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Lord Lansdowne's peace letter and the controversy it caused

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Abstract

Lord Lansdowne's 1917 Peace Letter and the Controversy It Caused

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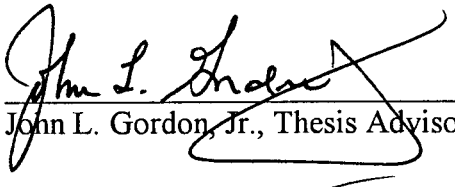
This study analyzes the letter Lord Lansdowne published in the 29 November 1917 Daily Telegraph and the varied reactions to it. The letter and his Cabinet Memorandum, which preceded it by a year, give no evidence of the traitorous, cowardly, sick, or tired old man his detractors portrayed. The detractors naturally included his political opponents, but also Americans such as Theodore Roosevelt and William Jennings Bryan. Interestingly, most abuse came from those of his own party with whom he had served his country in a variety of offices. This thesis explores the mystery of how a statesman could, by the publication of a single column of newsprint, turn into the vilest traitor. Sources include the Parliamentary Debates and a wide variety of newspaper and periodical reports and monographs and biographies. The conclusion of this research is that Lansdowne believed there was an alternative to waging a war which no one was winning. Lansdowne, perhaps, was the final bloom of Victorian reason in an Edwardian world gone mad.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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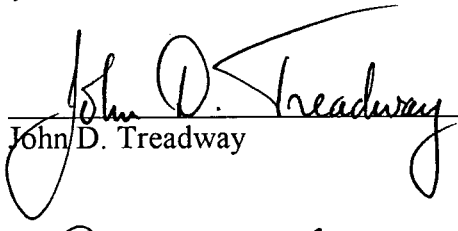

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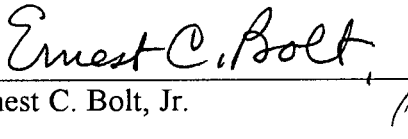

Ernest C. Bolt, Jr.

LORD LANSDOWNE'S 1917 PEACE LETTER AND THE CONTROVERSY IT CAUSED

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Mary Virginia Burton Cash

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
THE LETTER AND ITS CONTENTS

On 29 November 1917, Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice, better known as Lord Lansdowne, published his famous "Peace Letter" in which he urged a restatement of the Allies' war aims. Many people understood the letter to mean that Lansdowne wanted to negotiate a traitorous peace with Germany, and Lansdowne found himself embroiled in controversy. What motivated a man who had tried to strengthen his country first as Secretary of State for War and then as Foreign Secretary to publish a letter which members of the House of Commons debated as being traitorous under the Defense of the Realm Act? In the "Peace Letter" Lord Lansdowne openly wondered how his country could survive the continuation of the war, writing:

> As for ourselves, our casualties already amounted to over 1,000,000; there was no reason to suppose that they would increase at a lower rate; and we were slowly, but surely, killing off the best of our male population. The financial burden already accumulated was stupendous, and we were adding to it at the rate of over five millions a day.[1]

The First World War, like the American Civil War, was supposed to last only a matter of weeks. Few of the political or military leaders envisioned the final toll it would take on all of the belligerents in blood and treasure. It seemed as though neither side had the resources or the competence to defeat the other de-

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[1] Daily Telegraph (London), 29 November 1917. The text of the letter is included as Appendix A.

cisively. As Lord Beaverbrook, who was not part of the current government but had helped bring it to power, observed:

> 1917 opened as a year of disaster, France was exhausted; Russia was collapsing. There was a food shortage. The war was at a stalemate in France and German submarines disrupted shipping for food and other vital materials....The British public was not aware of the danger. Government Ministers seemed not to realize it. A few politicians and some of the newspapers warned of the danger, but were not heeded.[2]

Perhaps this ignorance of the true picture accounts for some of the strong and often vicious reaction to Lord Lansdowne's letter that was printed in the Daily Telegraph on 29 November 1917. Both supporters and opponents of Lansdowne's ideas called this document "The Peace Letter," but Lansdowne titled it "Co-ordination of Allied War Aims." He did not write "We Want Peace and We Want It Now." Instead he examined the Allies war aims in particular and queried, "What are we fighting for?" and "What do we want when the war is over?"[3] In answering the first question, Lansdowne wrote that defeating the Germans was not an end in itself. The Central Powers must be beaten, but for what reason? The reason he proffered was to prevent a recurrence of the events that caused the war in 1914. He answered the second question by noting the need for reparations and security. Lansdowne wrote that, of the two, security was the more important. He postulated that any efforts to make reparations complete, however

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[2] Lord Beaverbrook, Men and Power, 1917-1918 (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pierce, 1956), p. xxxv.

[3] Daily Telegraph (London), 29 November 1917.

extensive, would fall short, and that the best way to make amends for this incompleteness would be the prevention of another war. Lansdowne's suggestion for making this possible was for all of the Powers involved in World War I to bind themselves in a pact to submit future disputes to arbitration. If any nation refused to enter into the pact or abide by the decision of the arbitrators, the others would have the right jointly to use whatever means, political, economic, or military, to coerce that Power.[4]

Lansdowne did not take credit for the idea of a pact of nations with the power and permission to force erring nations to abide by its decisions. He cited examples of previous suggestions for such a body. They included Woodrow Wilson's speech at the banquet of the League to Enforce Peace on 28 May 1916, a speech by the German Chancellor Theobold von Bethmann-Hollweg in the Reichstag later in 1916, and a Papal Note to the Powers in August 1917, as well as the declaration on foreign policy made by the Austrian Foreign Minister, Count Ottokar Czernin, in Budapest in October 1917.[5] Even the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour, wrote in his dispatch covering the Allied Note of 10 January 1917 that one of the three conditions essential to a durable peace was some form of sanction which would give pause to the hardiest aggressor.

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

Lansdowne suggested that an effective sanction could take one of two modes. It could be either economic or military.[6] He then cited the circumstances, in his opinion, when it would be legitimate to use an economic boycott. The only legitimate reason would be for the purpose of defence and against the threats of a belligerent power. It should not be used to destroy the trade of the Central Powers at the end of the war. This kind of destruction would retard the economic recovery of all the powers involved in the war and not just the ones being boycotted. Lansdowne did concede that precautions should be taken to keep certain industries and sources of supply from being controlled by potential enemies.[7] These would include steel, lethal chemicals, and anything else that could be used to manufacture weapons.

Lansdowne wrote that territorial claims, except for obviously groundless ones, such as occupied Belgium being claimed as a German possession, should be examined and adjudicated when the war was over. It was more important for the Allies to focus on what would be most beneficial to all the Powers rather than what was most destructive to the resources of some of them. He stressed, "We are not going to lose this war, but its prolongation will spell ruin for the civilized world, and an infinite addition to the load of human suffering which already

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

weighs upon it."[8] Lansdowne pointed out that peace and security would be invaluable to a world that had enough vitality to use it for trade, but on the other hand, peace and security would be useless to countries too exhausted to grasp its blessings. If the war were not brought to a quick conclusion, all of the belligerent Powers would have their resources in this state of exhaustion.[9]

In Lansdowne's opinion, Germany and her allies already felt the war had lasted too long, and he was not alone in this estimation. In a speech at Mansion House on 9 November 1917, First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Eric Geddes, informed the public of the "'constant efforts" on the part of the Central Powers to initiate peace talk. Lansdowne conceded that the Government did not treat these efforts seriously because the Germans kept changing the conditions on which they would talk about making peace. (See Chapter 5 for more information on peace efforts by both sides.) He attributed their vagueness to German intolerance of independent expressions of opinion and German misrepresentation of Allied war aims. This misrepresentation included accusations that the Allies wanted to destroy Germany as a political and economic power, force her to accept a government chosen by her enemies, and exclude her from freedom of the seas.[10]

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

Lansdowne listed five points that he believed would clarify Allied war aims and perhaps make it easier to find common ground on which to negotiate a peace:

1. That we do not desire the annihilation of Germany as a Great Power;
2. That we do not seek to impose upon her people any form of government other than that of their own choice;
3. That, except as a legitimate war measure, we have no desire to deny to Germany her place among the great commercial communities of the world;
4. That we are prepared, when the war is over, to examine in concert with other Powers the group of international problems, some of them of recent origin, which are connected with the question of "the freedom of the seas";
5. That we are prepared to enter into an international pact under which ample opportunities would be afforded for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.[11]

Lansdowne maintained that, in the time since his letter had been written, the first three points had been dealt with by the current Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour at the public meeting in honor of Eleutherios Venizelos, the Greek Prime Minister. Moreover, the Americans had raised the question of point 4, "freedom of the seas," at the outset of hostilities, and, finally, an attempt to bring about the kind of pact suggested in point 5 should be common ground for all of the belligerents, and probably for all neutral powers as well.[12]

Lansdowne concluded that if there were no insurmountable difficulties to accepting these five points the new year ought to bring an honorable and lasting

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

peace.[13] He neither advocated peace at any price nor said that the Allies were doomed if they did not make a quick, negotiated peace with the Central Powers. Lansdowne never advised peace without honor. Lansdowne ended the letter by writing, "We are not going to lose this war." He suggested that a clear statement of the Allies' war aims might provide the basis to start talks for an honorable peace. He believed that if Germany clearly understood that she would neither be forced to give up her world position nor accept a government not chosen by her people then perhaps she would state peace terms that the Allies could accept in honor.[14] Lansdowne gave concrete suggestions that, if heeded, could allow the belligerents to move closer to peace.

From the perspective of more than eighty years, the letter makes good common sense. When it was written, however, most major world leaders were more interested in territorial gain, revenge, or remaining a world power than international security. Even President Wilson, whose ideas paralleled Lansdowne's, believed Germany must be defeated before peace terms could be discussed. No one was willing to set aside national interests for the international good. Why was Lansdowne willing to risk his reputation by speaking wisdom, and what difference did it make? Why was his letter considered a proposal for a negotiated peace? The following chapters of this thesis will examine these questions.

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid.

CHAPTER II
THE MAN AND HIS CAREER

In 1917, every major world leader knew Lord Lansdowne by reputation, if not personally. They were aware of the political offices he had held under the British government and what he had accomplished while holding those offices. Even his critics could not call him an inexperienced amateur at politics or state-craft.

Lord Lansdowne was born 14 January 1845 and baptized Henry Charles Keith Petty-Fitzmaurice. Upon the death of his father in 1866 he became the Fifth Marquess of Lansdowne. He inherited the title and his ancestral property at the age of twenty-one while still a student at Oxford.[1] As he became a peer almost simultaneously with achieving his majority, Lansdowne never had an opportunity to sit in the House of Commons and never fought an election campaign. Rather, he made his political debut in the House of Lords, unlike most of the important British political figures of the day.

