

Conservative Leaders, Coalition and Britain's Decision for War in 1914

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Abstract

Conservative leaders may have had a decisive impact on the decision by the Liberal government to enter the Great War in August 1914. In a seminal article of 1975 Keith Wilson argued that their readiness to fight 'cut the ground ... from beneath the feet of the non-interventionists' in the Cabinet. Those ministers who had hitherto opposed war now recognised that continued divisions could bring the Government's collapse, in which case the Unionists, probably in a coalition with pro-war Liberals, would take office and enter the conflict anyway. Since Wilson's essay important light has been shed on Unionist thinking by works that look at the July Crisis as part of a longer party history. The purpose of this article is to provide a detailed investigation of the actions of Unionist leaders in the days immediately leading to war. In so doing it will seek to resolve some of the main contradictions in the primary evidence, argue that the possibility of a coalition was very real and demonstrate that one key player – the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill – subsequently tried, with some success, to disguise his activities.

Although out of office since 1905, Conservatives may have had a decisive impact on Britain's decision to enter the Great War. In a 1975 article Keith Wilson argued that their readiness to fight, as expressed in a letter from their leader, Andrew Bonar Law to Prime Minister Henry Asquith, 'cut the ground... from beneath the feet of the non-interventionists: there was now no way in which the country could avoid war.'¹ Those Liberals who had hitherto opposed war recognised that continued divisions could herald the Government's collapse, leading the Unionists to join pro-war Liberals in a coalition that would enter the conflict anyway. Wilson's approach challenged the fullest account of the political debate of July-August 1914 by Cameron Hazlehurst, which dismissed claims about the significance of Law's letter as 'unfounded'.² In developing his case Wilson focused on changes of outlook among Liberal ministers, providing few details of dealings among Unionist politicians. More recently important light has been shed on Unionist thinking by Frank McDonough and Rhodri Williams, in works that look at 1914 as part of a longer history. McDonough explores the Unionists' belief in Empire, naval power and the preservation of the European balance of power, especially through the entente with France. Importantly he also emphasises the leaderships' commitment to a bipartisan foreign policy. Williams focuses on issues of army and naval reform, drawing out the differences between right-wing nationalists (often anti-German and favouring Imperial consolidation) and the leadership (more concerned with electoral considerations and the need to restrain expenditure).³ The purpose of this article is to provide a detailed investigation of the actions of Unionist leaders in the days immediately leading to war. In so doing it seeks to resolve some of the main contradictions in the primary evidence, argues that the possibility of a coalition was very real (thereby supporting Keith Wilson's

analysis) and demonstrates that one key player – the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill – subsequently tried to disguise his activities. It also underlines the importance of a bi-partisan approach to foreign policy by the leaders of the two main parties but shows that, paradoxically, the Conservative leaders were well aware that it would be better not to form a coalition at this point. National unity was best served by the Liberal government taking the country to war.

The Debate

Of central importance to the analysis are two letters. The first, upon which most existing accounts focus, Law's to Asquith on 2 August:

Lord Lansdowne and I feel it our duty to inform you that in our opinion as well as in that of all the colleagues with whom we have been able to consult, it would be fatal to the honour and security of the United Kingdom to hesitate in supporting France and Russia at the present juncture; and we offer our unhesitating support to the Government in any measures they may consider necessary for that object.⁴

This letter was publicised by Law in December 1914.⁵ As some commentators note it makes no mention of Belgium, the supposed *casus belli* for London.⁶ However, in 1923 Churchill reproduced a letter sent to him by a frontbench Unionist, F.E. Smith, on 31 July after consulting Law and others:

I have spoken to my friends of whom you know and I have no doubt that on the facts as we understand them – and more particularly on the assumption (which we understand to be certain) that Germany contemplates a violation of Belgian neutrality – the Government can rely upon the support of the Unionist Party in whatever manner that support can be most effectively given.

Churchill said he quickly showed this to Asquith, implying the latter was assured of Unionist support *before* the key cabinets of 1-2 August.⁷

In discussing Unionist behaviour an essential issue, as Nigel Keohane says, is ‘whether the Conservative leadership had to be cajoled into action by its backbenchers’, in particular a group on the radical Right. They had long predicted war with Germany, criticised the government for inadequate preparations and had links to sympathisers in the Press, War Office and Foreign Office. Paul Kennedy has argued that, while the leadership took ‘a leisurely view of things... the “push” came from the radical Right.’⁸ One leading member of this group, Leo Amery MP, left a detailed record in his memoirs largely based on his diary. He was a strong proponent of tariff reform and compulsory military service; he firmly opposed Irish home rule. With such beliefs he became a natural ally of Henry Wilson, the Army’s Director of Military Operations, responsible for preparing mobilisation plans for the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). An unconventional soldier, given to intrigue with the Opposition over Ireland⁹, he also kept a diary. Another MP, George Lloyd, shared Amery’s enthusiasms. Lloyd kept no diary but provided accounts to others of his role in events. Also influential was Leo Maxse, editor of the *National Review*, who shared the others’ pro-French, anti-German outlook. In 1918 he wrote a tendentious account of the crisis in the *Review*, arguing that the radical Right induced Unionist leaders to cajole Asquith into war.¹⁰

In fact, evidence from the 1911 Agadir crisis, the last time that a Franco-German war seemed possible, suggests Unionist leaders were always likely to support British involvement. In the House of Commons their then-leader, Arthur Balfour, offered the Government full support.¹¹ Since then, although he opposed much of the Liberals’ domestic programme, Balfour was largely content with their foreign and

defence policy. He sat on a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence and had regular contact with Churchill at the Admiralty.¹² In contrast Law, who became leader in 1911, had poor relations with Liberal leaders and, while he supported the entente, showed limited interest in foreign affairs: as Robert Blake says, ‘he left such matters largely to Balfour, and to Lansdowne.’¹³ The last was the Unionist leader in the House of Lords and, as Foreign Secretary in 1904, had forged the *entente* with France. Another leading Unionist, loyal to the *entente* was Austen Chamberlain who wrote a contemporary account of crisis.¹⁴ It will be argued below that, while the radical Right did indeed help galvanise Chamberlain (who they saw as their flag-bearer) into action, Unionist leaders consistently supported war and gave serious consideration to a coalition as a way to ensure Britain entered the war.

‘A United Front’

The ‘July Crisis’ unfolded quickly. Concern over the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, was initially outweighed in Britain by the bitter Liberal-Unionist differences over Irish Home Rule. Worries only grew around 24 July when the Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, told the Cabinet that Austria-Hungary had sent an ultimatum to Serbia, which it blamed for the assassination. Churchill later wrote that, as Grey spoke, ‘The parishes of Fermanagh and Tyrone faded back into the mists and squalls of Ireland...’.¹⁵ Churchill’s memoirs, however, while good for a telling turn of phrase, are not always accurate. In fact, he and the Foreign Secretary had discussed the gathering crisis three days earlier, when Grey was already concerned to localise any conflict.¹⁶ After all, Austria was allied with Germany, while Russia supported Serbia and was allied to France, making European conflagration possible. By 28 July, when Austria-Hungary declared war on

Serbia, it was clear Germany might strike against France, moving through Belgium, whose neutrality London had guaranteed in 1839. That day Churchill, without informing the Cabinet, but after informing Asquith, ordered the First Fleet to war stations and the Prime Minister reported to the King that ministers would consider their obligations to Belgium.¹⁷ But on 29 July, with a strong ‘pro-peace’ element in the Cabinet, ministers decided there was no requirement to act.¹⁸ The Government was in fact divided.

When beginning his contemporary memorandum on events, Chamberlain said he went to Westgate-on-Sea for the Bank Holiday weekend ‘in the confident belief... that the Government had made up their minds to support France and Russia.’¹⁹ Amery also believed that ‘all the Unionist leaders had been given to understand that everything was perfectly all right’.²⁰ It may seem odd that Unionists were so confident of Cabinet unity. Nonetheless, Government and Opposition were in close touch. Grey recalled that, ‘In the last week of July, Bonar Law... came daily to my room at Question Time before I returned to the Foreign Office, to ask what the news of the crisis was.’²¹ Even Asquith’s critics felt he responded promptly to events that week. Henry Wilson, who wrote on 27 July, ‘I think there will not be any war’, was surprised when the Prime Minister ordered ‘precautionary’ preparations on 29 July. Given his subsequent complaints about the Liberals’ supposed inadequacies, Wilson’s comment on Asquith’s order is striking: ‘I don’t know why we are doing it, because there is nothing moving in Germany... Anyhow, it is more like business than I expected of this Government.’²²

On 30 July – the day Russia mobilised, making a continental war likely – Asquith motored to Law’s Kensington villa, Pembroke Lodge, where he and Sir Edward Carson, the principal Irish Unionist, offered to suspend debate on Home Rule

so as not to 'advertise our domestic tensions' during the crisis. Asquith, who believed 'the German government are calculating upon internal weaknesses to affect our foreign policy', read out telegrams from Berlin to his guests, who can only have concluded that the Prime Minister would resist German machinations.²³ Later, in the Commons, Asquith argued that, with 'issues of peace and war ... hanging in the balance' it was vital to 'act with the authority of an undivided nation.' Law then added that, 'whatever our domestic differences may be, they do not prevent us presenting a united front in the counsels of the world.'²⁴ Already then, the party leaders seemed to present a 'united front'. As to ex-premier Balfour, he had his own reasons to believe the Government was firm. In late July he met both Arthur Nicolson, the Permanent Under-secretary of the Foreign Office, who stated the case for intervention²⁵ and, in a chance meeting while walking along Cockspur Street, Admiral Jackie Fisher, who 'told me that Winston had ordered the Fleet up the Channel... I was quite sure... that day that we should have war...'²⁶

