What was Austria-Hungary to do? It is important to realize that Austria hated Serbia anyway. Nationalism threatened the very existence of the polyglot empire, and the Austrian Chief of Staff General Hatzendorf had asked for a 'surprise' war to destroy Serbia more than 25 times in the eight years after 1906. So, the assassination was used by Austria as an opportunity to sort out the Serbs:

- **5 July**: Austria-Hungary approached the Germans and got a promise (the so-called blank check) that they could rely on Germany's support.
- **23 July**: The Austro-Hungarian government sent Serbia an ultimatum containing ten really tough demands. Failure to meet all of these demands, they said, would result in war. (They expected Serbia to reject the ultimatum, which would give Austria-Hungary an excuse to invade.)
- **25 July**: But the Serb government did not reject the ultimatum. Instead it sent reply in which it agreed to everything EXCEPT part of demand 6. It was so conciliatory that, after reading it, Kaiser Wilhelm wrote on 28 July: 'the reply amounted to capitulation in the humblest style, and with it there disappeared all reason for war'.
- **28 July**: Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.
RUSSIA DECLARES WAR

The Serbs had wrong-footed the Austrians. Whereas, on 28 June, many had supported the Austrians, now they looked unfair, unreasonable and war-mad. As the Austrian army shelled Belgrade (the capital of Serbia) the Serbians called up their army and asked their ally, Russia, for help. What was Russia to do?

• **24 July**: Russia did not want war. The Russian Grand Council decided - if Serbia was invaded - not to give military support, but to appeal to a conference of the Great Powers. Even the mad Rasputin warned that a war would destroy Russia.

• **29 July**: But Tsar Nicholas had already let down Serbia in the Bosnian crisis of 1908. And - he told the Kaiser in a telegram - it was a matter of right and wrong (see source E). Nicholas decided to mobilize (call up) his army.

• **31 July**: At first, Nicholas hoped to mobilize only against Austria-Hungary, but when his generals told him that this was impossible he was forced to order a general mobilization (against Germany as well as Austria-Hungary). However, he sent a telegram to the Kaiser assuring him that the mobilization was NOT against Germany.

**MAIN POINT OR SUMMARY**
3. Schlieffen Plan
What was Germany to do?

Things were going wrong for Germany - Russia was mobilizing, but France showed no sign of going to war to help the Russians. Now Russia was going to be ready too soon - every day that passed gave the Russian army one more day to get ready. When the German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg asked General Moltke: 'Is the Fatherland in danger?' the reply was: 'Yes'.

1 August: The Kaiser, therefore, gave the order to mobilize and Germany declared war on Russia.

3 August: claiming that French planes had bombed the German town of Nuremberg, Germany declared war on France.

4 August: with German troops on the march to invade France, the French declared war on Germany.

The Schlieffen Plan
Germany's Plan for mobilisation – called the Schlieffen Plan after the German Chief of Staff Alfred von Schlieffen – made three basic assumptions:

a. If there was a war, Germany would have to fight France AND Russia.
b. France was weak (France had defeated France in ten weeks in 1870).
c. Russia was strong but slow (Schlieffen estimated that it would take Russia 6 weeks to mobilize).

The Schlieffen Plan, therefore, was developed as a huge hammer blow at Paris, using 90% of the German army, which would take France out of the war quickly (allowing Germany to get its army back to fight Russia).

I t took just over three weeks due to the modernization of Russia's railways.
GREAT BRITAIN DECLARES WAR

1 August: British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey proposed to Germany that Britain would stay neutral if Germany did not attack France. Kaiser Wilhelm wanted to agree, but when he tried to pause the invasion, his generals told him that he couldn't.

2 August: The Schlieffen Plan had an error. It planned for the German army, when it attacked France, to go through Belgium. The day after declaring war on Russia, therefore, the Germans asked permission for their army to pass through Belgium. The Belgians refused! So the next day, Germany invaded Belgium.

4 August: Britain was obliged (by the Treaty of London, 1839) to help Belgium in the event of an invasion. Therefore, Britain sent Germany an ultimatum demanding, by midnight, a German promise to withdraw from Belgium. The Germans were amazed: 'For a scrap of paper, Great Britain is going to make war?' asked German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg.

That night, crowds gathered in Parliament Square in London. As Big Ben struck 11 pm (midnight in Berlin) they sang *God Save the King*, and then ran home crying: 'War! War! War!' As Grey watched the crowds leave, he commented: 'The lights are going out all over Europe: we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime'.

What do you think Grey meant by this quote?