The Lansdowne family supported the Liberal Party, and the new Lord Lansdowne entered Gladstone's Ministry in 1872 as Undersecretary for War. In 1883 he was sent to Canada as Governor-General, serving until 1888.[2] In 1885, the Liberals lost power, and Lord Salisbury replaced Gladstone as Prime Minister.

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[1] Lord Newton, P.C., Lord Lansdowne, A Biography (London: St. Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1929), p. 7.

[2] Robert K. Massie, Dreadnought (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), p. 32.

Salisbury wanted Lansdowne in his party, and Lansdowne was already moving away from the Liberals and toward the Conservatives.[3] Lansdowne was the second largest landowner in Ireland, and Gladstone's promotion of Irish Home Rule made them politically incompatible. When Lansdowne returned from Canada in 1888, Lord Salisbury offered him his choice of three major offices: the War Department, the Colonial Office, or the Viceroyalty of India. In 1888 Lansdowne became the Viceroy of India and held this position until 1893[4] when the Liberals briefly regained the Government.

In June 1895 the Conservatives were back in power with Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister. This time Lansdowne took the post of Secretary of State for War.[5] As historian Robert Massie, the author of Dreadnought, observed, "He accepted the War office, never imagining that he would be called upon to deal with a war."[6] The war in question was the Boer War of 1899-1902. Most historians (Lloyd George's biographer, John Grigg, for one), and even Lansdowne himself, have regarded his tenure at the War Office as a failure.[7] He had inherited a situation neither of his own making nor one over which he had complete control. Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, would not accept South African Re-

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[3] Newton, p. 24.

[4] Massie, p. 338.

[5] Newton, p.130.

[6] Massie, p. 338.

[7] Ibid., p. 339.

public President Paul Kruger's restrictions on outsiders or his demand that British troops be withdrawn from the frontiers of the Transvaal. When the British did not comply, Boer cavalry besieged the towns of Kimberley, Mafeking, and Ladysmith.[8] The reverses of the British army in the Ladysmith District of South Africa at the hands of the Boers were the most humiliating in over a century.[9] Lansdowne labored to remedy the situation by reorganizing the means of supplying men and supplies to the site of battle. While the war would be remembered as a disaster, "Lord Lansdowne was nonetheless the first Secretary of State since 1870 to make a stand for the army."[10] He threatened to resign if the Government did not come through with what the army needed to win the war.[11] Lansdowne organized the Army for a major war when none was in sight and insisted on the expenditure needed to equip it, which many of his colleagues opposed.[12] With the assistance of Lord Woseley, Lansdowne provided the future War Secretary, Sir (later Viscount) Richard Haldane, with four main points to reform the Army. In summary they were :

1. To increase greatly the proportion of artillery to infantry

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[8] Ibid., p. 272

[9] Newton, pp. 167-168.

[10] Ibid., p.191.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid., pp. 193-194.

2. Not to entrust any officer with a command who would not lead those troops into battle
3. Any volunteer troops that would be entrusted with heavy guns should receive proper training by regular troops before combat
4. The Intelligence department and staff should be trained to be more accurate and better organized [13]

The Boer War emphasized deficiencies in the Army which, had Lansdowne not worked to correct them, would have made World War I an even bigger disaster.[14]

Peace brought complacency, and Lord Haldane, Secretary for War in the years immediately prior to World War I, was to benefit from Lansdowne's efforts which ended when the latter moved to the Foreign Office in 1900. Haldane found out that nothing had been done by Lansdowne's immediate successor to follow up on the criticisms found in the Report of the Royal Commission on the War in South Africa (1903) and that there was no Expeditionary Force that was immediately ready.[15] According to the Committee of Imperial Defence, it would take two months to put 80,000 men on the continent. In addition, all of the brigades, except one, were short of transport and medical organization. Less than half of the field artillery batteries could be manned due to a shortage of gunners. [16]

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[13] Ibid., p. 194.

[14] Ibid., p. 192.

[15] Brian Bond, "Richard Burdon Haldane at the War Office," The Army Quarterly and Defence Journal 85 (October 1962 and June 1963): 36.

[16] Ibid.

Haldane's ideas of army reform began with Lansdowne's but went far beyond. He also insisted on enough men and materiel to win a war, but he strove to be able to do it in an efficient manner. Because he did not think a large army was needed for home defense, Haldane eliminated units that could not serve as part of an Expeditionary Force or as relief for overseas battalions. During his first two years in office, 1905-1907, he was able to reduce the Army estimates by £2 million, which enabled him to secure Government support to create a Territorial Force. This fashioned the Auxiliary Forces into an army which could very quickly be made ready for war in every respect.[17] In 1914, Haldane was able to dispatch to France in just 15 days 120,000 men who were generally regarded as the best-equipped force that ever left England.[18] Haldane had learned from the mistakes of the Boer War and carried out the reforms he thought would prevent a repeat performance. He did not want ineptitude at the War Office to be blamed for campaign failures, as had happened during the Boer War. Lansdowne himself never had the opportunity to put his ideas about army reform into place because in 1900 Lord Salisbury moved him from the War Office to the Foreign Office.[19] While actual army reform would be carried out by Haldane, many of his changes were based on Lansdowne's suggestions.

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[17] Ibid., p. 37.

[18] Ibid. p. 43.

[19] Massie, p. 337.

As Foreign Secretary (1900-1905), Lord Lansdowne would end Britain's "splendid isolation."[20] The first, and perhaps most surprising alliance, was the one with Japan. Both Britain and Japan were concerned over Russian expansion in the Far East. In April, 1901, Count Tadasu Hayashi, the Japanese ambassador to London, suggested to Lansdowne that their governments should try to come to some permanent understanding for the protection of their mutual interests in the Far East.[21] Lansdowne was favorable to his suggestions and, less than a year later on 30 January 1902, Great Britain and Japan signed a military alliance.[22] The treaty guaranteed Korea's integrity for five years. More importantly, if either ally were attacked by only one other power, then the other ally would remain a benevolent neutral, but if either of the allies were attacked by two or more countries, then the other ally would go to war in its support.[23] The treaty seemed to favor Japan, but if France and Russia were to attack Great Britain, the Japanese could attack Russia from the rear and divert its resources from the West. In addition, the Mikado (Emperor of Japan) promised to protect British interests and markets in China.[24]

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[20] Ibid., p. 339.

[21] Ibid., p. 219.

[22] Massie, p. 339.

[23] Newton, p. 221.

[24] Massie, p. 340.

Lansdowne's second major diplomatic success was the entente with France. On 6 August 1902, he met with the French Ambassador, Paul Cambon, to discuss colonial problems.[25] This meeting led to further discussions. On 7 July 1903, Lord Lansdowne and the French Foreign Minister, Théophile Delcassé, had a conversation about problems in Morocco, Newfoundland, Sakoto, the New Hebrides, and Egypt. The result was an arbitration treaty signed that summer, but unresolved issues regarding Egypt remained a problem.[26] A further agreement, known as the Entente Cordiale was signed on 7 April 1904.[27] It was not a treaty of alliance between France and Britain. At this period Britain did not want a formal alliance. "There was no question of an Alliance; the common object was to remove the causes of differences between the two countries in different parts of the world . . .."[28] The entente with France and the defeat of the Russian navy by Japan in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 would eventually lead to an Anglo-Russian understanding that would be signed by Lansdowne's Liberal successor, Sir Edward Grey, in 1907.[29]

These understandings with France and Russia would change Britain's relationship with Germany. The German principalities, from the Hanoverian suc-

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[25] Newton, p. 267.

[26] Ibid., p. 282.

[27] Ibid., p. 290.

[28] Ibid., p. 291.

[29] Ibid., p. 328.

cession in 1714 to unification, had been sometimes allied with Britain in her battles with France (Waterloo was the classic example). Since German unification, there had been attempts at an alliance, but they had all ended in failure. Lansdowne was the last Foreign Secretary to attempt an agreement with Germany over colonial disputes. Upon taking the Foreign Office, Lansdowne wrote to Sir Frank Lascelles, the British Ambassador to Berlin, "We should use every effort to maintain, and if we can strengthen the good relations between the Queen's Government and that of the Emperor."[30] In 1901 Baron Eckardstein, a German diplomat stationed in England, returned to the subject of an Anglo-German alliance.[31] A draft convention was drawn up by the Foreign Office in 1901, but Lord Salisbury objected on the grounds that there was a much greater chance of Britain having to defend Germany against Russia than of Germany having to defend Britain against France.[32] The Anglo-French agreement of 1904 put an end to any more attempts at a German alliance and meant that Germany could no longer play France and Britain against each other in colonial disputes.[33]

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[30] Ibid., p. 196.

[31] Ibid., p. 199.

[32] Ibid., p. 200.

[33] Ibid., p. 329.

Lansdowne's tenure at the Foreign Office ended in December 1905 with the fall of the Conservative Government.[34] His policies in that office were not only considered successful, but continued by his successor, Sir Edward Grey. "Perhaps the best tribute to his success, during five critical years, is that his policy was never seriously impugned, and that his successor followed implicitly in his footsteps."[35] As the Conservatives were out of office, Lord Lansdowne was no longer a member of the Cabinet. He, however, was still leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Lords and would keep that position until 1916.

If Lansdowne had left the War Office a legacy of attempting to do something about Army reform upon which Haldane expanded, he left an even more visible legacy at the Foreign Office. On 10 January 1906, Sir Edward Grey informed Haldane, the War Minister, that he was authorizing the continuance of conversations between French and British naval and military experts.[36] Haldane then began his push for those Army reforms that would prepare an expeditionary force of 120,000 men to land in France in 1914.[37] As Foreign Secretary, Grey had two objects in view in promoting a closer Anglo-French alliance. One was to preserve peace; the other was to ensure that if war came, Britain would have a

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[34] Ibid., p. 344.

[35] Ibid.

[36] George Macauly Trevelyan, Grey of Fallodon (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1937), p. 152.

[37] Ibid., p. 155.

chance to win.[38] Lansdowne, of course, had had the same two objectives in view during his tenure as Foreign Secretary, but he thought the danger would be attacks on the British Empire, not a European war.[39] By initiating an entente with the French, Lansdowne reversed traditional British diplomacy with France, Germany, and Russia

After 1905, Lansdowne led the Conservative opposition in the House of Lords to Government measures such as Home Rule for Ireland. The same influence that he had exerted to create the entente with France he now used to great effect to pass, defeat, delay, or alter bills in the House of Lords. The first of these bills to pass with the benefit of his influence was the budget of 1910, which imposed additional taxes, mainly on the upper classes — and was therefore unpopular in the House of Lords.[40] He did not oppose merely to oppose, however, and sometimes he worked with the Government to pass bills that may have been vetoed. The most important example of this was the Parliament Bill of 1911, which took away the Lords' power to amend money bills and deprived them of their veto over any legislation passed by the House of Commons in three consecutive sessions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George, had informed Lansdowne that no substantial alterations to this Bill by the House of Lords would be accepted and that the Government would recommend the crea-

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[38] Ibid., p. 228.