What the Unionists did not predict was the scale of doubt that enveloped Cabinet ministers in late July, but they soon learnt of it thanks to Churchill. The First Lord 'entered into communication with the Unionist leaders through Mr. F.E. Smith' on the evening of Thursday, 30 July. Churchill 'stated that no decision had been reached by the Cabinet, and that I had received letters from one or two Unionists of influence protesting vehemently against our being drawn into a Continental war.' He then 'asked [Smith] to let me know where he and his friends stood on the supreme issue.' Smith was able to do as Churchill asked because, on 31 July, he went to spend the weekend with Law and Carson at Wargrave Manor, near Henley.²⁷ Other accounts of the Wargrave conversations suggest there was more to Churchill's approach than his memoirs reveal. Max Aitken (later Lord Beaverbrook), a Unionist MP close to

Law, makes clear that a *coalition* government was mooted. Although he can be an untrustworthy source, making himself central to events and sacrificing accuracy for drama, Aitken's presence at Wargrave is confirmed by its visitors' book.²⁸ He had gone to discuss Ireland, but the gathering 'instantly' focused on Europe. Smith explained that, 'While most of the leading Liberals were determined to stand by France, the majority of the Liberal newspapers were dead against war, and this view was finding... strong expression in the Cabinet...' In light of the possible resignation of several ministers, Churchill wanted to know 'would the Opposition be prepared to come to the rescue of the Government, not merely with parliamentary support, but by forming a Coalition to fill up the vacant offices?' Aitken adds, 'Churchill believed he had Grey's support in his action and the unspoken assent of the Prime Minister' and quotes Smith as saying a positive reply 'would affect the Prime Minister's mind.' Law decided to 'take no action', supposedly because of personal distaste for Churchill and backstairs intrigue, but there was acceptance of the general idea that the Tories should support the Government if it declared for war... – hence, presumably, Smith's letter to Churchill (reproduced above) which has no mention of a coalition. Yet, while Aitken says Law 'was opposed to coalition', he also suggests the latter's real objection was to the way in which the proposal was put. Any support 'ought to be asked for openly and directly by Mr. Asquith himself, and in that case [Law] would go to London.'²⁹

Some may doubt Aitken's statement that Grey and Asquith backed Churchill's approach.³⁰ Even the few biographies of Churchill that do mention the coalition question see it as a personal initiative, quickly off killed off either by Law or by Asquith.³¹ Surprisingly, the otherwise exhaustive official biography does not explore the question. Arno Mayer did suggest, in 1967, that Asquith and Grey were ready to

force Britain into war by exploring a coalition; but this argument tended to be dismissed by other historians.³² And, at the outset, it should be conceded that Churchill was quite capable of pursuing such an initiative on his own. Yet, there is tantalising evidence that others were in the know *before* Churchill approached Smith. It has already been seen that he discussed the Austro-Serb crisis with Grey ahead of the Austrian ultimatum. Grey's name will reappear below in the context of contacts with the Unionists. Furthermore, during the Cabinet of 29 July, Churchill passed a note to Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, saying 'Keep Friday night clear, F.E. is enquiring.'³³

Where evidence is lacking is with regard to the Prime Minister's knowledge of such contacts. Churchill's memoirs acknowledge, albeit elusively, that he was involved in various secret activities at this time. 'It was... necessary for me to take peculiar and invidious personal responsibility for many things...' His remark that, 'I had also to contemplate a break-up of the governing instrument' hints that he may also have been involved in planning for its replacement.³⁴ He told his wife in a letter of 31 July, with instructions (fortunately ignored) that it should be 'locked up or burnt', that, 'I c[oul]d not tell you all the things I have done & the responsibilities I have taken in the last few days...'. He also said that he had dined the previous evening with Asquith, who 'backs me... in all the necessary measures.'³⁵ However, this may simply refer to the naval preparations the being made. Then again, meetings between the two seem to have been very frequent. Asquith's wife, Margot, noted in her diary that, after the Cabinet meeting on 31 July he lunched at the Admiralty, presumably with the First Lord.³⁶ It is also worth noting Churchill's *modus operandi* where clandestine activities were concerned. While he did not always report key decisions to the Cabinet, he did keep the Prime Minister informed. Thus, Asquith

approved the Fleet's move to war stations and, on 1 August, when Churchill decided to mobilise the Navy he again consulted his chief. 'The Prime Minister, who felt himself bound to the Cabinet, said not a single word, but I was clear from his look that he was quite content.'³⁷ It is easy to imagine a similar 'nod' being given to discussions about a coalition, especially when the Cabinet was threatened with collapse in the midst of the worst international crisis for decades. Asquith was nothing if not a shrewd party manager and would have recognised that the mere possibility of a coalition government could force anti-war Liberals into line.

Aitken admits Churchill was not the ideal mediator, having defected from Unionist ranks a decade before: there was never 'any sympathy between him and Bonar Law.' However, Aitken adds that some Unionists admired Churchill. Smith was one, Balfour another. In her biography of her uncle, Blanche Dugdale talked of Balfour sitting in his house in Carlton Gardens during the war crisis, where he would 'listen to Mr. Winston Churchill and others who brought him the latest telegrams from abroad, or the latest orientation of opinion in the Cabinet Room.' Nor does Aitken's claim that Law 'objected to Mr. Churchill as the medium' of approach dovetail with other evidence.³⁸ The relationship between the pair may have been frosty.³⁹ Yet, a few days later, on 2 August, Law actually *proposed* to make contact with Churchill, using Smith as interlocutor, to see what the First Lord thought of the idea of a letter from the Unionist leaders to Asquith. It is also clear from Chamberlain's contemporary account that Churchill was asked, on Saturday, 1 August, 'whether there was anything the Opposition could do, and had at that time replied in the negative.'⁴⁰ In late July and early August, then, contact between him and the Unionists was quite close. In fact this was not the first period when Churchill had acted as a conduit to them. In 1913, he had exchanged letters with Chamberlain about the Irish problem, again sharing

some with Asquith.⁴¹ Nor was this the first time in recent years that a Liberal coalition with Unionists was explored. In August 1910, after a close election and the death of Edward VII, the situation seemed desperate enough for Lloyd George to propose a coalition to preserve national unity. This came to nothing and its seriousness may be debated, but it is interesting that the names of some who were privy to it reappear in 1914. As first point of contact with the Unionists, Lloyd George used Smith, who spoke to their then-leader, Balfour. Law, Chamberlain and the Chief Whip were among others consulted. On the Liberal side, Churchill was the first to know, Asquith soon became involved and a selection of other cabinet ministers was sounded, including Grey.⁴² It is also worth noting the events of May 1915, when a coalition was eventually established. Then, too, Churchill and Smith were active in pressing the idea, Chamberlain was willing to agree, Law needed some persuading.⁴³

Whatever the truth about the Churchill-Law relationship, the Unionists effectively became allies in the First Lord's determination to prepare for war. Churchill told Smith that he had not only showed the latter's letter of 31 July to Asquith, but 'read it to the Cabinet where it produced a profound impression.'⁴⁴ In other words, if Churchill is to be believed, ministers – probably at their morning meeting on the 1st, when Asquith says that 'Winston occupied at least half the time' – may already have been appraised of Unionist support for firmness.⁴⁵ It should also be noted that Churchill was in contact with another Unionist MP, Robert Cecil, and gave a copy of one of his letters to Asquith on 1 August. This said that 'if the Gov[ernmen]t decide to take action whether by the despatch of an expeditionary force or otherwise they may count on the support of the whole Unionist party.'⁴⁶

The 'Pogrom'

While the Churchill-Smith communications were underway, there were separate moves to galvanise support for war. Henry Wilson wrote on 30 July that ‘war seems inevitable’, but he feared ‘the Cabinet was going to run away’ and so launched his own campaign for action. He met Arthur Nicolson for one of their regular meetings early on 31 July and later with Eyre Crowe, Assistant Under-secretary at the Foreign Office, who ‘was in despair’ at Grey’s determination ‘to act the coward.’ Wilson, Nicolson and Crowe were all convinced of the German threat and the need to stand by the *entente*. Wilson even told a French official that his ambassador, should threaten to ‘break off relations and go to Paris’ if Britain did not promise support. Wilson also met the Unionist MP John Baird, Private Secretary to Law, and had him write to the latter, ‘begging him to come up and see Asquith tonight’; this being the first of several attempts to get Law back to London.⁴⁷ Wilson also had friends among the Press, including Maxse, who he telephoned, announcing ‘We are in the soup.’⁴⁸ It is important to grasp that for Wilson it was essential to commit Britain to war alongside the French as soon as they entered the war, because he planned to mobilise the BEF *simultaneously* with the French army. During the Agadir crisis he had already insisted that, ‘Britain must mobilise at *exactly* the same moment as France’, an argument that was made plain to both Grey and the then-Secretary for War, Richard Burdon Haldane.⁴⁹ This consideration does much to explain the urgent rush to war that affected Wilson and his friends in early August 1914, especially in light of the fact that the Cabinet on 1 August – as France mobilised – ruled out sending the BEF to Europe, at least for the moment.⁵⁰

