



37 Days: Countdown to World War One

28 July: Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia

Prof Margaret MacMillan:

The 28 July. Shortly after 09:00am the Kaiser reads Serbia's reply to Austria-Hungary's ultimatum. Three days ago Vienna rejected their response. But the Kaiser is hopeful that war can still be avoided.

Serbia has given way on most points and he expects that the rest can be cleared up with negotiation. He comes up with a face saving plan for the Austrians. Let them have their attack on Serbia but halt in Belgrade.

Kaiser Wilhelm:

The Serbs are Orientals, therefore liars tricksters and masters of evasion. But it could be secured by means of the temporary military occupation of Belgrade until the demands have been complied with. On this basis I am ready to mediate for peace with Austria.

Prof Margaret MacMillan:

But the Kaiser's proposal is too late. Just after 11:00am, Austria Hungary moves to prevent any more attempts at mediation.

Austrian Government Statement:

The Royal Serbian Government have not answered in a satisfactory manner the note of July 23, 1914. Austria-Hungary consequently considers herself henceforward in state of war with Serbia.

Prof Margaret MacMillan:

Since Vienna has already closed its embassy in Belgrade there is the awkward matter of how to deliver the declaration of war. The Austrian government finally sends a telegram. The first time war has been declared in this way.