[39] Massie, p. 349.

[40] Ibid., p. 647.

tion of enough Liberal Peers to pass the Bill in its original form.[41] Lansdowne then told the Lords that Prime Minister Asquith was not bluffing when he threatened to ask the King to create enough new peers to pass the bill the next session. Thus, whether they chose to give up their power by allowing the Bill's passage or had it forced upon them by the creation of enough Liberal Peers to ensure its passage, the Lords would lose its veto power.[42] Most of the Conservative Peers did not vote either for or against the Bill but followed Lansdowne's suggestion and abstained, which allowed the Bill to pass and let the House of Lords look like they had given in gracefully.[43]

Lansdowne had not given way on these two bills because he had changed his mind or agreed with their contents, but from a sense of duty. He believed that, as a member of the Aristocracy, he had a duty to serve England in whatever capacity he was asked. Any obligations incurred by this service could not be shirked, and so Lansdowne would not shirk his duty no matter what the personal consequences.[44] His decisions were made on what he believed to be best for the

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[41] Peter Rowland, David Lloyd George, (New York: Macmillan Company, Inc., 1975), p. 248.

[42] Massie, p. 659.

[43] Ibid., p. 661.

[44] Ibid., p. 337.

British Empire. The outbreak of war would not cause him to waver from his policy of doing what he thought best for England, whatever the personal consequences.

On 4 August 1914, the German Army crossed the Belgian frontier in violation of the Treaty of London (1839) in which France, Britain, Prussia, and Austria had guaranteed the perpetual neutrality of Belgium. The British Government sent Germany an ultimatum which would expire at midnight German time (an hour ahead of midnight in Britain). The Germans did not reply, and at 11:00 P.M. Britain was at war with Germany. Lord Lansdowne was not among those who objected as the crisis escalated into war. Along with the other leading Conservatives, he backed the Government's decision to go to war and the Conservative Party did not oppose the government on this decision. The leading Conservatives — Lansdowne, Andrew Bonar Law, Arthur Balfour and Austen Chamberlain — were all agreed, as they told Asquith in a letter dated two days before the war, that any hesitation in supporting France and Russia would be fatal to the honor and to the future security of the United Kingdom.[45] They further offered to support the Government in any measures it considered necessary for the war effort.[46] H. H. Asquith wrote in Memories and Reflections that, on 3 August 1914, "Bonar Law and Lansdowne came to see me early this morning. They were in general

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[45] Cameron Hazelhurst, Politicians at War, July 1914 to May 1915 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), p. 41.

[46] Newton, p. 440.

agreement, but laid great stress upon Belgian neutrality."[47] As a result of this pledge of support given by the opposition leaders, those Cabinet Ministers who had been organizing resistance to intervention and threatening resignation changed their minds, and eventually only two, Lord John Morley and John Burns, adhered to their convictions and left the Government.[48] Instead of facing an administration which had brought Ireland to the verge of civil war and had been incapable of even coping successfully with Emmeline Pankhurst, the Germans found themselves against an England united to carry the struggle to the bitter end if necessary.[49]

Lansdowne, though a leader of an opposition party that supported the Government completely, was not idle. He made a précis of all important Foreign Office telegrams the Government received from August 1914. As Conservative leaders in the Lords and Commons respectively, Lansdowne and Bonar Law received paraphrased copies of War Office and Foreign Office telegrams to acquaint them with the progress of events. These were read in their regular Shadow Cabinet meetings. In addition to his political activities, Lord Lansdowne became Chairman of the Manpower Committee and head of the Red Cross. One of his estate houses, Bowood, was converted into a hospital. Both of his sons

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[47] Herbert Henry Asquith, Memories and Reflections 1852-1927, 2 vols. (London: Cassell and Company Limited, 1928), 2:20.

[48] Newton, p.440.

[49] Ibid., p.442.

rejoined their regiments, and his second son, Lord Charles Mercer Nairne, was killed 30 October 1914 at the First Battle of Ypres.[50]

Even though he was supporting the war effort unstintingly, Lansdowne repudiated the suggestion that there was a partnership between the Government and the Opposition and disclaimed having preliminary knowledge of major war measures. Both he and Bonar Law were willing to co-operate with the Government in the war effort, but they were unwilling to accept even partial responsibility for any Government policy they and their party had not helped make.[51] This situation changed in 1915 when Asquith decided to invite the Conservative Parliamentary leaders into his War Council to try to provide more cohesion in the Government. Asquith wrote in Memories and Reflections that on 10 March 1915, "We had our War Council this morning, which was attended for the first time by Lansdowne and Bonar Law."[52]

Admitting the Opposition leaders to the War Council was just the beginning of the change in Asquith's government. Two, almost simultaneous, events forced Asquith to form a Coalition Government in May 1915. The First Coalition was to include eight Unionists and Arthur Henderson as the only Labor Member.

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[50] Ibid., pp. 442-443.

[51] Hazelhurst, p.159.

[52] Asquith, Memories and Reflections, 2:63.

Lord Lansdowne agreed to become Minister Without Portfolio.[53] The two events that had precipitated Asquith's formation of a coalition were the "shell crisis" and Lord John Fisher's resignation at the Admiralty. Of the two, the "shell crisis" was considered by some to be nonexistent and a creation of those military leaders (especially Sir John French) who needed an excuse for not winning the war.

> Shell shortage was perennial throughout the First World War. This was partly apathy, due to lack of energy and imagination in organizing supply to meet the incredible rate of consumption involved in repeated assaults upon heavily fortified positions. It may have also owed something... to the fact that when generals set themselves an impossible objective and they failed to achieve it, they had to blame something.[54]

This deficiency of shells became visibly apparent at the Battle of Neuve Chapplle on 10 March 1915 when the army used as many shells as had been expended during the entire Boer War.[55]

Asquith's biographer, Roy Jenkins, blamed Fisher's resignation at the Admiralty, and not the "shell crisis," for the fall of the Liberal Government in 1915.[56] The Gallipoli campaign had begun at the end of February as a cheap and easy way to do something quickly for Russia (provide her with a warm water port at

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[53] Newton, p. 446.

[54] Roy Jenkins, Asquith (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1966), p. 355.

[55] Ibid., p. 356.

[56] Ibid., p. 355.

Constantinople).[57] The campaign was successful initially, but the combined land and naval attack was delayed until 12 April.[58] During the delay, the Turks, led by Mustafa Kemal, reinforced their lines, and the military situation became a stalemate which neither side could win.[59] In November the Secretary for War, Lord Kitchener, went to Gallipoli to report on the advisability of withdrawal. He telegraphed a recommendation for evacuation and the War Council agreed, but the Cabinet asked for a delay and the final decision was postponed until 7 December. The troops finally were evacuated 18-21 December and their withdrawal was the most successful part of the campaign. In the aftermath, Lord Fisher resigned in May because Asquith had refused to grant him the same powers that Kitchener had at the War Office. Fisher's resignation subsequently forced Asquith to dismiss Winston Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty.[60] The conflict between Churchill and Fisher had the possibility of provoking a vicious attack on the Government by the Conservatives who disliked and mistrusted Churchill.[61] Asquith, with Bonar Law's agreement, decided to get rid of Churchill and form a coalition government.

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[57] Bentley Brinkerhoff Gilbert, David Lloyd George (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 1992), p. 193.

[58] Jenkins, p. 354.

[59] Ibid.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Gilbert, p. 161.

Since manpower, as well as firepower, was becoming critical, one of the first things the Coalition had to tackle was compulsory military service. In June a Registration Bill was proposed and agreed to. Some members of the Cabinet saw this as paving the way for conscription. The military developments in August, notably the disaster in Gallipoli, tilted the argument in favor of conscription.[62] Lord Lansdowne himself had never been a supporter of compulsion, but he now began to urge preparation for the inevitable.[63] On 12 October 1915 Lansdowne, Lloyd George, Lord Curzon, Churchill (still an M. P.), and Walter Long raised the issue of the need for conscription in Parliamentary debate.[64] The issue had opponents in the Cabinet as well as the public. Reginald McKenna, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Walter Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, were opposed to compulsion on the grounds that Britain could supply either the materiel or the men to win the war, but not both.[65] The supporters of compulsion were equally determined. Charles Hobhouse wrote in his Journal that, ". . . Lansdowne, Curzon, Law, A. Chamberlain were for leaving the Cabinet if conscription were not proposed."[66] On 2 May 1916, Asquith introduced the bill

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Newton, p. 447.

[64] Rowland., p. 327.

[65] Jenkins, p. 389.

[66] Quoted in Edward David, ed., Inside Asquith's Cabinet (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), p. 55.

for conscription. It met little opposition and passed through all its stages by 25 May.[67] Lansdowne voted for conscription, once again doing what he considered to be in the best interests of Britain even though he was personally opposed.

Despite the bloody slugfests at Verdun and the Somme, the campaign of 1916 also failed to produce a decisive victory for either side, and at the end of October Asquith asked members of the War Committee to express their views on the terms upon which peace might be concluded.[68] Lord Lansdowne wrote a memorandum that was circulated to the Cabinet on 13 November 1916.[69] It was a preview of his public letter to the Daily Telegraph, a year later. In it he raised the questions, "What are our chances of winning the war outright? And if the chances according to the military authorities are unfavorable, should an effort be made to secure peace on negotiated terms?"[70] This memorandum was rejected on a unanimous basis with words ranging from the sweetly reasonable to the blast of the Chief of the General Staff, Sir William Robertson, at "cranks, cowards and philosophers who think we stand to gain more by losing this war than by winning it."[71] Lansdowne's ideas were not backed by any important Conservative

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[67] Jenkins, p. 394.

[68] Newton, p. 449.

[69] Ibid. The Memorandum is included as Appendix B.

[70] Trevelyan, p. 365.

[71] Quoted in S. L. A. Marshall, World War I (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), p. 267.

M. P. or any other member of the Cabinet. "No one, who mattered, could be found to agree with Lansdowne, but there was nothing fanciful about the account he gave of Britain's predicament."[72]

The Cabinet's official reply was made by Lord Robert Cecil, Minister of the Blockade, in a memorandum of 27 November 1916. "He was firmly opposed to Lord Lansdowne's suggestions, at least as taken literally."[73] Cecil insisted that any negotiated peace would bring disaster to Britain.[74] Two quotes from Cecil's memorandum sum up his position. They are, "Whether we agree with Lord Lansdowne's conclusions, or not, one thing is clear, our situation is grave," and, "our enemies, though badly injured are not disabled."[75] While he did not, or could not, agree with Lansdowne, Cecil conceded that Lansdowne had provided food for thought.