The situation on 31 July also troubled Amery, partly because of a Commons statement by Asquith. The Prime Minister, after reporting Russian mobilisation and the likelihood that Germany’s would follow, said he preferred ‘not to answer any

questions until Monday next.⁵¹ After dinner Amery was visited by his fellow radical George Lloyd who was convinced ‘we *must* stand firm’ against what he saw as a German attempt to split the entente.⁵² The pair ‘agreed strongly that it was essential that our leaders should voice even more definitely than they had done their readiness to support the Government in doing its duty by France.’ Amery then telephoned both H.A. Gwynne, editor of the *Morning Post*, ‘to urge him to write as strongly as he could’, and Wilson, who declared the government ‘was absolutely rotten and in favour of betrayal all along the line’. Lloyd went to put similar pressure on Geoffrey Dawson, editor of *The Times*, and Lord Charles Beresford, a former Admiral who was now Unionist MP for Portsmouth. Both Amery and Lloyd, who evidently had no knowledge of the Churchill-Smith communications, also wrote letters to Austen Chamberlain.⁵³ Lloyd’s asked, ‘Is there nothing you can do to get our leaders to do their share in stiffening the govt’s backs?’⁵⁴

Maxse remembered 1 August as ‘the blackest of black Saturdays.’⁵⁵ Yet, as day broke, there were positive signs from his perspective. The *Morning Post* declared, ‘Englishmen are all agreed that this country must stand by France, which means, in the existing situation, standing by Russia also.’ Of course patriotic newspapers might have taken such a line without the encouragement of Amery and Lloyd, but Gwynne’s leading article, ‘The Need for Guidance’, closely reflects their thoughts. The editor also wrote to Grey’s Private Secretary, William Tyrrell, declaring ‘I fear we are disappointing France and leaving her in the lurch...’ and arguing Grey was strong enough ‘to force his views on the Cabinet and the country’.⁵⁶ During the morning the pro-war activists drew closer together. Henry Wilson was early off the mark, meeting Nicolson at 7 a.m. They went to try to see Grey, but he was in bed and Nicolson would not disturb him.⁵⁷ Wilson returned to his house where a breakfast meeting had

been organised with Maxse and a few others. It was here, according to Maxse, that ‘one of our number suggested bringing in the Unionist Opposition to save the situation.’ He adds that the group decided to call themselves ‘The Pogrom’, an unusual title, generally associated with anti-Jewish atrocities.⁵⁸ According to Amery’s diary, he and Wilson met somewhat later, Wilson emphasising the importance of prompt military action and complaining that the Committee of Imperial Defence had not yet met. Meanwhile, Lloyd visited Balfour, asking him to stay in London until evening, in case he should be needed. According to Amery, Balfour was ‘flabbergasted at the news Lloyd gave him’ of government inactivity. Lloyd and Maxse also contacted the Russian embassy and visited French ambassador, Paul Cambon, who warned that, ‘if we stood out and the French won they would gladly do everything to crush us afterwards.’⁵⁹ It was an oddly threatening way to win friends and, according to Lloyd’s account, the meeting became quite heated, especially when the Ambassador reported the supposed differences within the Unionist camp. According to one source Lloyd was nonplussed when Cambon asked ‘But where are your leaders’, because they both knew that most had gone away for the holiday weekend.⁶⁰

Unionist Divisions

It is now necessary to consider the issue of division within Unionist ranks, which has provoked some differences among historians. Cameron Hazlehurst, for example, has argued that there were real differences in Unionist ranks, but Nigel Keohane thinks them less serious. The Government certainly *claimed* the Opposition differed over war. Cambon reported to Lloyd that Grey had said so; Maxse picked up a similar report. Amery gives the impression that Asquith’s government was using supposed

Unionist doubts as an ‘excuse’ for its own dithering. He concedes, however, that there *was* support for neutrality among Unionists. He first confines this to Hugh Cecil and ‘in a milder degree’ Hugh’s brother, Robert, both sons of the former Prime Minister, the 3rd Marquis of Salisbury. However, Amery adds that ‘the Jewish influence generally, in so far as it affected the *Daily Telegraph* and some other circles in the party, looked with great aversion on the idea of war’, suggesting that doubts about war were quite widespread.⁶¹ Chamberlain, too, names Hugh Cecil as causing confusion, having written to Churchill ‘urging our complete neutrality’ – which was what led Robert Cecil to write his letter to Churchill saying the Unionists actually favoured firmness.⁶²

Oddly, another member of the Cecil clan, who may have provoked confusion was Salisbury’s nephew, Arthur Balfour. He dined with Nicolson around 29 July and, when Nicolson talked of standing alongside France and Russia, Balfour put the opposite view. Nicolson reported the conversation to Grey, who then told Cambon the Unionists were divided. Dugdale calls this a ‘misunderstanding’, arguing that the philosophical Balfour, ‘although entirely agreeing’ with Nicolson, ‘had, characteristically, put the other side of the case.’ When Balfour became aware of the confusion he wrote to Tyrrell, to clarify matters.⁶³ Balfour received a letter from Nicolson on 2 August insisting, ‘I am innocent of the authorship of any rumours’ and explaining:

The morning after we had met I told Sir E. Grey that I gathered from you that you were of opinion that neither Parl[iamen]t nor the country would intervene in a quarrel between Russia & Austria over Servia, but it might be another matter were Germany and France involved... if the former was to attack the latter.⁶⁴

Whatever Nicolson had reported, however, damage was done: the former Unionist premier apparently oppose war. In Balfour's defence, it can be said that no-one in late July wanted to enter into an *Austro-Russian* war and it may simply have been this to which he was opposed. It has already been seen, above, that he was a firm supporter of the entente and had backed firm action in the Agadir crisis. However, even as late as 1 August, he told the Russian ambassador's son-in-law that while the Unionists would support war for 'European' (as opposed to Serbian) issues, Britain had no written obligation to fight.⁶⁵ There was also apparently an 'incident' at a dinner, the precise date of which is unclear, when Balfour upset the Russian Ambassador by remarking that the position of India might be endangered if Britain helped Russia defeat Germany.⁶⁶

Confusion about Unionist policy may even have been caused Law. According to Grey's memoirs, in a conversation around 29 July, Law told him:

it was not easy to be sure what the opinion of the whole of his party was. He doubted whether it would be unanimous or overwhelmingly in favour of war, unless Belgian neutrality were invaded; in that event, he said, it would be unanimous.

Grey was adamant he had not misunderstood Law, who was talking about the Unionist rank-and-file.⁶⁷ It is possible to find doubts about war from other Unionists. Lord Selborne, a former First Lord of the Admiralty, told his wife on 3 August, 'We can only hope and pray that England may be spared from joining in...'.⁶⁸ Small wonder then, that Grey and Churchill – who desperately wanted the Opposition to back them on support for France and had no motive for inventing stories about the Unionists' vacillation – were genuinely concerned about the situation and wanted to know the truth about what their position really was.

On 1 August, Lloyd asked Amery to lunch at Wilton Crescent, where they were joined by Maxse and Lord Eustace Percy, a member of the Foreign Office's Western Department and later a Conservative minister. All agreed on 'the bad state of affairs' and that Unionist leaders must return to London.⁶⁹ According to Wilson's diary it was Percy, evidently sharing Nicolson and Crowe's support for France in the FO, who 'arranged to send George Lloyd and Charlie Beresford for Bonar Law to Wargrave.'⁷⁰ Percy's momentary appearance is evidence that the so-called 'Pogrom' was an amorphous group and that Lloyd's subsequent claims – for example, that he took the initiative for taking Beresford to Wargrave – must be treated cautiously. One of Lloyd's most significant claims was that a telegram from him persuaded Lansdowne to return to London on 1 August. Actually, however, others were urging the same course. According to Maxse, Lord Edmund Talbot, the Unionist chief whip, 'telegraphed to Lord Lansdowne at Bowood', to come to the capital.⁷¹ More important may have been Balfour, who sent messages to Law *and* Lansdowne. A letter Balfour wrote to his sister on 8 August explains:

Last Saturday I was the only ex-Minister in London and spent much of my time in conveying to the French and Russian Ambassadors that the rumour of Unionist reluctance to take our share in depending [sic] France and Belgium was totally unfounded. I sent to the country for Bonar Law and Lansdowne, and on Sunday they communicated our views to the Prime Minister.⁷²

It should be noted that this letter clearly paints a rather positive view of his dealings with the French and Russians, given the confusion he had created about Unionist intentions.

Lansdowne House

After the meeting at Wilton Crescent, Lloyd and Beresford left for Wargrave, where Law insisted on finishing a set of tennis before talking to them. According to Lloyd's later account, Beresford ended up 'shouting at Bonar' before the latter said he would return to London after dinner, adding, 'But I think it quite unnecessary.' Yet again, the contemporary evidence is contradictory on details. Amery, based on a contemporary conversation with Lloyd, says Carson and Smith were away from the house, 'having gone up the river'. Yet, Lloyd's later version says Smith was the one playing tennis with Bonar.⁷³ Aitken, who makes no mention of Lloyd and Beresford, says, 'On the Saturday morning everyone wished to return to town at once', but that Law wanted to wait for further news and that, eventually, 'the whole party motored to town in the afternoon.'⁷⁴ But Amery's version is supported in a biography of Carson, by Ian Colvin, which says the Irishman returned to Wargrave to find Law had already gone. Instead, Carson met Captain Wilfrid Spender there. Spender was an Ulsterman who, after talking to friends at the War Office about delays in mobilisation, had come to warn the Unionists leaders about the situation.⁷⁵ Spender's mission reinforces the image of many individuals, including those linked to the Foreign and War Offices, pressing Law and the Unionists to act at this point.

