



Source 4

Message from the German ambassador in Britain to the British government on the German invasion of Belgium in August 1914

(Catalogue ref: FO 371/2161)

How to use this source:

Study this source carefully. There are details in this source that will help you to answer the key question. As you study the source, ask yourself:

- What is Germany promising to Britain?
- How does the German ambassador try to convince Britain that his assurances can be believed?
- According to the message, why have the Germans invaded Belgium?
- According to the message, was the German information about the French plans reliable?
- Does this source give any clues about how the Germans thought the British would react to the invasion of Belgium?



Source 4

THE WAR.

[August 4.]

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 14.

[35748]

No. 1.

Herr von Jagow to Prince Lichnowsky.—(Communicated to Foreign Office, August 4.)

(No. 226.)

(Telegraphic.) *En clair.*

Berlin, August 4, 1914.

PLEASE dispel any mistrust that may subsist on the part of the British Government with regard to our intentions by repeating most positively formal assurance that even in the case of armed conflict with Belgium, Germany will under no pretence whatever annex Belgic territory. Sincerity of this declaration is borne out by fact that we solemnly pledged our word to Holland strictly to respect her neutrality. It is obvious that we could not profitably annex Belgic territory without making at the same time territorial acquisitions at expense of Holland. Please impress upon Sir E. Grey that German army could not be exposed to French attack across Belgium, which was planned according to absolutely unimpeachable information. Germany had consequently to disregard Belgic neutrality, it being for her a question of life or death to prevent French advance.