Others were not so generous. Historian A. J. P. Taylor wrote that Lansdowne's ideas were silenced by advocates of the "knock-out blow." Among these advocates were David Lloyd George and, to a lesser extent, Bonar Law.[76] No important political figures supported Lansdowne's view, and the military leaders

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[72] John Turner, British Politics and the Great War (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 249.

[73] Quoted in Ibid.

[74] Beaverbrook, Men and Power, p.xxxvii.

[75] Quoted in Asquith, Memories and Reflections, p. 147.

[76] A. J. P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848- 1914 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 551.

were particularly vicious. Sir William (Wully) Robertson, in addition to his blast about cranks, cowards, and philosophers, replied that it was unmanly and unpatriotic to think of peace or peace terms until Germany was crushed.[77] Unfortunately, Robertson and the other Generals did not seem to know how to crush Germany and win the war.[78] Indeed, Robertson's failure is especially prominent, since as Maurice Hankey pointed out in The Supreme Command, "his appointment as Commander in Chief of the General Staff on 23 December 1915 decided for years the main strategy of the war."[79] While it was not well-received and had no immediate diplomatic or military effect, the Lansdowne Memorandum very possibly had a major political impact, as shall be discussed.

> Its contents did not represent Asquith's view.... But he also thought, as did Grey, and most of the other Liberals in the Cabinet, that Lansdowne was perfectly within his rights and indeed might be performing a public service by raising the questions which he did. This view was not taken by Lloyd George or Bonar Law, within the Government, or by Carson or Northcliffe outside.[80]

At this same time Asquith was being attacked on several fronts by those who did not approve of his leadership style. When it came to fighting the War, Asquith never imposed his views on the service chiefs. In his opinion, they were

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[77] V. H. Rothwell, British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914-1918 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 54.

[78] Marshall, p. 267.

[79] Maurice Hankey, The Supreme Command 1914-1918, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin Limited, 1961), 2:446.

[80] Jenkins, p. 418.

the experts in their respective fields.[81] He may have been wrong not to have taken a firmer hand in guiding the service chiefs, who had made little progress in winning the war. Unfortunately, no one more competent could be found to replace them, and Asquith became their scapegoat. The military leaders had not won any great victories, but were seemingly immune from criticism. Instead the Prime Minister was blamed for the conduct of the war. "But it should not be assumed that all delays and blunders were the responsibility of Asquith and his style of Cabinet leadership. The incompetent obstinacy of the British naval and military leaders was a force to be reckoned with, and the civilian administration was uneven in quality."[82] In spite of the reforms made by Lansdowne and Haldane (moving troops and supplies quickly and seeing that the troops were adequately supplied), good military leadership could not be legislated.

Asquith had tried to make a Britain that was divided on domestic issues into a cohesive entity that would put all its energies into the war effort. The formation of a Coalition Government was supposed to be a step toward putting national interests ahead of political and personal conflicts. It did not work because the Cabinet members were too focused on their personal political careers to concentrate on the war. According to Hankey, it was not Asquith's lack of vigor that brought the first coalition to an end, but, "the party controversy before the war

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[81] Ibid., pp. 350-351.

[82] Turner, p. 110.

had been too acute to admit of complete fusion of the parties so soon. There were too many rancorous memories, too deep a distrust....In other words it was a coalition that never coalesced."[83] In his 1992 study, British Politicians and the Great War, John Turner wrote, "The most general complaint about the Asquith coalition was that it suffered a form of pernicious anaemia...."[84] Everyone seemed to think Asquith was either not doing enough, botching what he did do, or both. While he could not be responsible for winning or losing the war single-handedly, "Nevertheless the accumulation of frustrations and near disasters proved fatal to Asquith and finally brought Lloyd George to power as the head of a new coalition government on 6 December, 1916."[85]

A decision by Asquith the previous year had led to dissension over who was in control of the war. On 31 October 1915 Asquith decided to institute a small War Cabinet (Committee) to take care of the day-to-day business of the war. It was supposed to consist of himself and two to four other members.[86] This small committee of convenience threatened to become the tail that wagged the dog as the members argued over which took precedence in managing the war: the committee or the full Cabinet. Lloyd George, who was both on the committee

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[83] Hankey, p. 570.

[84] Turner, pp. 101-102.

[85] W. N. Medlicott, General Editor, Contemporary England 1914-1964 (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1967), p. 45.

[86] Rowland, p. 341.

and in the Cabinet, thought the committee should determine war policy. On 2 December 1916 Asquith and Lloyd George openly disagreed about the War Committee having precedence over the Cabinet.[87] Lord Beaverbrook, Bonar Law's best friend and a prominent newspaper magnate, thought Bonar Law, who had been loyal to Asquith, should form a government, but Law did not feel he had enough support for this. Instead he began to back Lloyd George after 19 November and secured the agreement of Lloyd George's major Tory critics — Chamberlain, Curzon, Cecil and Long — to serve in a government under Lloyd George's leadership.[88] Law had neither asked Lansdowne, the Unionist leader of the House of Lords, if he would serve under Lloyd George nor gotten his support for this maneuver. Law had not even consulted Lansdowne. When Bonar Law held a party meeting to inform the Unionists of his plan to back Lloyd George, Lord Lansdowne was in the country for the weekend and found that, because of weekend scheduling, he could not catch a train that would get him to the 3 December meeting on time.[89] Bonar Law made no subsequent efforts to get Lansdowne's approval or include him in a government headed by Lloyd George. "All the Unionist Ministers in the previous administration, with the notable exception of

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[87] A.J.P. Taylor, ed., A Diary by Frances Stevenson (London: Hutchinson of London, 1971), pp. 130-131.

[88] Medlicott, pp. 45-46.

[89] Jenkins, p. 434.

Lansdowne, accepted office under Lloyd George."[90] Lord Lansdowne resigned from his Cabinet post and as Unionist leader in the House of Lords when Lloyd George became Prime Minister. He continued to sit in the House of Lords and spoke on a variety of subjects more or less connected with the war.[91] Ironically, Asquith had wanted Lansdowne, but not Law, on the Committee, but Lansdowne had refused to serve.[92]

Lansdowne's role in the collapse of Asquith's government may have been greater than letting Bonar Law take his proffered place on a committee and in missing a train. Interestingly, Lord Crewe wrote a memorandum dated 20 December 1916 that credited Lansdowne's memorandum with bringing about the fall of the first coalition Government.

> Possibly the veritable causa causans of the final break-up is to be traced to Lord Lansdowne's striking paper of 13 November 1916. It has been rumoured that the present Prime Minister [Mr. Lloyd George] regarded this document as a danger signal marking an obstruction in the road, the barrier being a supposed invitation to the 'elder statesman' or soberer spirits of the Government to anticipate an enforced conclusion of the War. Study of the memorandum does not confirm this fear. It is rather to be regarded as a plain and courageous exposition of the facts, perhaps erring somewhat in the direction of mistrust, but displaying no poverty of spirit or lack of determination.[93]

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[90] Rowland, p. 374.

[91] Newton, p. 462.

[92] John Grigg, Lloyd George From Peace to War 1912-1916 (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), p. 320.

[93] Asquith, Memories and Reflections, p. 128.

Crewe was not the only person to credit Lansdowne's Memorandum as the spur to the coalition's fall. In her diary, Frances Stevenson, Lloyd George's personal secretary, wrote 22 November 1916, "D[avid] said it was a very serious document upon which the Cabinet must have an absolutely clear decision; the views of the Cabinet must be obtained upon it and a definite understanding reached."[94] Miss Stevenson noted that Lloyd George would not think of peace, believed in the knock-out blow, and thought Lansdowne should resign if he were not backed by the Cabinet.[95] Lloyd George himself does not mention the Memorandum in his War Memoirs, but such a statement from Stevenson, who was also his mistress, must be given considerable weight.

Moreover, Bentley Gilbert, one of Lloyd George's biographers, also wrote that Lansdowne may indeed have made the Lloyd George coalition possible. In Gilbert's explanation, Asquith's respect for Lansdowne and his silence on the Lansdowne Memorandum led Chamberlain, Curzon, Cecil, and Long, as well as Bonar Law, to believe that Asquith might be considering a negotiated peace. If Bonar Law had remained loyal, Asquith could have forced an election in 1916, and Lloyd George would not have come out the victor.[96] No one has been explicit on the subject, but Bonar Law's fear of Lansdowne's moderating influence may explain his timing of the meeting where he publicly switched allegiance.

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[94] Taylor, A Diary by Frances Stevenson, p. 127.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Gilbert, pp. 377-378.

The Lansdowne memorandum may have caused a change in government, but even that seemed to have no effect on military operations. The stalemate continued into 1917. In March, the Czarist regime in Russia was overthrown, which in time would lead to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, 3 March 1918, formally ending Russian participation in the war.[97] Between March 1917, and March 1918, Russian participation in the war on the eastern front was problematic.

The void left by the Russians was filled by the United States. President Wilson had broken off diplomatic relations with Germany on 3 February 1917 in the wake of unrestricted submarine warfare but waited for an overt act of hostility to ask Congress to declare war. It came on 25 February when the contents of the Zimmerman telegram were released. The coded telegram to the German ambassador in Mexico promised the Mexican government American territory if it would aid Germany upon an American declaration of war. On 6 April 1917 the United States declared war on Germany, but the first American troops did not land in Europe until 26 June. They did not fight their first battle until 23 October 1917.[98] Neither their presence nor the Russian absence seemed to make much difference in the military situation.

No one seemed capable of winning the war and no one could predict when it would end. "Not one prophet forecast victory within the next year. Though

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[97] Marshall, p. 281.

[98] Ibid.

reeling from losses and home-front privations, which by this time were woeful in England, grave in Germany, and acute in Austria, both sides appeared to be as intransigent as ever."[99] Neither the military nor political leaders were able to come up with a way to end the war. Lloyd George, "the man of push and go," was not able to end the war any more quickly than his predecessor had. Against this backdrop of growing despair, Lord Lansdowne decided to make some suggestions on a possible way to at least bring peace closer.

[99] Ibid., p. 319.

CHAPTER III
THE LETTER AND BRITISH REACTION

The Lansdowne Memorandum of 1916 had been a private document intended to be read only by members of the Cabinet. Lansdowne's next document on the war would be the peace letter, which expressed the ideas of the Lansdowne Memorandum to the British public. "In November 1917 he decided upon an action that at once restored him into the forefront, and for the moment he became again one of the most prominent, and incidentally one of the most reviled men in Great Britain."[1] This action was the publication of the Peace Letter.

Lansdowne originally offered the letter to Geoffrey Dawson, editor of The Times. He showed Dawson the letter on 27 November, and Dawson asked for time to consider it. The next day Dawson urged that the letter be withheld from publication until delegates had returned from an Allied conference in Paris and thought he had convinced Lansdowne of the wisdom of this course.[2] Instead, Lansdowne contacted Lord Burnham of The Daily Telegraph. Burnham did not think the Foreign Office was opposed to some of the proposals in the letter and agreed to publish it.[3] The result was the publication of the Peace Letter on 29 November 1917.

