe Berthelot	Political Director, Foreign Ministry
Jean-Baptiste Bienvenu-Martin	Minister of Justice (acting Foreign Minister)
Jules Cambon	Ambassador, Berlin
Paul Cambon	Ambassador, London
Charles Pineton de Chambrun	Embassy Counsellor, Paris
Pierre Descos	Minister, Belgrade
Alfred Dumaine	Ambassador, Vienna
Abel Ferry	Under-secretary, Foreign Ministry
Marshal Joseph Joffre	Chief of the General Staff
Gustave Henri Benoît, Comte de Manneville	Embassy Counsellor, Berlin
Pierre de Margerie	Director of Political Affairs, Foreign Ministry
Adolphe Messimy	War Minister
Maurice Paléologue	Ambassador, St Petersburg
René Viviani	Prime Minister and Foreign Minister
Germany	
Kaiser Wilhelm II	German Emperor, King of Prussia
Prince Heinrich of Prussia	Kaiser's brother
Albert Ballin	German shipping magnate
Claus von Below-Saleske	Minister, Brussels
Dietrich von Bethmann Hollweg	Embassy Secretary at Vienna
Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg	Chancellor
Lieutenant-General Oskar von Chelius	Military Plenipotentiary, St Petersburg
Clemens Ernst Gottlieb von Delbrück	State Secretary of the Interior and Vice-chancellor

xix / Principal *dramatis personae*

Germany	
General Erich von Falkenhayn	Prussian War Minister
Hans von Flotow	Ambassador, Rome
Hugo Ganz	Vienna correspondent, <i>Frankfurter Zeitung</i>
Julius Adolf, Freiherr von Griesinger	Minister, Belgrade
Gottlieb von Jagow	State Secretary, Foreign Ministry
Karl Max, Fürst von Lichnowsky	Ambassador, London
General Moriz, Freiherr von Lyncker	Chief of Kaiser's Military Cabinet
General Helmuth von Moltke, the Younger	Chief of the General Staff
Victor Naumann	Journalist
General Hans von Plessen	Kaiser's Adjutant-General
Friedrich, Graf Pourtalès von Cronstern	Ambassador, St Petersburg
Kurt Riezler	Aide to the Chancellor
Wilhelm Eduard, Freiherr von Schoen	Ambassador, Paris
Wilhelm von Stumm	Political Director, Foreign Ministry
Grand Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz	Navy Minister
Heinrich, Freiherr von Tschirschky und Bögendorff	Ambassador, Vienna
Hans Wilhelm, Freiherr von Wangenheim	Ambassador, Constantinople
Theodor Wolff	Editor, <i>Berliner Tageblatt</i>
Arthur Zimmermann	Under-State Secretary, Foreign Ministry
Great Britain	
King George V	King of Great Britain and Ireland, Emperor of India
Herbert Henry Asquith	Prime Minister
Sir Henry George Outram Bax-Ironside	Minister, Sofia
Sir Francis Leveson Bertie	Ambassador, Paris
Sir George William Buchanan	Ambassador, St Petersburg
Sir Maurice de Bunsen	Ambassador, Vienna
John Elliot Burns	President of the Board of Trade
Hon. Winston Spencer Churchill	First Lord of the Admiralty
Dayrell Montague Crackanthorpe	Chargé d'Affaires, Belgrade
Charles Louis Des Graz	Minister, Belgrade
Sir Eyre Alexander Crowe	Assistant Under-secretary, Foreign Office
Sir (William) Edward Goschen	Ambassador, Berlin
Sir Edward Grey	Foreign Secretary
Richard Burdon Haldane, Viscount Haldane of Cloan	Lord Chancellor
Lewis Harcourt	Colonial Secretary

xx / *Principal dramatis personae*

(cont.)