Aitken claims that, 'Churchill, on our arrival in London, was anxious that Bonar Law should dine with him and Grey that night.' This suggests that Churchill was informed about Law's movements and that the Foreign Secretary was again working closely with the First Lord. Chamberlain, who heard of the incident later, says Law declined dinner because he feared 'intriguing with a section of the Cabinet behind the Prime Minister's back.'⁷⁶ Yet, it is surely highly important that Smith and Aitken went to see Churchill that evening. Smith was already Churchill's close friend but, at this point, Aitken barely knew the First Lord (however close they subsequently

became) and most probably acted as Law's envoy. It is difficult to believe, given the earlier correspondence, that the subject of a coalition did not come up, but Aitken makes no mention of this and there are puzzling elements about the meeting. Aitken mentions a 'couple of friends' of Churchill being present, but does not say who they were. More strikingly, Churchill's memoirs claim he 'dined alone at the Admiralty' that evening. This is deliberately misleading because, some years later, he conceded to Smith that they had indeed met. Then again, even if discussion of a coalition was intended, the subject may simply not have come up before Churchill was abruptly forced to leave for Downing Street, after hearing of Germany's declaration of war on Russia.⁷⁷

Having declined Churchill's invitation to dinner, Law went to see Lansdowne, now back from Bowood. The evidence about this meeting is again confusing, with contradictory information originating from one of those present, George Lloyd. The contemporary accounts by Amery and Chamberlain, both written after talking to Lloyd and entirely dependent on him for information, disagree on who attended. Amery lists them as Law, Lansdowne, the Duke of Devonshire (Chief Whip in the House of Lords), Edmund Talbot (Chief Whip in the Commons), Lloyd and Wilson. 'Balfour had gone off to Hatfield with a promise to return in the morning.' Yet Chamberlain categorically says that Balfour was also present. As to the contents of the meeting, Chamberlain reports:

Wilson and Lloyd had been distressed by their conversation with the leaders at Lansdowne House. Lloyd said Balfour, of course, understands the position, but Bonar Law does not know what it means, and Lansdowne does not seem to understand... they had parted without taking any steps...

Even Chamberlain found the last point difficult to believe, believing the former Foreign Secretary would ‘obviously appreciate’ the situation.⁷⁸

Years later, Lloyd provided a radically different account to the historian Ian Colvin. Lloyd, who revealed that Devonshire had asked him to the meeting and that he, in turn, asked Wilson to go along in support, now claimed that Lansdowne demonstrated ‘decision and clarity.’ Lansdowne apparently recommended that Law telephone Asquith; but when the call reached Downing Street the Prime Minister was asleep and his secretary, Maurice Bonham Carter, refused to wake him. This later account seems, in one respect, the more reliable in that there *was* an attempt to secure a meeting with Asquith that night. Another interesting point is that Lloyd says, ‘I think’ Balfour was there. However, the 1934 account ventures into mere imagination when it details, at some length, the Unionist decision ‘to draft the now famous ultimatum to the Government,’ which was written ‘by Lansdowne.’ In fact, as will become evident below that letter was only drafted the following day, with Chamberlain providing the key draft. What Lloyd seems to mean is a shorter letter to Asquith, simply putting in writing Unionist leaders’ willingness to meet him.⁷⁹

Fortunately, there were other accounts of the Lansdowne House meeting, written down soon afterwards. Wilson’s diary confirms that he and Lloyd went to Lansdowne’s at 11 pm, talked for about an hour and made a request to Asquith ‘to see him in the morning.’ Wilson lists the attendees as Law, Lansdowne, Devonshire, Talbot, Lloyd and himself, thus agreeing with Amery’s list.⁸⁰ Lansdowne, in a letter to his wife the following day, said Law, Devonshire and Talbot were waiting for him when he returned home, that Lloyd and Wilson arrived later, and that Law and Lansdowne offered to meet Asquith.⁸¹ Neither account mentions Balfour’s presence and so the weight of evidence suggests he was not there. This rather goes against most

secondary accounts, which confidently place Balfour at the meeting. One even makes him the central figure of the proceedings.⁸² The error is understandable, in that these accounts trusted the evidence of the usually dependable Chamberlain. However, he, hearing Lloyd's account of his meetings that day, perhaps compounded the Lansdowne House gathering with a separate, earlier interview between Lloyd and Balfour that took place.⁸³

Pembroke Lodge

While Lloyd had been on the Wargrave mission, Amery had gone to bring Chamberlain from Westgate-on-Sea, but a locomotive breakdown meant they were not back in London until 1 a.m. on the Sunday morning. Lloyd met them, giving his account of the Lansdowne House meeting. Then, Lloyd and Amery urged Chamberlain 'to put an end to any excuse the Government might have' for indecision and he promised to get the leadership together again. It was 2 a.m. before they parted.⁸⁴ The following morning, Lloyd and Amery met with Maxse at Henry Wilson's house and all duly went round to the French Embassy. Here Charles Roux, the First Secretary, confirmed what Wilson had already heard from Nicolson at a pre-breakfast meeting: Germany had declared war on Russia, invaded Luxembourg and had refused to give the British government a guarantee of respect for Belgian neutrality. Despite all this, the Cabinet was still divided; Grey had seen Cambon but refused to give any firm undertaking to fight. Wilson says there was 'much telephoning to Bonar Law, Austen and others' that morning. At some point Amery telephoned Law to tell him of the invasion of Luxembourg, but the Unionist leader still seemed reluctant to act, arguing that 'any attempt to bring too much pressure on the Government would rally the coalition in opposition to the war.' However, there

was better news for the ‘Pogrom’, when Amery and Lloyd went on to Lloyd’s house and Austen Chamberlain soon arrived. He, too, had been up early and, true to his promise of the previous evening, had got the leaders together.⁸⁵

Chamberlain’s day had begun with a visit to Lansdowne House. While waiting for him to come down, Chamberlain drafted a possible message to send to Asquith. Written on Lansdowne House notepaper, it read:

We feel it our duty to declare that, in our opinion, any hesitation in now supporting France and Russia, our intimate friends (with one of whom at least we have for years past concerted naval and military measures affecting gravely her own military and naval dispositions at this moment), would be fatal to the future security of the United Kingdom; and we offer His Majesty’s Government the assurance of the united support of the Opposition in all measures required by England’s intervention in the war.

To make comparisons with the eventual letter sent to Asquith, the words they have in common have here been italicised. This scotches alternative claims that Law, Balfour, or even Aitken, did much to draft it.⁸⁶ Chamberlain says that, when Lansdowne appeared, he was ‘convinced, like myself, that for England to hang back now was for her to incur indelible disgrace.’ Lansdowne also revealed that Chamberlain had been misled by Lloyd about the previous evening’s meeting: the Unionist leaders *had* sent a message to Asquith, offering to meet him. Then, while Lansdowne breakfasted, Chamberlain drafted some notes setting out what Unionist leaders might say to Asquith, including the need for immediate mobilisation – as, of course, Wilson wanted – and a message to Germany asking that it respect Belgian neutrality. Unfortunately, Chamberlain does not say why his draft letter ignored the Belgian question, while the speaking notes covered it. But it is clear that, even if the all-

important letter to Asquith did omit Belgium, the issue was still a live one in Unionist minds. It may be that the Unionists wished to emphasise the importance of standing by the Triple Entente at this point because the European balance of power was fundamental to their thinking, but their underlying thinking about the international system is simply not brought out in the surviving sources.

By 10 a.m., Lansdowne and Chamberlain were at Law's house. Chamberlain pressed his case that, if there were disagreement in the Cabinet, 'it might be proper for those who were ready to act to know the attitude of the Opposition; and here I mentioned that Cambon had told George Lloyd that Grey was pleading the attitude of the Opposition as an excuse for inaction.' Chamberlain now learnt about the Churchill-Smith communications, the confusion caused by Balfour's remarks to Nicolson, and Robert Cecil's letter to Churchill. 'Lansdowne and Law seemed to conclude from this that there was no need to do more.' Law added the point that Churchill, who had been contacted on 1 August, agreed there was nothing more the Unionists could do. This seemed to mark the defeat of Chamberlain's desire to write to Asquith. However, it is worth underlining that Law and Lansdowne were reluctant to act, not because they wanted to leave the Government in the dark, but because they believed Unionist views *were already clear*. Nonetheless, Chamberlain continued to press his case and something happened to change Law's mind. It is impossible to say what it was, because Chamberlain says he 'there were two or three interruptions, and I left the room to take a telephone message.' When he returned, Law 'suddenly, to my surprise' announced, 'I am not sure that after all Austen is not right. I think we ought to write to the Prime Minister.' But it is possible that the change was thanks to Churchill because, immediately before noting the 'interruptions', Chamberlain reports that Law, 'said that he would try to get into touch with Winston through F.E. Smith

on the telephone.’ Once the decision was made, Chamberlain’s draft was then altered somewhat and sent to Downing Street.⁸⁷

Yet again, there are contradictory accounts of the meeting at Law’s house, largely revolving, once again, around whether Balfour was present. Aitken says that Balfour, Lansdowne and another leading Unionist, Walter Long (who had competed with Law and Chamberlain for the party leadership in 1911), called on Law that morning. Surprisingly, he has no mention of Chamberlain. But this discrepancy can easily be explained: Aitken is simply confusing the 2 August meeting with one the following day when, as will be seen below, Balfour, Lansdowne and Long were all present, along with others, including Chamberlain.⁸⁸ It is noteworthy that Chamberlain’s lengthy account of the 2 August meeting makes no mention of Aitken’s presence.⁸⁹ One historian claims that the decision to send the letter to Asquith was ‘largely as a result of Balfour’s pressure,’ but that is difficult very difficult to believe, since Chamberlain can hardly have completely omitted to mention a prominent figure like Balfour had he been there.⁹⁰ True, Dugdale also gives the impression, though she does not say categorically, that Balfour was there.⁹¹ But Balfour’s letter to Alice Balfour of 8 August makes no mention of his being present.⁹² Furthermore, the letter from Lansdowne to his wife, written on 2 August itself, confirms that Chamberlain took the lead and suggests Balfour only reappeared on the scene later:

I had meant to breakfast late this morning but there was an urgent message from Austen C[hamberlain] begging me to see him as soon as possible. He arrived at 9.20 and, after I had bolted my breakfast, we went on to Bonar Law’s house, which he couldn’t leave as all sorts of people were ringing him up. I got back at 11 and found A.J.B[alfour] just arriving...⁹³

Balfour and Lansdowne were still together about 1.45, being seen at the Travellers' Club 'in earnest colloquy.'⁹⁴

Coalition Avoided

Balfour, though he actually seems to have been absent from the key meetings of the previous twenty-four hours, was soon at the centre of events, meeting Churchill who called on him after the morning Cabinet meeting. It is extraordinary that the First Lord, rather than trying to win over Liberal doubters, went to see the ex-premier at this critical moment, but so too is his attempt to cover up his purpose. Churchill's claim that, during the discussion, he 'learned that the Unionist leaders had tendered formally in writing to the Prime Minister their unqualified assurances of support', is clearly a red herring: Law's letter had been just read to the Cabinet, which the First Lord attended. However, Churchill is not the only eminent figure who felt compelled to mention this afternoon meeting with Balfour, while trying to avoid any details about its subject matter.⁹⁵ Chamberlain noted, elusively, that at this point Churchill 'sought ... an interview with Balfour ... [and] talked to him freely about the position.'⁹⁶ Balfour, equally vague, told his sister, on 8 August that 'Winston came to see me on Sunday and we had an interesting talk.'⁹⁷

The truth about the meeting was finally revealed by Blanche Dugdale in 1930. Churchill had told Balfour that 'half the Cabinet would resign when war was declared. Balfour at once said he was certain that if so the Unionist leaders would be quite prepared to join a Coalition Government.' Dugdale based this on notes of a conversation with her uncle on 11 August 1914, adding that 'When he proffered Unionist support on his own initiative Balfour had probably already got in touch with Mr. Bonar Law and Lord Lansdowne, who was out of London.' This statement has a

tentative air and is clearly incorrect on one point: Lansdowne had actually returned to London. But it is doubtful Balfour would have given Churchill such the reassurance about a coalition unless he believed that Lansdowne (in whose company he had just spent some time) and Law would agree.⁹⁸ That a coalition was the subject of the Churchill-Balfour meeting is confirmed by the papers of Geoffrey Dawson, editor of *The Times*, who saw Churchill on the evening of the 2nd and who adds that Balfour ‘came up from Hatfield’ for the talk.⁹⁹

It is not that those involved in the exchanges at this point necessarily wanted a coalition, though Churchill and Smith may have done so. Most were simply preparing for a possible Cabinet break-up. Dugdale says Balfour saw a coalition as ‘a very great misfortune’, adding that the formation of a pro-war government ‘at that moment might hasten the formation of an anti-War Party’, dividing the country.¹⁰⁰ Balfour referred in his 8 August letter to the ‘calamities that might have come upon us if the administration had broken up and a coalition Government had had to be formed.’¹⁰¹ He was not the only Unionist to think like this. Lansdowne told his wife, ‘Things may end in a split, and in our being approached, but a change of govt. would be deplorable at such a moment.’¹⁰² A former Unionist Chief Whip, Lord Crawford, wrote on 4 August, ‘There are talks of a coalition government, but... our support of the war policy is quite adequate to show Europe that we are united.’¹⁰³

This theme of *supporting* the government rather than seeking office emerges elsewhere. Balfour said on 4 August that ‘the Unionist Party are most anxious to aid to the very best of their ability the Government in the present crisis.’¹⁰⁴ It undermines Lloyd’s description of the 2 August letter to Asquith as an ‘ultimatum’.¹⁰⁵ The ‘Pogrom’ may have wanted to cajole the Liberals, but Unionist leaders were more restrained. Whatever their domestic differences, there was, as McDonough

emphasises in his study of the Unionists and Anglo-German relations, a strong tradition in British politics of bipartisanship on foreign affairs, which Balfour and Lansdowne were always keen to sustain. It was even more important to safeguard this at times of international crisis.¹⁰⁶ As Keohane adds, in contrast to domestic issues, ‘diplomatic policy was perceived as the province of the sitting government and confidential information was treated as such.’¹⁰⁷ Then again, some of the Government did feel threatened. John Simon’s letter of resignation of 2 August, which was subsequently withdrawn, noted the possibility of a coalition and added that one Cabinet member was working for this.¹⁰⁸ The reference can hardly be to anyone other than Churchill.

It was probably after the day’s first Cabinet that Asquith wrote to Law, saying he had received his letter, had informed the Cabinet about it and ‘shall be glad to confer with you and Lord Lansdowne at some convenient time to-morrow.’ The Unionists thus finally had a response to their request, first made the evening before, for a meeting. However, with a second Cabinet session in the afternoon the Prime Minister could not see them quickly. Later, Asquith wrote again enclosing a policy statement and confirming his readiness to meet, while warning there would be another Cabinet at 11 a.m. on 3 August.¹⁰⁹ The policy statement was hardly encouraging, beginning as it did by insisting, ‘We are under no obligation, express or implied, either to France or to Russia to render them military or naval help.’ In fact, it was based on a paper that Asquith had drawn up for the morning’s Cabinet, which was intended to keep the Government together and therefore included points designed to please the pro-peace ministers.¹¹⁰ It was difficult to reconcile its tone with the fact that ministers, at their second meeting that day, effectively decided in favour of war

should there be ‘a substantial violation’ of Belgian neutrality – and had thereby removed any immediate need for a coalition.¹¹¹

Indeed, the letter was so troubling to Law that, accompanied by Carson, he went along to Brook’s Club to see Lansdowne, Chamberlain and Devonshire. Chamberlain felt ‘the whole document appeared extremely wavering and looked as if the Government were searching for excuses to do nothing...’.¹¹² Geoffrey Dawson, who dined at Brook’s that evening, saw ‘Lansdowne, Devonshire and other Unionist leaders who – with Carson and Bonar Law – were possible alternatives to the Lloyd George “cave” in a coalition Cabinet’ (Lloyd George being the supposed leader of the anti-war faction). An intriguing point, that only Dawson reveals, is that Smith dined with Grey and Tyrrell, at the Admiralty that evening – and therefore, presumably, with Churchill. Frustratingly, he gives no idea what they discussed, but the meeting again reveals that Grey had some involvement in links to the Opposition.¹¹³ In any case, by 11 p.m., Chamberlain was more optimistic that the government would survive. Reports from the offices of *The Times* and *Morning Post*, confirmed the latest Cabinet meeting ‘was more satisfactory’. Significantly, Chamberlain again recommended that, when Law and Lansdowne saw Asquith, they should ask ‘whether it is true that Germany has refused to pledge itself to observe the neutrality of Belgium.’¹¹⁴

Law and Lansdowne finally met Asquith face-to-face at 10.30 a.m. on 3 August. He was ‘very tired and obviously anxious to get rid of them as soon as possible’, but made clear he ‘was with Grey and... Churchill’ on support for France, while ‘trying to preserve as large a portion of his Cabinet as possible.’¹¹⁵ Asquith’s account also reveals that during this meeting the Unionists ‘laid great stress on Belgian neutrality.’ While it would be pointless to deny that the Unionists strongly

supported the entente with France¹¹⁶, it is clear once again that Belgium loomed large in their thinking. Indeed, it had done so from the time of Smith's letter to Churchill. Chamberlain may have omitted Belgium when he drafted the 2 August letter, but he certainly recognised it as important. More than once he had pressed Law and Lansdowne to raise it with Asquith.¹¹⁷ Law and Lansdowne reported back on their meeting to a gathering of Unionist leaders at Lansdowne House immediately afterwards, where the others present were Balfour, Chamberlain, Long, Devonshire, Lord Salisbury and Robert Cecil. They were reassured by Asquith's attitude.¹¹⁸ Later, Grey made his celebrated speech arguing that Britain must stand by France and Russia. Afterwards Law declared, 'that in whatever steps [the Government] think it necessary to take for the honour and security of this country, they government can rely on the unhesitating support of the Opposition.'¹¹⁹ That evening Balfour intervened to bring an early end to an adjournment debate on the international situation, which looked likely to be dominated by anti-war Liberals.¹²⁰ Aside from the fact that Unionist support for war may have helped keep the Cabinet together, it also helped guarantee an image of unity in parliament. Indeed William Bridgeman, one of the Unionist whips, believed 'we have saved the Govt. from their friends' and that the Liberals, with their Labour and Irish Nationalist allies, barely had 100 MPs who supported war.¹²¹

As 4 August dawned Wilson and Amery were still not content, because the Government seemed 'determined at all hazards not to send the Expeditionary Force.' They again hoped to mobilise Unionist leaders to put pressure on the Government, enlisting support from another right-wing MP (and Boer War hero), Lord Simon Lovat, and a prominent Unionist, Lord Milner.¹²² In fact, the leadership was already pressing the Government to send the BEF, a letter on these lines being sent from