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1 Newton, p. 462.

2 Ibid., pp. 463-466.

3 Ibid., p. 466.

Even though he was unaware of the real attitude of the Foreign Office, Burnham apparently was expecting controversy over the letter and its publication because he published a disclaimer in the same issue as the Peace letter. In it, Burnham explained that the letter was Lansdowne's personal view and acknowledged that it would likely provoke criticism and discussion. In addition, Burnham noted that he did not agree with Lansdowne on certain points. He did predict however that, because of Lansdowne's reputation and experience, the letter would be studied and considered by all who were thinking of the war, and he urged the Allied Governments at the Paris Conference to give it their full consideration.[4]

Lansdowne lunched with Asquith the day the letter was published. Before Lansdowne arrived, Asquith told his wife, "It is unfortunately ill-timed, but this it would always be called, whether he had published it when we were winning or losing. I am glad that Lansdowne has had the courage to write it."[5] When Asquith raised the issue of timing again over lunch, Lansdowne replied, "If we wait for the right moment we shall certainly wait forever."[6]

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[4] The Daily Telegraph, (London), 29 November, 1917.

[5] Quoted in Margot Asquith, The Autobiography of Margot Asquith, 2 vols. (London: Thornton, Butterworth, Ltd., 1922), 2:267.

[6] Quoted in Ibid., 2:268.

Asquith's generous view of Lansdowne's courage and his timing was a minority view. On 3 December 1917, Lloyd George told Lord Riddell, head of the Newspaper Proprietor's Association:

> The letter was ill-advised and inopportune. I have read it again. Lord Lansdowne advocates making a treaty with a nation whom we are fighting because they have broken a treaty. He advocates that the treaty should be enforced by a League of Nations consisting of the nations who are now engaged in attempting to enforce the treaty already in existence. A step of that sort (the letter) should not be sanctioned on countenanced without the approval of the War Cabinet. It is a serious matter.[7]

The Prime Minister's formal reply to the Lansdowne Letter came in a speech 14 December 1917 at Gray's Inn. Lloyd George said, "To end a war embarked upon to enforce a treaty, without reparation for the infringement of a treaty, merely by entering into a new, more sweeping treaty, would be indeed a farce in the setting of a tragedy."[8]

Both Asquith and Lloyd George were Liberals, though estranged because of political infighting by 1917, and it is not surprising that, while Asquith may have been more understanding, neither of them agreed with Lansdowne's views in their entirety. On the other hand, being penned by one of their former leaders did not guarantee the letter's acceptance among the Conservative Party. Bonar Law, Lansdowne's colleague and his former counterpart as Unionist Leader in the

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[7] Quoted in George Allardine Riddell, Baron, Lord Riddell's War Diary (London: Hazell, Watson and Viney, Ltd., 1933), p. 300.

[8] Quoted in Thomas Jones, Lloyd George (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), pp. 130-131.

House of Commons, was highly pessimistic but he never wavered in his belief that the war must be won and that, in the end, it actually would be won.[9] Accordingly,"...Bonar Law felt obliged to take the first opportunity to dissociate himself and his colleagues from Lansdowne's proposal."[10] The day following publication he repudiated Lansdowne's views in a speech to a Conservative Party Conference. As he was part of Lloyd George's Coalition, he felt this would allay the Government's suspicion that other leading Conservatives — especially Cabinet members — might share Lansdowne's views.[11] This same inverse reaction to the letter can be seen elsewhere along party lines. Approval, or at least understanding, if it came at all, came from his former Liberal opponents, and the bitterest attacks came from his erstwhile colleagues.

Lord Esher, a Liberal permanent member of the Committee of Imperial Defense, was in Paris as head of a British mission as the liaison officer between the British and French war offices when the letter was published. He recorded in his journal that

> Lansdowne has written an interesting letter to the Daily Telegraph, drawing attention to much the same point made by Robinson (editor of The Times) two nights ago when he was dining at G.H.Q. There is "no appreciation" by the Foreign Office of our peace objectives and no co-ordinated "after-war" policy. Lansdowne observes with wisdom that no "no peace" with the Hohenzollerns is a reinforce-

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[9] Robert Blake, The Unknown Prime Minister (London: Eyre & Spottiswood, 1953), p. 226.

[10] Ibid., p. 363.

[11] Ibid.

> ment of the war à outrance party in Germany, besides being an unrealisable ideal.[12]

The sympathy of one who was in a position to know was countered, on the other hand, by Lansdowne's fellow Unionist, Austen Chamberlain. He wrote to his sister, Hilda, on 2 December 1917, "What a gaffe of Lansdowne's. How he of all men came to write that mischievous letter I cannot think.... He is the last man I should have expected to write so inopportune and unwise a letter."[13]

To conclude the review of party responses to the letter, it is interesting to note that Winston Churchill, who himself had broken ranks over principle, did not remark on the letter until 3 August 1918 and even in criticizing the letter did so sympathetically. He wrote to Sir George Ritchie, President of the Dundee Liberal Association, [letter not sent]

> Lord Lansdowne had advised that we should now endeavor to make peace with Germany upon honourable terms...and that we should now try to make a territorial bargain with Germany and her Allies which would spare mankind the suffering and slaughter and economic waste through which they must otherwise plough their way. Such a proposition was undoubtedly a serious one, but it is not one which those who take the contrary view need be afraid.[14]

Another measure of the impact of the letter is that, not only did it still occupy the mind of Churchill when he gave a speech to his constituents months

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[12] Oliver, Viscount Esher, ed., Journals and Letters of Reginald, Viscount Esher, 4 vols. (London: Ivor, Nicholson Watson Limited, 1938), 4:163.

[13] Robert C. Self, ed., The Austen Chamberlain Diary Letters, Camden Fifth Series, vol. 5 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 142.

[14] Martin Gilbert, Winston S. Churchill The Stricken World 1916-1922 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), p. 129.

later,[15] but that it immediately became an issue in Parliament from 3 December to 20 December 1917. A day by day account is given below.

Monday 3 December 1917

Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck asked if the Government would give the House an early opportunity of discussing the letter in Secret Session.

Bonar Law replied no.

Mr. Kennedy Jones wanted to know if the letter was placed before the Censor by Lord Lansdowne or the Publisher of the Newspaper.

The Speaker's answer was that that question does not arise.

Mr. Thomas Richardson wanted to know if the letter will require sanction under regulation 27 of the Defense of the Realm Act.

The Home Secretary, Sir George Cave replied yes.

Mr. Arthur Ponsonby said that the letter should not be widely circulated as it may influence the general population and people prefer Lord Lansdowne to Lord Northcliffe (owner of The Times).

Cave said that it was not his responsibility to reply.

Cave also admitted that he did not know if the letter was submitted to the censor.

Mr. Robert Outhwaite asked if any charges would lie against Lord Lansdowne if the letter was not submitted to the censor.

Sir George Cave replied no, but that distribution of it in leaflet form would be charged.

Mr. Arthur Lynch asked if the Home Secretary had seen the letter and if he intended to institute proceedings under the Defense of the Realm Act for giving encouragement to the enemy.

Sir George Cave replied yes to the first and no to the second.

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[15] Ibid.

Mr. Lynch then asked if poor pacifists prosecuted for less serious offenses will be given reparation and security.

Cave replied that position or means of the pacifist make no difference.

Mr. Kennedy Jones wanted to know if The Daily Telegraph was guilty of infringement of the Defense of the Realm Act for publishing a letter without submitting it to the censor.

Cave replied that he had already said that submission was optional.

Mr. William Pringle wanted to know if Lansdowne was going to be prosecuted.

Cave answered that we cannot prosecute everyone who says or does things that are a national disaster.

General Sir Ivor Phillips asked if Lansdowne, as Foreign Secretary, had placed a British army in China under a German Field Marshal in 1900. [16]

Wednesday 5 December 1917

Mr. Robert Outhwaite asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs if any Allied Government's response to Lansdowne's letter (positive or negative) had been received.

Mr. Arthur Balfour replied that negative responses had been received.

Mr. Lynch asked if the Prime Minister would make a statement to the House on the matter.

Bonar Law replied no.

Mr. Lynch then inquired if the Cabinet had considered the gravity of this document as being an invitation to give Germany European hegemony if the present German dynasty is preserved.

Bonar Law had nothing to add to this statement.

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[16] The Parliamentary Debates Official Report, 5th ser. vol. C, 7th Session of 30th Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain & Ireland, 8 George V, House of Commons, 11th vol. of Session 1917 comprising period from Monday 3 December to Thursday 20 December, 1917 (London: HMS Stationery Office), cols. 31-32.

Mr. Outhwaite wanted to know if the Prime Minister would secure the widest possible publicity on this document through the War Aims Committee.

Bonar Law replied in the negative.

Major Hunt asked the Home Secretary if neither Lord Lansdowne nor Lord Burnham would be prosecuted for the letter's publication.

Cave replied that people who distribute the letter in leaflet form are liable to prosecution under the Defense of the Realm Act if the censor condemns the letter.

Mr. Charles Trevelyan wanted to know why leaflet distributors will be prosecuted.

Cave said that Regulation does not apply to the Newspaper Press, but leaflets must comply with regulation.[17]

Wednesday 12 December 1917

Mr. Robert Mason said that Lord Lansdowne was Secretary of State for War and he points out in the letter that if the war is continued interminably it will ruin all the belligerents. Perhaps notice should be taken of this fact. Lansdowne does not suggest giving away the objects for which Britain entered the War. Lansdowne has outlined a way to get rid of Prussian militarism, end the war and stop the drain on British resources.[18]

Friday 14 December 1917

Sir Hamar Greenwood said that if Lansdowne's letter were not written by a peer, it would not have been published. A common man would go to jail for it.[19]

Wednesday 19 December 1917

John W. Wilson remarked that there was more sympathy in the country and Mr. Ponsonby said Lansdowne's letter had an enormous influence on the common

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[17] Ibid., col. 400.

[18] Ibid., cols. 1309-1312.