Great Britain	
David Lloyd George	Chancellor of the Exchequer
William Lygon, 7th Earl of Beauchamp	First Commissioner of Works, Leader of the House of Lords
Edwin Samuel Montagu	Financial Secretary to the Treasury
John, Viscount Morley of Blackburn	Lord President of the Council
Sir Arthur Nicolson	Permanent Under-secretary, Foreign Office
John Albert Pease	President of the Board of Education
Hon. Arthur Ponsonby	Liberal MP
Sir James Rennell Rodd	Ambassador, Rome
Sir Horace George Montague Rumbold	Embassy Counsellor, Berlin
Walter Runciman	President of the Board of Agriculture
Hon. (Odo William) Theophilus Villiers Russell	Embassy Counsellor, Vienna
Herbert Louis Samuel	President of the Local Government Board
Sir John Allsebrook Simon	Attorney-General
John Alfred Spender	Editor, <i>The Westminster Gazette</i>
Sir William George Tyrrell	Private Secretary to Sir Edward Grey

Italy	
Giuseppe, Duca di Avarna di Gualtieri	Ambassador, Vienna
Ricardo Bollati	Ambassador, Berlin
Andrea, Marchese Carlotti di Riparbello	Ambassador, St Petersburg
Guglielmo, Marchese Imperiali di Francavilla	Ambassador, London
Antonio Paterno-Castelli, Marchese di San Giuliano	Foreign Minister
Antonio Salandra	Prime Minister
Nicola, Barone Squitti di Palermiti e Guarna	Minister, Belgrade

Russia	
Tsar Nicholas II	Tsar of All the Russias, King of Poland, Grand Duke of Finland
Pyotr Lvovich Bark	Finance Minister
Nikolai Aleksandrovich Basili	Deputy <i>chef de cabinet</i> , Foreign Ministry
Aleksandr Konstantinovich, Count von Benckendorff	Ambassador, London
Arkadi Nikola'evich Bronevski	Embassy Counsellor, Berlin
Konstantin Yevgeni'evich von Bützow	Head of Second Department, Foreign Ministry
General Yuri Nikoforovich Danilov	Quartermaster-General