Balfour to Haldane, who was back as (Acting) Minister of War. Around lunchtime, Law, Lansdowne, Balfour and Chamberlain considered another letter to Asquith but, as on previous occasions, Law was reluctant to act and soon there was no time to do so before that afternoon's Cabinet.¹²³ Instead, later in the day Balfour and Lansdowne both met, separately, with Haldane.¹²⁴ Amery was back at Wilson's in the evening, still determined to step up pressure on the Government. But a telephone call to Chamberlain put him in his place. Speaking 'a little stuffily', Chamberlain complained that Amery was 'asking too much of the Unionist leaders and fears that if they press the Government too hard the latter may get irritated.'¹²⁵

It was perhaps as well that Unionists did not press for mobilisation too firmly or quickly, because the cabinet might have balked. On 1 August, Grey told Cambon, of the Cabinet's decision that 'we could not propose to Parliament at this moment to send an expeditionary force to the continent.' As Cameron Hazlehurst has argued, Asquith probably used this decision to help win the Cabinet over to participation in war: ministers would be more tempted to enter the conflict if they felt the army need not be committed to it.¹²⁶ Reginald McKenna, the Home Secretary, 'was for war if Belgian neutrality was violated, but against the dispatch of an expeditionary force,'¹²⁷ while another minister, J.A. Pease, still believed on 3 August that one argument against resignation was that it would bring more bellicose ministers into office, who 'might urge our troops being sent abroad...'¹²⁸ It is worth noting that Liberals were not alone in such doubts. The staunchly anti-German owner of the *Daily Mail* and *The Times*, Lord Northcliffe, was equally firmly opposed to sending an expeditionary force, because he felt it would not be strong enough to make a real contribution and he believed it would be needed to meet a German invasion of England.¹²⁹ More surprisingly, as the crisis unfolded a letter from an army friend, sceptical about the

BEF's readiness for war, even led George Lloyd to advise Chamberlain that London should stiffen French morale by 'throwing full weight of our fleet in. Meanwhile mobilise our army at once and get in shape to wait events.'¹³⁰ This would hardly have been welcome news to Lloyd's ally, Henry Wilson. But as it was, the cautious approach to mobilisation paid off. On 5 August, with Britain now at war, a War Council of ministers and military chiefs decided to send four divisions to fight on the continent.

Conclusion

There are many gaps and contradictions in trying to reconstruct the behaviour of Unionist leaders in days before war. The party was fractured, as can be seen from the primary sources that survive. Balfour barely surfaces in the Amery diaries, while biographers of Balfour have nothing about Amery. Similarly, Aitken's memoir ignores Lloyd, Amery and Beresford. No-one except Aitken himself says much about his role. Chamberlain openly acknowledged, when publishing his account, that 'doubtless much took place of which I was unaware.'¹³¹ As McDonough says, the meeting at Lansdowne House on 1 August had to be organised somehow, but none of the primary sources has a mention of the telephone calls or telegrams by which this was achieved.¹³² It would certainly be fascinating to have full record of then telephone calls in and out of Pembroke Lodge on the morning of 2 August. Nonetheless, some general conclusions are possible.

Like many others around Europe, Unionist leaders were caught unprepared by the precipitate descent into war. They felt little cause for alarm as late as 31 July, largely because they believed a firm line would be taken by Asquith's Cabinet. Nonetheless, it is difficult to disagree with Keohane's argument that 'the traditional

story of vacillation among the Tory leaders', as put about by Maxse and others, 'is without sound foundation.' There were reasons to doubt Unionist unanimity on war and, for a few days, Amery and his allies seemed 'a vital force in contrast to a sluggish leadership', but they subsequently exaggerated their significance.¹³³ They did not learn of the Smith-Churchill correspondence, nor do they seem to have known about the talk of a coalition. The Lloyd-Beresford mission was only one of several attempts to reach Law on 1 August. On the other hand, the amorphous 'Pogrom' should not be dismissed as a factor. There is no denying that Amery played the key role in getting Chamberlain to the capital and the latter arguably proved the key figure on 2 August, drafting the letter to Asquith, and pressing it on a reluctant Law. In mid-August his brother, Neville, told him 'we were within a hair's breadth of eternal disgrace, and some day the country will be grateful to Amery, G. Lloyd and you for having preserved her honour.'¹³⁴

Liberal sources can be oddly elusive about the Unionist factor in the decision for war. Grey has a few self-serving sentences about Unionist internal divisions, Churchill makes clear that he was in contact with Unionist leaders but scrupulously avoids mentioning a coalition. Yet, there is certainly evidence to back Keith Wilson's contention that the possibility of a Unionist entry into government focused Liberal minds. One Cabinet minister, Walter Runciman, wrote on 4 August of his reluctance to hand 'over policy and control to the Tories.'¹³⁵ Actually, an all-Unionist government was unlikely. Despite impressive by-election gains since the last general election, in 1910, when the Unionists tied with the Liberals on seats, the Irish Nationalists and Labour (with well over a hundred seats) were unlikely prop up a Unionist administration. The real danger was 'the prospect of a coalition government of Liberal imperialists and Unionists... that would take Britain into the war

anyway...'¹³⁶ This was the scenario Churchill raised with Smith, then Balfour: Asquith, Grey and others would remain in office, while Unionists would fill the places of those who resigned. It implied, of course, a split in Liberal ranks, as John Simon understood. Explaining the withdrawal of his letter of resignation, Simon told a Liberal backbencher, 'If a block of them were to leave the Government at this juncture, their action would necessitate a Coalition Government which would assuredly be the grave of Liberalism.'¹³⁷

As well as Unionist politicians, there was a broad group that, behind the scenes, opposed neutrality in the event of continental war. It included pressmen, like Maxse and Gwynne, members of the French and Russian embassies, and officials in both the Foreign Office (Nicolson, Crowe, Percy) and War Office (not least Wilson, who was ready to be openly disloyal to ministers). These elements, who already loathed the Government for its Irish policy, joined together in pressing the government to support France. The views of the right-wing MPs and the officials inside government (and therefore working for Liberal ministers) could be surprisingly close. On 31 July, for example, Nicolson wanted the mobilisation of the army and on 1 August, when urging that Britain must come 'to the aid of our friends', he added, 'I have... little doubt that the opposition leaders in this case would, if consulted, be of the same mind.'¹³⁸ Having come to Asquith's rescue on the war issue, the Unionists subsequently argued that it would be 'a breach of faith' if the government continued with its Irish Bill.¹³⁹ Yet, ironically, at the end of the day, the person who perhaps gained most from their activities, was Asquith who, rather than being the victim of any Unionist coup, exploited the Opposition's bellicose stance to stiffen the Cabinet.

Flexible as he was, Asquith may have had another card up his sleeve, in case the Cabinet did collapse: he was prepared to lead a coalition government. His wife

felt, by 2 August, that if there were many ministerial resignations, he would 'form a Coalition.'¹⁴⁰ Valentine Chirol, former Foreign Editor of *The Times*, also understood that, 'faced by numerous threats of resignation' on 2 August, Asquith decided to meet them 'on the advice of the King and [with] the assurance of the Unionist leaders, by the formation of a coalition government.' Chirol, who had close links to the Palace, adds that the King told the Prime Minister, 'when the latter informed him that... Ministers might have to resign collectively, that in that case he would send for him, Asquith, and Lord Lansdowne, and charge them with the formation of a National Defence Government.'¹⁴¹ This makes sense: Lansdowne would have been invited in preference to Law, because the former could lead a coalition from the Lords, while Asquith would lead in the Commons. As regards Churchill, it is impossible to prove conclusively that he acted as the Prime Minister's envoy in discussing coalition with the Unionists. It may well be that the First Lord acted on his own initiative, perhaps informing Asquith only retrospectively of what was afoot. But, by the morning 2 August, with the Liberal administration facing collapse, an astute political tactician like Asquith was likely to see the wisdom of leaving the door open to a coalition: before the day was through, had there been numerous ministerial resignations, he might have had no alternative to pursuing one. Certainly, there can be little doubt that Churchill talked about a coalition, or that he subsequently tried to disguise this. Yet, he found it impossible to stop others mentioning his activities. A month into the war, a letter by Arthur Nicolson related that, in the critical days of early August, 'Churchill, I hear, in view of the difference in the Cabinet... was busy for a time in indirect negotiations with the leaders of the Opposition for a coalition Cabinet.'¹⁴² Far from being a personal fad of Churchill's, quickly written off by the principals,

coalition was a serious option in early August 1914. The main reason it was not pursued was that its very possibility helped unite the Liberals behind war.

Notes

I would like to thank Professor David Stevenson, and the journal's anonymous readers, for their comments on earlier drafts of this article.

¹ Keith Wilson, 'The British Cabinet's decision for war', *British Journal of International Studies*, 1:1 (1975), 154. Zara Steiner and Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), 245-6, integrates Wilson's thesis.

² But he conceded 'the threat of coalition' helped prevent some ministers from resigning. Cameron Hazlehurst, *Politicians at War, July 1914 to May 1915* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1971), 41-2 and 114-15.

³ Frank McDonough, *The Conservative Party and Anglo-German Relations, 1905-14* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007); Rhodri Williams, *Defending the Empire: the Conservative Party and British defence policy, 1899-1915* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). Looking forward, see also Nigel Keohane, *The Party of Patriotism: the Conservative Party and the First World War* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

⁴ Following the signed copy, Parliamentary Archives (PA), Lloyd George Papers, LG/C/6/11/20.

⁵ *The Times*, 15 December.

⁶ For example: Earl Loreburn, *How the War Came* (New York: Knopf, 1920), 210; Harry Barnes, *The Genesis of the World War* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970), 515; Anthony Morris, *Radicalism against War, 1906-1914* (London: Longman, 1972), 397.