[19] Ibid., cols. 1582-1583.

people. They are beginning to foresee something in the nature of a League of Nations emerging at the War's end.[20]

Mr. Athelstan Rendall countered that the Prime Minister referred to Lansdowne's letter in a speech the week before and said what Britain wants is victory.[21]

Mr. Noel Buxton said the Lansdowne letter was misunderstood. He claims that Lloyd George and Sir Edward Carson have been unduly influenced by extremist forces in the Cabinet, and that is why they have branded Lansdowne's letter a pacifist utterance. He also says that if the Government pursues a peace of restoration and is later forced by America to change the terms because the Americans do not agree with them, it will be humiliated. He pointed out that the Prime Minister has said that we must fight so that never again will war occur, and that we must stop the moment that we have guarantees. He asked how Lansdowne differed from that. He said that it is vital to leave the Germans feeling hostile to war. Even if the German military machine is pulverised, there is no guarantee that the German military force will not be resuscitated. If the Allies had co-ordinated their diplomacy and from the first aimed their policy at security, ... they would have attained their ends. Their policy has been the cause of the disasters which have come with the prolongation of the War. [22]

Mr. R. D. Holt stated that Lansdowne's claims are the same as the national idea as to the sort of peace Britain wants — evacuation and restoration of conquered territories coupled with crushing Prussian militarism. Do not impose a form of Government on Germany not chosen by the Germans. Germany should be able to take her place among the great powers after the War.[23]

Mr. Morrell stated that Lansdowne's letter has given an opportunity for restatement of our war aims. "He wrote a moderate letter which must have been read in every neutral and allied country. "The Ministerial Press covered him with vile and scurrilous abuse. Lord Northcliffe described it as the stupid and senile declaration of an old man who had lost control of himself. The leader of the House described it as a national misfortune. What it really was, was the Government's

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[20] Ibid., col. 2026.

[21] Ibid., col. 2037.

[22] Ibid., cols. 2039-2040.

[23] Ibid., cols. 2056-2057.

chance to say what are not Britain's war aims and remove any false impressions about war aims.[24]

Mr. Trevelyan said that the Government could have used Lansdowne's letter to deny the aim of imperialism and did not take the opportunity. He stated that popular feeling is for Lansdowne's views especially in Glasgow.
At this juncture there was a motion for Adjournment for the Christmas recess.

Sir J. D. Rees said he was proud of having served under Lansdowne, and that things have been read into the letter which he did not mean and it does not contain.[25]

This was the nature and extent of the discussion on the letter in the House of Commons. The letter was not even discussed in the House of Lords. The Commons debates ranged from accusations of treason to amazement that the Government could not see the letter as reasonable. The remarks of the members depended on their political views and reflected the diversity of opinion within the House of Commons. Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, Kennedy Jones, Thomas Richardson, Robert Outhwaite, Arthur Lynch, William Pringle, and General Sir Ivor Phillips clearly shared the view that Lord Lansdowne had been foolish, if not traitorous, in publishing the letter. On a lighter note, Arthur Ponsonby was being tongue-in-cheek when he said it should not be widely circulated because it may influence the general population. He was a founding member of the Union of Democratic Control, which was trying to find a way to end the war honorably.[26]

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[24] Ibid., cols. 2064-2065.

[25] Ibid., col. 2189.

[26] A. J. P. Taylor, The Troublemakers, Dissent Over Foreign Policy 1782-1939 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1958), p. 139.

Ponsonby's inclusion of Lord Northcliffe in his allusion had a darker aspect. Lord Northcliffe at the time of World War I held one half of the London newspaper market. This conferred on him a power over the public mind and the war-time Government which he exerted with effect. In addition to The Times, he owned The Daily Mail, The Evening News, and The Weekly Dispatch.[27] Politicians feared and hated him because Northcliffe's sympathies lay not with them, but with the generals."[28] Thus, Ponsonby's comments on the relative popularity of Northcliffe and Lansdowne if the letter were widely circulated could have been an accurate view. Certainly it was Ponsonby's belief that Northcliffe — and through him the Generals — had too much control over public opinion. Ponsonby believed that the common people were beginning to see the drain the war was putting on the nation and that they would want some form of insurance against another war. His suggestion of something in the nature of a League of Nations paralleled Lansdowne's ideas.

Other supporters, including Robert Mason, disagreed with the detractors about Lansdowne's intentions in the letter. He backed up the suggestion that all of the belligerents would be ruined by the war, if it continued interminably. He thought Lansdowne had come up with a way to have peace with honor. J. W. Moore, if his remarks were correct, argued that even soldiers in the ranks had sympathy for Lansdowne's letter. E. D. Morrell, another member of The Union of

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[27] Beaverbrook, Men and Power, pp. 59-60.

[28] Ibid., p.62.

Democratic Control, thought the Government was losing an opportunity to restate its war aims and remove any false impressions about them. His UDC colleague, Trevelyan, was even more specific and said that the letter could have been used to deny the aim of imperialism. Sir J. D. Rees ended the session by trying to inject balance and said that things had been read into the letter which it did not contain and Lansdowne had never intended.

The Established Church would also express its opinions, which, like those of the Members of Parliament, ranged from denouncement to support. The periodicals Challenge, which represented the Liberal Anglican viewpoint, and Commonwealth, reflecting that of the Christian Social Union, agreed that an ill-considered peace was unthinkable, but that negotiations should be discussed. The periodicals Guardian and Church Times of the Anglo-Catholic viewpoint denounced Lansdowne. Bishop Charles Gore of the Anglican Church and a Lansdowne relative thought security could come only from a military victory, while Tissington Taslow of the Student Christian Movement supported Lansdowne. Most importantly, since he spoke for the Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Randall Davidson, gave no public indication of his attitude, but told Asquith that he was in favor of Lansdowne's position.[29] The Church was no longer the "Conservative Party at prayer," of course, but it is interesting to note that the divi-

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[29] Alan Wilkinson, The Church of England and the First World War (London: Holy Trinity Church, 1978), p. 228.

sion in opinion somewhat mirrored that in Parliament: the more Liberal, the more kindly; the more conservative, the more hostile.

If the politicians and the Church were divided, so was the British press. The Times denounced the writer with quite exceptional violence.[30] The 30 November 1917 issue of The Times accused Lansdowne of having lost touch with the political and military situation since his resignation as Minister Without Portfolio in December 1916. According to this article, Lansdowne had shaped the current foreign policy through the creation of the entente with France, and the letter was thus a surprise to his former colleagues and read by them with great regret. The writer wondered why Lansdowne did not make his plea directly to Parliament in the House of Lords so that the response to it could have been immediate. The article predicted correctly that all of the Ministers, including even Lansdowne's former Unionist colleagues, would publicly dissociate themselves from his views. The article insinuated that Lansdowne had written the letter to further someone else's — presumably Asquith's — designs, but Asquith had no knowledge of the letter until its publication. The Times article also reported that opinion in the lobby was generally unfavorable. According to it, the Unionist rank and file were unanimous in their hostility to the letter. They regarded the letter as not only ill-timed, but also short-sighted. The politicians had reportedly examined Lans-

[30] Newton, p. 469.

downe's arguments in minute detail, but he had few converts. The Times sneered that the only group that was pleased were the pacifists.[31]

The following day The Times again went out of its way to criticize the contents of the letter and to imply criticism even when it found admiration for Lansdowne. According to the Northcliffe press, everyone from Clemenceau, the French Premier, to William Jennings Bryan the former American Secretary of State, disagreed with Lansdowne. One such article, entitled "Repudiation by Government," stated, "The letter has, however, produced a very unfortunate situation abroad. While in Germany it is hailed with satisfaction, it has created a feeling of pained surprize in France and the United States, where it is regarded as disastrously inopportune and hurtful to the Allied cause."[32] The article ended with Bonar Law's description of the letter as a national misfortune, and as suggesting a basis for peace which would really be an Allied defeat.[33] Another article, "Repudiation by Government," stated the view of His Majesty's Government. "Lord Lansdowne, in his letter, spoke only for himself. Before writing it, he did not consult, nor indeed, has he been in communication with any member of the Government, His Majesty's Ministers reading it with as much surprize as did everybody else."[34] The article stressed that the letter's views did not represent the

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[31] The Times, 30 November 1917.

[32] Ibid., 1 December 1917.

[33] Ibid.

[34] "Repudiation by Government," Ibid., 1 December 1917.

Government's views or indicate any change or modification in its war policy. It also absolved Lloyd George, Asquith, Bonar Law, and Balfour of sharing Lansdowne's views and ended with Clemenceau's quote, "The war aims for which we are fighting are victory."[35]

A third article that same day was "Nation Against Premature Peace," by The Times' parliamentary correspondent. He wrote that Lansdowne's letter was bound to cause a controversy, but his reporting did not reflect fairly a controversy in which opinion had fallen into two great camps. Instead, almost entirely, he recounted everything hostile to Lansdowne. He gleefully stated that Bonar Law and the National Union Conference had dissociated the Government and the Unionist Party from Lord Lansdowne. The correspondent was then explicit about Lansdowne's current position in the party. Lansdowne was no longer a Cabinet Minister and was no longer joint leader, with Bonar Law, of the Unionist Party. In short Lansdowne had no real political power any more.[36] He was a has-been.

Yet another article titled "Repudiation by Unionist Party" elaborated on the Unionist Party's repudiation of Lansdowne's views. The party revulsion was so strong that the following resolutions had been proposed and passed at a special private conference of the National Association of Conservative and Unionist Organizations held 30 November 1917 at the Kingsway Hall:

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[35] Ibid.

[36] "Nation Against Premature Peace," Ibid., 1 December 1917.

1. That this conference, representing the Conservative and Unionist Associations of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales deplores the publication of Lord Lansdowne's letter and peace prospects and
2. Declares in firm adherence to the war aims of the Allies as defined by the Prime Minister, Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Asquith
3. That copies of the foregoing resolutions be cabled to Paris to the Prime Minister and Mr. Balfour.[37]

This conference was the occasion on which Bonar Law made his remark about the letter being a national misfortune. Law also went on to damn Lansdowne with faint praise by saying that in the years before the war no one came into more contact with Lansdowne than himself and that he had not met anyone more patriotic or disinterested than Lansdowne.[38]

Law 's position against the letter was that there was discontent in Germany, probably because of the German military's failure to win the war. If there was an immediate peace, he warned, then the men in Germany who had started the war would still be in power and still be ready to take any future opportunity to start another war. He stressed that a powerful world-wide coalition had formed and was armed to defeat these German opportunists and so they ought to be defeated now. The Germans must be humbled and shown that war does not pay. In his mind a negotiated peace was simply another way for the Germans to win the war. If the German military machine could not get the results their leaders wanted, then he would certainly not allow them to achieve those results through

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[37] "Repudiation by Unionist Party," Ibid., 1 December 1917.

