New Zealand enters the First World War

5 August 1914

1914 PHS

MCH, 2017l

Following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife Sophie in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina, on 28 June 1914, Germany gave its ally Austria-Hungary a 'blank cheque' to take whatever action it deemed appropriate. Although Serbia, which Austria-Hungary blamed for the assassinations, accepted almost all the terms of a harsh ultimatum, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on 28 July.

The following day Serbia's key ally Russia ordered a partial mobilisation against Austria-Hungary. Germany responded by threatening Russia with war, which in turn prompted Russia's ally France to mobilise its armed forces on 1 August. Germany declared war on Russia the same day and on France two days later. Germany's Schlieffen Plan to defeat France quickly required the invasion of Belgium, which Britain had pledged to protect. When Germany failed to withdraw its troops from Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August.

n the other side of the world, the New Zealand government was informed of the outbreak of war just before 1 p.m. on 5 August (NZ time). At 3 p.m. the governor, Lord Liverpool, announced the news from the steps of Parliament to a large and

enthusiastic crowd. Most New Zealanders regarded themselves as British and Britain as home, so there were few doubts about fulfilling our obligations to the Empire in its moment of crisis. Germany's invasion of Belgium, another small country, also struck a chord with many New Zealanders.

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Schlieffen Plan and German invasion of 1914 – First World War - overview
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First World War - origins (Te Ara)

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