xxi / *Principal dramatis personae*

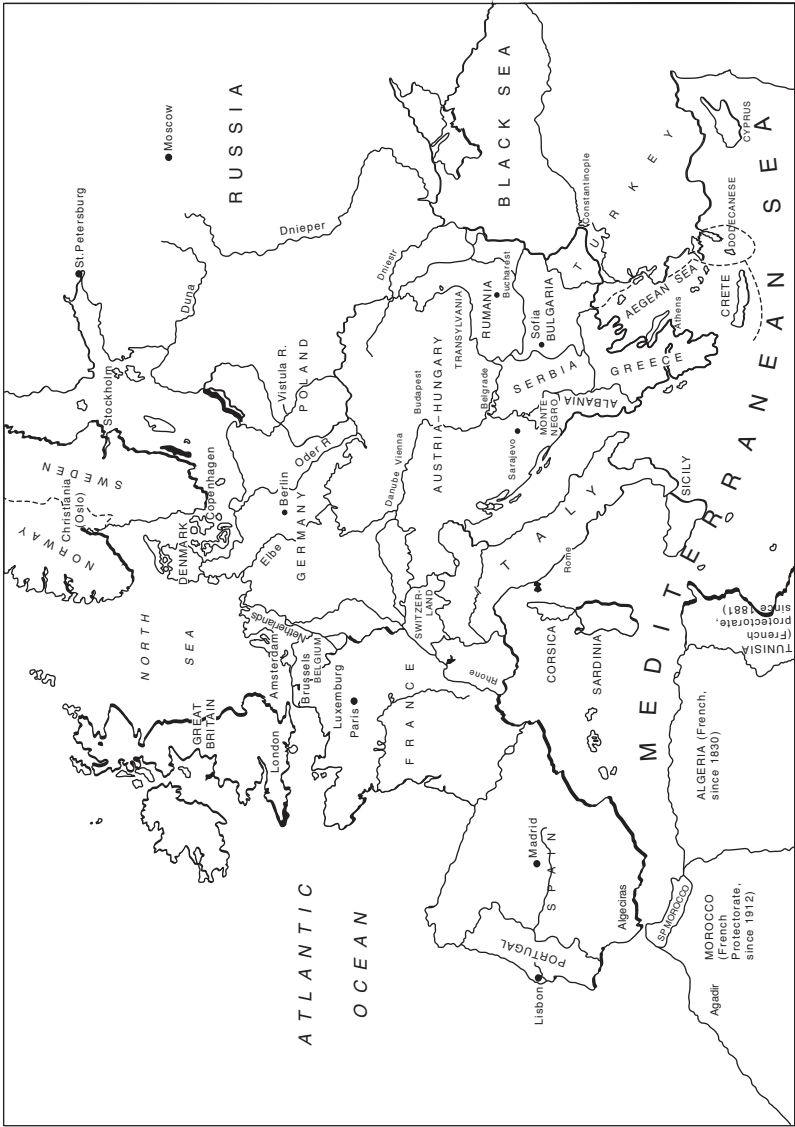
(cont.)	
Russia	
General Sergei Konstantinovich Dobrorolski	Director, Mobilization Section, General Staff
Baron Vladimir Borisovich Fredericksz	Minister of the imperial household
Mikhail Nikola'evich de Giers	Ambassador, Constantinople
Ivan Loginovich Goremykin	President, Council of Ministers
Rear-Admiral Ivan Konstantinovich Grigorovich	Navy Minister
Nikolai Genrikovich de Hartwig	Minister, Belgrade
Aleksandr Petrovich Izvolsky	Ambassador, Paris
Alexander Vasilevich Krivoshein	Agriculture Minister
Anatoli Nikola'evich Krupenski	Ambassador, Rome
Nikolai Aleksandrovich, Prince Kudashev	Embassy Counsellor, Vienna
Vasili'i Alekse'evich Maklakov	Minister of the Interior
General Nikolai Avgustovich Monkewitz	Staff Officer
Anatol Anatolevich Neratov	Assistant Foreign Minister
Sergei Dmitrievich Sazonov	Foreign Minister
Moritz Fabianovich, Baron von Schilling	Head of Department I (Western Europe), Foreign Ministry
Nikolai Nikola'evich Shebeko	Ambassador, Vienna
Vasili'i Nikola'evich von Strandtmann	Legation Counsellor, Belgrade
General Vladimir Aleksandrovich Sukhomlinov	Chief of General Staff
Sergei Nikola'evich Sverbe'ev	Ambassador, Berlin
Prince Grigori'i Nikola'evich Trubetskoy	Head of Near Eastern Department, Foreign Ministry
General Nikolai Nikola'evich Yanushkevich	Chief of Staff
Serbia	
King Petar Karadjordjević	King of Serbia
Prince Aleksandr Karadjordjević	Crown Prince and Regent
Mateja Bošković	Minister, London
Milan Ciganović	Railway clerk and intelligence agent
Colonel Dragutin T. Dimitrijević ('Apis')	Head of Military Intelligence Section
Slavko Gruić	Secretary-General, Foreign Ministry
Velizar Janković	Trade Minister
Jovan Jovanović	Minister, Vienna
Ljuba Jovanović	Minister of Education
Milutin Jovanović	Legation Secretary, Vienna

xxii / Principal *dramatis personae*

(*cont.*)

Serbia	
Lazar Paču	Finance Minister
Nikola Pašić	Prime Minister
Stojan Protić	Minister of the Interior
Field Marshal Radomir Putnik	Chief of Staff
Miroslav Spalajković	Minister, St Petersburg
Dušan Stefanović	War Minister
Captain Voja Tankošić	Military intelligence officer
Milenko Vesnić	Minister, Paris

Note to Readers: To retain some of the period flavour I have followed the custom of the time and used the following shorthands for the foreign ministries of the Powers: Ballhausplatz (Austria-Hungary); Choristers' Bridge (Russia); Downing Street (Great Britain); Quai d'Orsay (France); Quirinale (Italy); and Wilhelmstrasse (Germany).



i. Europe, 1914



2. The Balkans, 1914