[38] Ibid.

diplomacy. The war could be won only on the battlefield and the Germans must be made to realize that the Allies could go on longer than they could. Because of the importance of the Germans needing to learn this lesson for a successful conclusion of the war, Law said that the war had become a war of nerves. "He who blinked first lost."[39] He reminded his Party that the situation was similar to that of the Napoleonic Wars. The people should act as they had done then and back the Government in order to win the war. The danger Law foresaw in Lansdowne's letter was that it stimulated the pacifist movement, and—by causing enough public nervousness—the House of Commons might waver and not pass the harsh measures necessary to prosecute the war to completion. That must not be allowed to happen. Peace on this basis would spell disaster and inevitably cause the breakup of the British Empire.[40]

The speech of Austen Chamberlain at another war aims meeting 30 November 1917 in Northampton provided the basis for another Times article. Like Bonar Law, he damned with faint praise and spoke first of his personal and professional relationship with Lansdowne as one of respect and admiration. He viewed the letter as both unfortunate and inopportune. Chamberlain asserted that Lansdowne had been reluctant to join Asquith's Coalition Cabinet and did so only out of a sense of duty. Then he said that, because Lansdowne had been glad to leave the Cabinet and become a private citizen when Lloyd George

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

formed the second coalition, his opinions should be taken only as those of a private citizen, and not as those of a Party leader.[41]

Chamberlain reiterated Law's view that, while Lansdowne's colleagues respected him, they could not agree with his views in the letter. The letter was unfortunate because it would be made an instrument of mischief by the enemy. While Russia was in the midst of a revolution and Rumania was isolated with half her territory in enemy hands and Italy invaded, nothing should be said or written that would cast doubt on Britain's firmness or her loyalty to her Allies. Chamberlain was sure that Lansdowne did not intend to cast any doubts of this nature, but he believed the letter would still have that effect. He wanted Britain to stand by its pledge to protect Belgium's neutrality. He thought it a matter of honor that, as long as the other Allies were true and faithful to engagements they had entered into with Belgium, Britain should also be true and faithful.[42]

Chamberlain conceded that Lansdowne was right about security being more important than reparations, but he speculated that Lansdowne had been the victim of misinformation from sources that were erroneous and controlled by the Prussian military autocracy. There had been no direct word from Germany that the Germans were ready to negotiate either on security or reparations. In Chamberlain's view, there could be no peace until Germany unmistakably abandoned

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[41] "An Instrument of Mischief," Ibid., 1 December 1917.

[42] Ibid.

her ancient [warlike] ways, or until the Allies were in a position to dictate conditions of peace. "Germany made this war and he who called the game must pay the forfeit."[43]

Chamberlain agreed with Lansdowne that Britain did not want to destroy Germany as a great power or impose any peculiar form of Government upon her, but Chamberlain disagreed with Lansdowne on Germany retaking her place among the great commercial nations. He did not think Germany would be welcome in this group until she had lived down the memory of some recent events. He concluded that whatever sacrifices must be made for the Allies to gain their ends should be made.[44]

Northcliffe used whoever he could to discredit Lansdowne. One of the most curious articles in The Times was an excerpt from William Jennings Bryan's speech on the letter. Ironically, Bryan had resigned as Wilson's Secretary of State because he believed Wilson was not willing to do everything possible to prevent the U. S. from entering the war,[45] but that did not mean he was sympathetic to Lansdowne. "I have been a pacifist in times past and I still believe in peace, but the sort of peace I want is a lasting peace. I believe there is but one

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Arthur S. Link, Woodrow Wilson, 5 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1947), 3:420.

way to get a lasting peace in the present crisis, that is to fight for it. We should all get together and fight like the devil."[46]

More ominous because it seemed to flesh out Law's and Chamberlain's fears that the Germans would be emboldened and the Allies dispirited by talk of a negotiated peace was a report from The Times Washington correspondent. In "U. S. Resentment," it said that Lord Lansdowne's letter had been hailed with delight by pro-German pacifists, but was resented by the bulk of the American people, who regarded it as a means of keeping autocracy in place in Europe and its author as someone who feared democracy. The article argued that the letter's effect was unfortunate. It accused Lansdowne of failing to understand the fundamental issues and lacking sympathy for the aspirations of Allied democracies. The article stated that President Wilson's desire was not to annihilate Germany as a great power but rather to crush the Hohenzollerns, wipe out Prussian domination, and annihilate the existing German Government. It said that America did not wish to impose a form of government on Germany but to free it from a form of government that was a menace to the whole world.[47]

The author of the article was amazed that any responsible British statesman should infer that freedom of the seas did not exist before the war. He wrote that America's practices and laws on this issue were the same as Britain's in time of peace. He suggested that Lansdowne was making a political attack on Lloyd

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[46] "U.S. Resentment," The Times, 1 December 1917.

[47] Ibid.

George by writing the letter, but, if this had been his plan, the letter had done no damage to Lloyd George but had instead complicated the relationship between the American and British allies. According to the correspondent, President Wilson would not abate one iota from his war aims. No matter how long the war lasted, America would not lay down arms until the smallest of the "suffering and bleeding" nations were freed from the tyranny of a set of men whose system should be swept off the earth. America did not object to the German people being powerful and prosperous, but their autocratic system of government must be crushed. Wilson's aims were such that the United States was in the war until such a peace was assured by victory.[48]

Because of the crucial role of the United States in winning the war, it was important for Northcliffe's correspondent to emphasize the disastrous effect that Lansdowne's letter could have on American resolve. "America, in adding its enormous strength to the Allies, who are resisting the Kaiser's effort to make Germany a world-wide empire and impose Prussianism on mankind, was fighting for 'the principle of human liberty, upon which rests the development of freedom in the world' for democracy against autocracy."[49] The Times also suggested that Lansdowne was not really concerned about securing a peace to prevent the ruin of the civilized world, but rather wanted peace before the assured triumph of de-

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid.

mocracy sealed the doom of institutions like the British and German aristocracies whose utility was outworn. Wilson had sworn to destroy autocracy, and so the autocracy of the German political structure must be destroyed before Wilson would welcome Germany into the family of nations. The article ended by saying that any statesman who was craven enough to compromise with autocracy forfeited the confidence of the American people.[50] The implication was that Lansdowne for his own selfish reasons would make such a compromise and must therefore take the consequences of public disgrace.

Albeit from a different perspective than Northcliffe's, Lansdowne's biographer, Lord Newton, wrote that, "The letter had ... a mixed reception abroad. Many French papers, notably the Echó de Paris and the Figaro ignored it altogether, and none of them printed it in full. A few papers said it was damaging to the Allied cause."[51] Of course, Northcliffe managed to find and to quote those few. The Times Paris correspondent took Northcliffe's line that the letter was no surprise to those who knew why Lloyd George had not included Lansdowne in his Cabinet. In spite of the immediate uproar, the correspondent baldly stated that the letter had had no influence on the life and feelings of Britain. The writer also either was unaware that Lansdowne had resigned from the Government as a way of refusing to serve under Lloyd George or he twisted the account to imply that Lloyd George had refused to invite Lansdowne into his Cabinet because Lans-

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Newton, p. 470.

downe was not a true patriot. Lansdowne was accused of preaching peace and half measures while the Allies were busy concerting the means of victory. While the correspondent conceded that the letter might feed a certain section of the French press that was defeatist, he assured his readers that it would by that very reaction convince the Allies to follow Clemenceau's advice to go to work for victory.[52]

The correspondent quoted the negative reactions of three French papers to the letter. The Gaulois had printed, "The sentiments which inspire the former Secretary of State are most honourable: but for the moment there is only one way of bringing about peace—that is to continue the war with increasing energy. We will talk afterwards." The Temps noted, "a general feeling that the letter is out of season, and an astonishment that so considerable a personage should have thought it his duty to make such a statement in the present circumstances." It said the pacifists were likely to seize upon it as a pretext for opening more discussions. Finally The Débate gave the most charitable explanation of what it termed Lord Lansdowne's "strange" letter. "He is an old man and has been sorely tried by the war...."[53]

The Times of 30 November 1917 carried an article from its special correspondent in Amsterdam which gave the Dutch viewpoint of the letter. First, he

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[52] The Times, 1 December 1917.

[53] "The French Point of View," Ibid., 1 December 1917.

claimed that Holland, as a neutral, would welcome a speedy peace to deliver her from the menace of being engulfed in a world conflict. Then the special correspondent quoted three Dutch papers. One, which he labeled pacifist, the Nieuses van der Tag, considered Lansdowne's letter as a symptom of the feeling in authoritative and influential British circles. The Nieuses said that the champions of peace in England now know that there is at least one statesman sharing their desires. This paper lauded Lord Lansdowne as a statesman of great reputation, one of the foremost in the country. The Handelsblad began, "At last! A sensible word from a sensible man." It also said that the Jingoes would take a long time to realize the truth of Lansdowne's thesis, but now that it had been proposed no one could ignore it. The Catholic Tyd 's comment was, "One more cause of division in the entente's organism!"[54] Also from Amsterdam came the report that, "Today's German newspapers published Lord Lansdowne's letter on their front page. The Germans considered it the beginning of reason in England. The letter caused general satisfaction in Germany, where it was regarded as a semi-official feeler."[55] With reports such as these, The Times certainly gave weight to the fears of the letter's opponents that it would give aid and comfort to the enemy.

Closer to home in the country where he owned property and was known first as a Unionist, The Irish Times of 1 December 1917 also denounced Lans-

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[54] "Misled Neutrals," Ibid., 1 December 1917.

[55] "German Satisfaction," Ibid., 1 December 1917.

downe's letter, but it carried just one article on the subject. Despite the fact that it began by saying that Lansdowne held a great position in European politics,[56] it did not reprint the letter for people to read themselves and draw their own conclusions. Instead, the author presented Lansdowne's five major points in their most negative context: harmful to the Allies and beneficial to Germany. "On the very day when his action was likely to do most mischief Lord Lansdowne suddenly enrols himself among the pacifists."[57]

To make Lansdowne's position appear even worse, The Irish Times quoted Bonar Law as saying that both Lansdowne's arguments and the whole tone of his letter were objectionable.[58] "It is the letter of a man who has lost his nerve and is so anxious for an immediate peace that he is ready to pay for it a price which neither our honor nor our security permits us to pay....The German press sees in it a definite weakening of the British resolution to make peace only over the grave of Prussian militarism."[59]

The article argued that a pact could not be made with Germany because the Germans would regard it as a "mere scrap of paper." It asked, "If the Allied forces cannot secure the peace of the world, how will a League of Nations be

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[56] The Irish Times, 1 December 1917.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Quoted in Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

able to?" It predicted that Lansdowne's peace would produce another war in ten or twenty years. "The mischief of his letter lies in its effect on public opinion in Germany and in the Allied countries.... Germany, of course, sees him as a true exponent of British thought on the war." The Irish Times feared that, if our Allies were permitted to regard Lord Lansdowne's views as those of the British Government, the Grand Alliance would be in imminent danger of collapse."[60]

The article concluded that, while harm had been done by the letter, it was not irreparable. The Allies would be smart enough to know that Lansdowne had spoken only for himself. "His proposals have been, not merely rejected, but denounced by the British Government, by his own party and by nine-tenths of the British press....It is the chief offense of Lord Lansdowne's letter, however honest and patriotic his motives may be, that it may throw doubt and despondency into hearts that have grown weary of war." The author conceded that everyone is weary of war, but he believed the vast majority were resolved that its end should be a true end — victory.[61] The surprise (or sop) is that the author actually thought Lansdowne's motives were honest and patriotic.