⁷ Churchill, *The World Crisis, 1911-14* (London: Butterworth, 1923), 215-16; original in Churchill Archive Centre (CAC), Cambridge, CHAR13/26/148.

⁸ Keohane, *Patriotism*, 12; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914* (London: Ashfield Press, 1980), 460. On the pre-war development of right-wing nationalism see Frans Coetzee, *For Party or Country: nationalism and the dilemmas of popular conservatism in Edwardian England* (Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁹ Robert Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister: the life and times of Andrew Bonar Law, 1858-1923* (London: Eyre and Spottiswode, 1955), 178-81.

¹⁰ Leo Maxse, 'Retrospect and Reminiscence', *National Review*, August 1918, 726-52.

¹¹ House of Commons debates (HC Deb.), Fifth Series, Vol. 28, 1828-9; K.M. Wilson, 'The Opposition and the Crisis in the Liberal Cabinet over Foreign Policy in November 1911', *International History Review*, 3:3 (1981), 399-413.

¹² Williams, *Defending*, 200-3.

¹³ Blake, *Unknown*, 219.

¹⁴ Austen Chamberlain, *Down the Years* (London: Cassell, 1935), 93-106. The original (hereafter 'Chamberlain memorandum') is in Birmingham University Library, Austen Chamberlain Papers, AC14/2/2. Elements of this were first published in *The Sunday Times*, 1 December 1929.

¹⁵ Churchill, *World Crisis*, 155.

¹⁶ The National Archives (TNA), Kew, FO800/88, Churchill to Grey, 22 July.

¹⁷ Churchill, *Crisis*, 211-13; Asquith to the King, 28 July, in J.A. Spender and Cyril Asquith, *The Life of Herbert Henry Asquith, Lord Oxford and Asquith: volume II* (London: Hutchinson, 1932), pp. 80-1.

¹⁸ Asquith to the King, 30 July, in Spender and Asquith, *Asquith*, 81-2.

¹⁹ Chamberlain memorandum,

²⁰ John Barnes and David Nicholson, eds. *The Leo Amery Diaries, Volume One, 1896-1929* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), 104.

²¹ Grey of Fallodon, *Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916: Volume One* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), 337.

²² Imperial War Museum, Henry Wilson diary, 29 July; C.E. Callwell, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, his life and diaries: Volume One* (London: Cassell, 1927), 152 (misdated 28 July).

²³ Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 30 July, in Michael and Eleanor Brock, eds., *H.H. Asquith: letters to Venetia Stanley* (Oxford University Press, 1982), 135-7 and footnote 2.

²⁴ HC Deb., Vol. 65, 1601-2.

²⁵ Blanche Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour, 1906-30* (London: Hutchinson, undated), 85; Chamberlain, *Years*, 97-8.

²⁶ Dugdale, *Balfour* (London: Hutchinson, undated), 83, dates the meeting to 29 July. But other evidence suggests it was on 30 July: British Library (BL), Balfour papers, 49832, Balfour to Alice Balfour, 8 August; CAC, CHAR/13/28/21, Fisher to Churchill, 31 July.

²⁷ Churchill, *Crisis*, 215, contradicting Ian Colvin, *The Life of Lord Carson: volume three* (London: Gollancz, 1936), 16, who says Law was 'misled by F.E. Smith, who had heard from Winston Churchill that everything was going well...'

²⁸ PA, Wargrave Papers, WAR/9/1, visitors' book, 31 July. On Aitken's unreliability see Peter Fraser, 'Lord Beaverbrook's fabrications in *Politicians and the War*', *Historical Journal*, 25:1 (1982), 147-66.

²⁹ Lord Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War, 1914-16* (London: Collins, 1960), 16-19.

³⁰ John Campbell in *F.E. Smith: First Earl of Birkenhead* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), 373, says 'Churchill's feeler was entirely unauthorized and Bonar Law knew it' but cites no evidence.

³¹ Henry Pelling, *Winston Churchill* (London: Macmillan, 1974), 177-8; John Charmley, *Churchill: the end of glory* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993), 96-7; Norman Rose, *Churchill: an unruly life* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 105-6.

³² Arno Mayer, 'Domestic causes of the First World War', in Leonard Krieger and Fritz Stern, eds., *The Responsibility of Power: essays in honor of Hajo Holborn* (London; Macmillan, 1968), 298-300; Michael Gordon, 'Domestic conflict and the origins of the First World War', *Journal of Modern History*, 46:2 (1974), 224-25.

³³ Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume III, 1914-16* (London: Heinemann, 1971), 12, citing Lloyd George Papers. I have been unable to locate the original, which may have been lost before the papers reached the PA.

³⁴ Churchill, *Crisis*, 215.

³⁵ Winston to Clementine, 31 July, in Randolph Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill, Volume II: Young Statesman, 1901-14* (London: Heinemann, 1967), 714-5.

³⁶ Bodleian Library, Margot Asquith papers, Ms.Eng.d.3210, Diary, 31 July.

³⁷ Churchill, *Crisis*, 217.

³⁸ Beaverbrook, *Politicians*, 17, 25-7 and 118-19; Dugdale, *Balfour, 1906-30*, 83.

³⁹ Blake, *Unknown*, 55-6.

⁴⁰ Chamberlain, *Years*, 98.

⁴¹ Charles Petrie, *Life and Letters of the Right Hon. Sir Austen Chamberlain, Volume I* (London: Cassell, 1939), 346-55.

⁴² Austen Chamberlain, *Politics from Inside* (London: Cassell, 1936), 192-3 and 576-7; John Grigg, *Lloyd George: the people's champion, 1902-11* (London: Eyre

Methuen, 1978), 264-76. Lloyd George claimed that he submitted the proposal to Asquith at the outset, but this has been questioned: for a discussion of the evidence see Roy Jenkins, *Asquith* (London: Collins, 1964), 215-16.

⁴³ See Keith Wilson, ed., *The Rasp of War: letters of H.A. Gwynne to the Countess Bathurst, 1914-18* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1988), 90-92.

⁴⁴ Churchill to Smith, 1 August, in Earl of Birkenhead, *F.E.: the life of F.E. Smith, First Earl of Birkenhead* (London: Eyre and Spottiswode, 1959), 241.

⁴⁵ Asquith to Venetia Stanley, 1 August, in Brock, *Asquith*, 140.

⁴⁶ CAC, CHAR/2/64/7, Cecil to Churchill, 1 August; BL, Cecil of Chelwood Papers, Churchill to Cecil, 1 August; Cecil of Chelwood, *All the Way* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1949), 125.

⁴⁷ Wilson diary, 30 and 31 July; Callwell, *Wilson: Volume II*, 152-3.

⁴⁸ Maxse, 'Retrospect', 747.

⁴⁹ TNA, CAB4/3/2, memorandum, 15 August 1911, quoted in Keith Jeffrey, *Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 95-6; John and Peter Coogan, 'The British Cabinet and the Anglo-French staff talks, 1905-14: who knew what and when did he know it?', *Journal of British Studies*, 24:1 (1985), 121-2.

⁵⁰ 'Pro-war' ministers probably agreed to this to keep the Cabinet together: Morris, *Radicalism*, 394-95.

⁵¹ Barnes and Nicholson, *Amery Diaries*, 103; HC Deb., Vol.65, cols. 1787-8.

⁵² CAC, Lloyd papers, GLLD/8/6, Lloyd to 'Sam', 29 July; Colin Forbes Adam, *Life of Lord Lloyd* (London: Macmillan, 1948), 58-9.

⁵³ Barnes and Nicholson, *Amery Diaries*, 103.

⁵⁴ Chamberlain Papers, AC14/2/7, Lloyd to Chamberlain, 31 July.

⁵⁵ Maxse, 'Retrospect', 745.

⁵⁶ Wilson, ed., *Rasp of War*, 18-19.

⁵⁷ Harold Nicolson, *Lord Carnock* (London: Constable, 1930), 418-9.

⁵⁸ Maxse, 'Retrospect', 747-8; Wilson diary, 1 August; Callwell, *Volume II*, 153-4.

Maxse says Amery was there, but is contradicted by Amery's diary.

⁵⁹ Barnes and Nicholson, *Amery Diaries*, 103-4; Maxse, 'Retrospect', 749-50. See also Marina Soroka, *Britain, Russia and the Road to the First World War* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 254.

⁶⁰ CAC, Lloyd Papers, GLLD/17/36, Lloyd to Colvin, 18 May 1934; Colin Forbes Adam, *Life of Lord Lloyd* (London: Macmillan, 1948), 60.

⁶¹ Barnes and Nicholson, *Amery Diaries*, 104-5. Hazlehurst, *Politicians at War*, 42; Keohane, *Patriotism*, 14-15, differs.

⁶² Chamberlain, *Years*, 98; CAC, CHAR/2/64/7, Cecil to Churchill, 1 August (saying Hugh had given 'a false impression' and 'would take no public action inconsistent' with support for war).

⁶³ Dugdale, *Balfour, 1906-30*, 85; Chamberlain, *Years*, 97-8.

⁶⁴ BL, Balfour papers, 49748, Nicolson to Balfour, 2 August.

⁶⁵ Soroka, *Russia*, 254.

⁶⁶ Cambridge University Library, Hardinge Papers, Vol. 93, Chirol to Hardinge, 4 August.

⁶⁷ Grey, *Twenty-Five Years*, 337.

⁶⁸ Bodleian Library, Selborne Papers, Box 102, Selborne to Lady Selborne, 3 August.

⁶⁹ Barnes and Nicholson, *Amery Diaries*, 103-4.

