

conference to meet in London. France and Italy accepted without delay. The German Government replied on July 27 that it would accept mediation "in principle," reserving its right to assist Austria if attacked. On July 30, Russia ordered a general mobilization of its army. At midnight of July 31 the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg (now Petrograd) presented an ultimatum from his government, requiring Russia to begin demobilization within twelve hours, or before noon on the following day. As soon as the limit named in the ultimatum had expired, both the German and Austrian Governments ordered a general mobilization of their armies and navies, and at seven o'clock that evening Russia was informed that a state of war existed between Germany and that country. On the same day, the President of the French Republic signed a decree for general mobilization, after receiving information that Germany had presented an ultimatum to Russia, and was beginning to mobilize, thus declaring the intention of France to stand by its ally. Sir Edward Grey had already instructed the British Ambassadors at Berlin and Paris to ask whether the neutrality of Belgium, in the event of war, would be respected by Germany and France. The French Government replied promptly in the affirmative, except in the event of some other power violating that neutrality, when France might find herself compelled in self-defence to act otherwise. On August 2 the German Government required Belgium to take up an attitude of friendly neutrality by permitting German troops to pass through her territory for the invasion of France, granting a time limit of twelve hours in which to make a reply. On the night of August 1 German troops invaded Luxemburg and during the following day, overran the entire Duchy and entered French territory near Longwy. On August 3 France informed Germany that a state of war existed between them in consequence of this invasion. Next day the British Government sent an ultimatum to Germany requiring that country to respect the neutrality of Belgium, which the German chancellor had already declared it would be necessary to violate. Before this was received, the German troops had entered Belgian territory in force and attempted next day, to capture Liège, its chief industrial city, by direct assault. Having undervalued the efficiency of the garrison, they attacked in close formation and were repelled with heavy loss. On August 5, in consequence, the British Government declared the existence of a state of war between Great Britain and Germany, as having begun at eleven p.m. on the preceding day. It is worthy of remark that all belligerents sedulously abstained from making a distinct declaration of war. Italy announced its intention of remaining neutral on the ground that the war undertaken by Austria was an aggressive conflict.

For many years the governing classes in Germany had been schooled in the belief that this gigantic struggle between the great powers of Europe was inevitable and must result in "world power or downfall" for Germany. They had diligently prepared for it by taking every measure which the resources of the country would permit to increase its military and naval strength. The deepening of the Kiel canal had been accomplished. This gave the navy a safe harbour