⁷⁰ Wilson diary, 1 August; Callwell, *Volume II*, 154. Lord Percy of Newcastle, *Some Memories* (London: Eyre and Spottiswode, 1958), 41-2, is unfortunately very general.

⁷¹ GLLD/17/36, Lloyd to Colvin, 18 May 1934; Maxse, 'Retrospect', 751.

⁷² Balfour Papers, 49832, Balfour to Alice Balfour, 8 August 1914, and 49836, Balfour-Dugdale conversation, 8 November 1928.

⁷³ Barnes and Nicholson, *Amery Diaries*, 104-5; GLLD/17/36, Lloyd to Colvin, 18 May 1934

⁷⁴ Beaverbrook, *Politicians*, 19. McDonough, *Conservative Party*, 131 argues Law ‘was in no way persuaded to return by the unsolicited intervention of members of the radical right.’

⁷⁵ Colvin, *Carson*, 16-17.

⁷⁶ Beaverbrook, *Politicians*, 19; Chamberlain, *Years*, 97,

⁷⁷ Beaverbrook, *Politicians*, 28-32; Churchill, *Crisis, I*, 216; PA, Beaverbrook Papers, BBK/C/86, Churchill to Beaverbrook, 18 March 1928.

⁷⁸ Barnes and Nicholson, *Amery Diaries*, 104; Chamberlain, *Years*, 95.

⁷⁹ Colvin, *Carson*, 17-18; GLLD/17/36, Lloyd to Colvin, 18 May 1934; McDonough, *Conservative*, 132. The idea this meeting drafted the 2 August letter appears in other accounts: Lord Newton, *Lord Lansdowne: a biography* (London: Macmillan, 1929), 439-40; Barnes, *Genesis*, 514-15.

⁸⁰ Wilson diary, 1 August (continued at front of diary).

⁸¹ BL, Lansdowne Papers, ‘Various Papers, 1912-19’, Lansdowne to Lady Lansdowne, 2 August.

⁸² Kenneth Young, *Balfour* (London: Bell, 1963), 348. Other works placing Balfour there are: R.J.Q. Adams, *Balfour* (London: John Murray, 2007), 286-7; Sydney Zebel, *Balfour* (Cambridge University Press, 1973), 197; and even Dugdale, *Balfour*, 85.

⁸³ GLLD/17/36, Lloyd to Colvin, 18 May 1934. As to Amery’s claim that Balfour had gone to Hatfield House, he did not sign the visitors’ book on 1 August, but it was not

used consistently that year. I am grateful to Vicki Perry, archivist at Hatfield, for this information.

⁸⁴ Barnes and Nicholson, *Amery Diaries*, 104-5; Chamberlain, *Years*, 95.

⁸⁵ Wilson diary, 2 August; Callwell, *Volume II*, 155; Barnes and Nicholson, *Amery Diaries*, 105.

⁸⁶ Claims made in, respectively: Beaverbrook, *Politicians*, 32-3; Young, *Balfour*, 348; A.J.P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972), 84.

⁸⁷ Chamberlain memorandum; and see Chamberlain Papers, AC14/2/3 for original letter to Asquith, with speaking notes.

⁸⁸ Beaverbrook, *Politicians*, 32-3.

⁸⁹ Chamberlain, *Years*, 97-9.

⁹⁰ Young, *Balfour*, 348.

⁹¹ Dugdale adds that ‘some time on Saturday or Sunday Balfour sent them [that is, Bonar Law and Lansdowne] word that the Unionist attitude should be made clear to the Government without delay.’ This seems to have been linked to another meeting between Balfour and Churchill in which the latter reported ‘a rumour going round the clubs that the division of opinion in the Cabinet had its counterpart in the Conservative Party.’ But the exact chronology is, unfortunately, unclear. Dugdale, *Balfour, 1906-30*, 84-5.

⁹² Balfour papers, 49832, Balfour to Alice Balfour, 8 August 1914.

⁹³ Lansdowne Papers, ‘Various Papers, 1912-19’, Lansdowne to Lady Lansdowne, 2 August.

⁹⁴ Almeric Fitzroy, *Memoirs* (London: Hutchinson, undated), 559.

⁹⁵ Churchill, *Crisis*, 218. The official biography by Gilbert, *1914-16*, says nothing on the Balfour meeting.

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- ⁹⁶ Chamberlain, *Years*, 100.
- ⁹⁷ Balfour papers, 49832, Balfour to Alice Balfour, 8 August.
- ⁹⁸ Dugdale, *Balfour, 1906-30*, 84-5.
- ⁹⁹ Bodleian Library, Geoffrey Dawson papers, Dawson Mss. 64, 'Note of some critical Sundays, July-Aug. 1914' (undated).
- ¹⁰⁰ Dugdale, *Balfour, 1906-30*, 84-5.
- ¹⁰¹ Balfour papers, 49832, Balfour to Alice Balfour, 8 August.
- ¹⁰² Lansdowne Papers, 'Various Papers, 1912-19', Lansdowne to Lady Lansdowne, 2 August.
- ¹⁰³ John Vincent, ed., *The Crawford Papers: the journals of David Lindsay, twenty-seventh Earl of Crawford* (Manchester University Press, 1984), 340-41.
- ¹⁰⁴ Law, BL/34/3, Balfour to Haldane, 4 August.
- ¹⁰⁵ Colvin, *Carson*, 17-18.
- ¹⁰⁶ See McDonough, *Conservative*, 133 and 135.
- ¹⁰⁷ Keohane, *Patriotism*, 14.
- ¹⁰⁸ Bodleian Library, Ms.Simon 2, Simon to Asquith, 2 August.
- ¹⁰⁹ Law Papers, BL/34/3, Asquith to Law (2 August).
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid., BL/34/3, memorandum (covering letter, 2 August); Asquith to Stanley, 2 August (including Cabinet memorandum), in Brock, *Asquith*, 146.
- ¹¹¹ Asquith to the King, 2 August, in Spender and Asquith, *Asquith*, 82.
- ¹¹² Chamberlain, *Years*, 100-2.
- ¹¹³ Dawson, Mss. 20, Diary, 2 August, and Mss. 64, 'Note of some critical Sundays, July-Aug. 1914' (undated).
- ¹¹⁴ Chamberlain, AC14/2/11, Chamberlain to Lansdowne, 2 August.
- ¹¹⁵ Chamberlain, *Years*, 102-3.

¹¹⁶ Works that emphasise this include Keohane, *Patriotism*, 16; McDonough, *Conservative*, 136; and Williams, *Empire*, 228.

¹¹⁷ Blake, *Unknown*, 224; Asquith to Stanley, 3 August, in Brock, eds., *Asquith*, 147-9.

¹¹⁸ While the meeting was underway, a note arrived for Balfour from Churchill, explaining the latest reassurances to France: *Chamberlain, Volume I*, 376-7.

¹¹⁹ HC Deb., Vol. 65, 1827-8.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1848-84.

¹²¹ Williamson, *Bridgeman*, 79-80.

¹²² Barnes and Nicholson, *Amery Diaries*, 107-8; Bodleian Library, Ms. Milner, dep.85, Diary, 4 August.

¹²³ Law, BL/34/3, Balfour to Haldane, 4 August; Chamberlain, *Years*, 103-5.

¹²⁴ Law, BL/117/1, Balfour memorandum, 5 August; Lansdowne Papers, 'Various Papers, 1912-19', note of conversation, 4 August; Richard Burdon Haldane, *An Autobiography* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929), 277.

¹²⁵ Barnes and Nicholson, *Amery Diaries*, 108.

¹²⁶ G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War, Vol. XI* (London, HMSO, 1926), no. 426, Grey to Bertie, 1 August; Hazlehurst, *Politicians*, 86-91.

¹²⁷ David, ed., *Hobhouse diaries*, 179.

¹²⁸ Pease to his wife, quoted in Keith Wilson, 'To the western front: British war plans and the military entente with France before the first world war,' *British Journal of International Studies*, 3:2 (1977), 166.

¹²⁹ Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, *Northcliffe* (London: Cassell, 1959), 462 and 464.

¹³⁰ Chamberlain Papers, AC14/2/10, Lloyd to Chamberlain, undated (but clearly written around 1 August given the subject discussed).

¹³¹ Chamberlain, *Years*, 93.

¹³² McDonough, *Conservative Party*, 131.

¹³³ Keohane, *Patriotism*, 12-14.

¹³⁴ Chamberlain, AC14/2/4, Neville to Austen, 15 August.

¹³⁵ Runciman to Trevelyan, 4 August, quoted in Hazlehurst, *Politicians*, 116.

¹³⁶ F.R. Bridge, *1914: the Coming of the First World War* (London: Historical Association, 1988), 31. But on the Unionist revival since 1910 see John Ramsden, *A History of the Conservative Party: the Age of Balfour and Baldwin, 1902-40* (Longman: London, 1978), chapter 4.

¹³⁷ Christopher Addison, *Four and a Half Years: a personal diary* (London: Hutchinson, 1934), 35.

¹³⁸ Gooch and Temperley, *British Documents*, no. 368, Nicolson to Grey, 31 July, and no.446, Nicolson to Grey, 1 August.

¹³⁹ See, for example, CAC, CHAR/2/64/15, Robert Cecil to Churchill, 5 August.

¹⁴⁰ *The Autobiography of Margot Asquith, Volume 2* (London: Penguin, 1936), 127.

¹⁴¹ Hardinge Papers, Vol. 93, Chirol to Hardinge, 4 August.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, Nicolson to Hardinge, 5 September.