The Times and The Irish Times were perhaps unique in their influence in England and Ireland, but they were not alone. Newspapers were at that time the major information medium, and every major city had newspapers which reflected the interests of its region. Large cities, like London, had several papers to pro-

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid.

mote the platforms of particular parties. Lord Newton wrote of the coverage of Lansdowne's letter that, "Most of the leading provincial dailies ... as well as The Daily News and The Star in London, supported it warmly, and most of the weeklies were cordial."[62] Examples of periodicals, other than major daily papers, which reviewed Lansdowne's views are the news magazines The English Review and The Nation.

The English Review for January 1918 had a major article on the letter by Austin Harrison, entitled "Lord Lansdowne's Interrogation." Harrison wrote,

> His letter takes its place side by side with the speech of Mr. Wilson, and that of Mr. Asquith at Birmingham (December 12th), and collated, these three utterances unquestionably denote a new spirit and that return to health and nobility which Mr. Lloyd George, with his vernacular bids for popularity has done so much to discredit and disown.[63]

Mr. Harrison in his kind words for Lansdowne also prophesied that, "Now another two years of war, and inevitably exhaustion will set in, both physical and economic, leading to the ruin referred to by Lord Lansdowne."[64]

The Nation, considered a radical periodical, similarly defended Lansdowne and his position. In an article entitled "War Aims Again," it said, "The real significance of Lord Lansdowne's letter . . . lies in the man himself and the hour at

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[62] Newton, p. 470.

[63] Arthur Harrison, "Lord Lansdowne's Interrogation," The English Review, 26, January 1918, p. 76.

[64] Ibid., p. 86.

which he speaks out....He is no pacifist, no timorous weakling."[65] The article asserted that, although it seemed that Lansdowne's letter focused on secondary issues, these issues (Germany being destroyed as a great power, the imposition of a form of government on the German people by the Allies, etc.) were the very issues that Germany had used as reasons not to end the war. It suggested that the militarist party in Germany had exaggerated those issues to keep their population fighting when if the truth were trumpeted about the Allied war aims — as Lansdowne suggested — then the support of the German people for their war government would collapse and the war would be over. It concluded, "On the main points, there is no thought in Lord Lansdowne's mind of abatement or surrender. Belgium, and the reparation due her, he still puts in the 'front rank.'"[66] Until Germany agreed to that, there would be no peace. The severest punishment the German militarists would suffer would be being forced to give up militarism for peace.[67]

Lansdowne's letter was not so kindly received in the January 1918 issue of Blackwood's Magazine. The opposite view appeared in a regular feature, titled "Musings Without Method." This article compared Lansdowne with his ancestor, Lord Shelburne, a defeatist in the Napoleonic Wars, and stopped just short of branding him an outright traitor. It was articles like this which gave weight to

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[65] "War Aims Again," The Nation, 105, 6 December 1917, p. 626.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

Lord Newton's comment on the treatment of Lansdowne that, "the abuse could not have been stronger had the writer been an open traitor, like Roger Casement [a collaborator with the Germans in the Easter 1916 Irish uprising], instead of one of the most respected and experienced statesmen in Europe and a signatory of the historic letter of 2 August 1914, which decided a wavering Cabinet to enter the war."[68]

The unknown author of "Musings Without Method" called Lansdowne's letter a defection that would have been unexpected except by his former Cabinet colleagues.[69] Like the Paris correspondent for The Times, this author implied that Lansdowne had been "sent packing" for lack of patriotism. He either chose to ignore or was ignorant of the reaction of Lansdowne's former Cabinet colleagues to the letter. Although even his worst detractors among his former Cabinet colleagues never impugned his loyalty, the "Musings" author accused him of becoming an acknowledged friend and colleague of J. Ramsay MacDonald and his German friends and of Philip Snowden and Norman Angell of the Union of Democratic Control.[70] The writer was distressed that the letter had met with a success that even Lansdowne could not have anticipated: it increased the value

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[68] Newton, p. 469.

[69] "Musings Without Method," Blackwood's Magazine, 203, January 1918, p.134.

[70] Ibid.

of the German mark![71] For the allies, however, "no word of value or statesmanship is spoken in it."[72] Indeed, had Lansdowne's proposals been written in a pamphlet, by an ordinary pacifist, he would have been jailed and the pamphlet would have been suppressed under the Defense of the Realm Act.[73] "Musings" bitterly condemned Lansdowne of crimes against the State that were far worse than those of any ordinary pacifist because Lansdowne had held high political offices and his influence was therefore greater than that of ordinary men.

To separate Lansdowne the Conservative Party leader from Lansdowne the traitor and to show that Lansdowne had spoken only for himself in the letter, the author of "Musings" referenced Lord Shelburne. In a venomous comparison the author explained how Lord Shelburne had sided with France in the Napoleonic Wars. Shelburne had advocated non-intervention when France invaded the Low Countries, had not seen why food and provisions should be treated as contraband items, and had advocated giving neutrals (America) "the freedom of the seas" to trade with France. The author wrote that Lord Shelburne had welcomed the Peace of Amiens in 1801 and then accused Lansdowne of offering terms to the Germans as generous as those of that treaty. He furthermore accused Lansdowne of choosing the hour at which he could inflict the worst injury upon his native land to print his letter. Such actions would make him a traitor

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., p. 135.

unless, of course, Lansdowne had lost his faculties.[74] None of these accusations corresponded to Lansdowne's actions in 1914 and afterwards, but the reader was left with the choice of Lansdowne as the worst possible traitor or as a doddering old fool.

In contrast to denigrating Lansdowne, "Musings" then praised President Wilson who proclaimed at the right time the Allies aims and purposes. Wilson dealt with realities and not politics in a speech to Congress (no date given). "Our object is, of course, to win the war, and we shall not slacken or suffer ourselves to be diverted until it is won."[75] The author included what Wilson had said about dissenters and men who debate peace, "But I know that none of these speaks for the nation. They do not touch the heart of anything. They may safely be left to strut their uneasy hour and be forgotten."[76] To silence any thought that people might consider Lansdowne's peace of half-measures, the author quoted Wilson's pledge that America was ready to fight to the finish. "Every power and resource we possess, whether of men, of money, or of materials is being devoted to that purpose until it is achieved."[77] Wilson's speech had ended by saying that the war would be won only when the Germans agreed to a settlement based upon justice

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[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Quoted in Ibid., p.138.

[77] Quoted in Ibid., p.138.

and reparation of the wrongs that their rulers had done.[78] "Musings" believed that Wilson's speech should end German optimism about an early and unfortunate peace for the Allies. Wilson confirmed that the Allies would not draw back until they were assured of real security and reparation and not the poor security and incomplete reparation that would satisfy a Lansdowne.[79] The article ended by quoting Wilson, "The Allies will not permit the Germans to triumph, and the sooner the peacemongers cease to interrupt us in the performance of a just duty, the sooner will the war be over."[80]

While the author of "Musings" may have impugned Lansdowne's patriotism, Lloyd George and Bonar Law knew privately that Lansdowne's motives were pure. Nonetheless, their policies would have been furthered if they and everyone else in Britain condemned Lansdowne and considered him a traitor. Opinion in Britain, however, was never monolithic. As has been shown, some politicians, clergy, and journalists supported him wholeheartedly. Those who did condemn him often tempered their condemnation by praise for his previous service to Britain or gave him credit for misguided patriotism. Even the ones who wholly condemned him had to make erroneous statements about his previous record or his motives. If the British were so divided among themselves about one of their own, could the Americans be any more objective? It was now their war too.

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

[80] Quoted in Ibid., p. 139.

CHAPTER IV
AMERICAN REACTION

The initial reaction of many Americans to the letter was best described by Seward W. Livermore in his book Politics is Adjourned.

> Hard on the heels of this setback (Cambrai) came the celebrated Lansdowne letter appealing to the belligerents to save civilization by making an immediate peace, on the basis of no retaliation or reparations for German war damage.... Such views coming from a distinguished elder statesman, who has held many high government posts, shocked official Washington, and raised an angry dither in the press over the extent to which the British peer reflected the peace sentiments of Wilson himself. Some Republicans even attributed Lansdowne's shocking performance to the malign influence of Colonel House ....[1]

Edward M. House, Wilson's main advisor and confidant, was privy to the Lansdowne Cabinet Memorandum of the previous year. Lord Beaverbrook, in Men and Politics, wrote, "The plan was widely discussed in political circles in the early days of 1917.... Many people supported the plan, including Colonel House, President Wilson's confidant."[2] Lord Riddell told Lloyd George on 3 December 1917, "I have reason to think that Colonel House was cognizant of and approved the letter...."[3] House had visited Lansdowne early in November and on 14 November he wrote the following:

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[1] Seward W. Livermore, Politics is Adjourned (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), p. 65.

[2] Beaverbrook, Men and Power, p. xxxvii.

[3] Lord Ridell's War Diary, p. 298.

> I found Lansdowne in a particularly pacific turn of mind. He condemned ... the folly and madness of some of the British leaders. Lansdowne thought it time for the British to realize that in the settlement, they need not expect to get what he termed "twenty shillings to the pound." He believes that definite war aims should be set out—aims that are moderate and will appeal to moderate minds in all countries.[4]

On 1 December 1917, shortly after the letter's publication, House wrote, "The Lord Chief Justice and I had a long discussion on the Lansdowne letter and its effect upon the British political situation. I thought Lloyd George was making a mistake in not insisting upon the resolution regarding our war aims."[5] Although House may not have been satisfied with Lloyd George's response to the letter, he soon had an opportunity to learn how much the letter had troubled him. Two weeks later on his way home from the Inter-Allied Conference in Paris, House wrote to Sir Maurice Hankey, Secretary of the Allied Supreme Command, that at a meeting of the Supreme War Council in Versailles, "The Lansdowne letter, which appeared in The Daily Telegraph on Thursday, was uppermost today in the mind of the British Prime Minister." [6]

House may have been friendly to Lansdowne and his ideas, but Walter Hines Page, the American ambassador to England, was not. He was alarmed by

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[4] Charles Seymour, Arranger, Intimate Papers of Colonel House (New York: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1928), pp. 232-233.

[5] Seymour, pp. 283-284.

[6] Edward M. House, letter to Sir Maurice Hankey, December 15, 1917, U. S. Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1917, Supplement 2, The World War (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1932), 2:313.

the Lansdowne plan and supported Lloyd George and Bonar Law, who wanted to fight until victory.[7] On 3 December 1917 Page wrote to President Wilson that the British military men in London were discouraged by the Lansdowne letter but that he was not and neither were the British generals in France.[8]

What were Wilson's own views? This is an important issue to decide because Wilson's statements, as has been shown, were used to bludgeon Lansdowne for half-measures and cowardice. N. Gordon Levine, Jr., wrote in Woodrow Wilson and World Politics, "Far from being attracted to a compromise or Lansdowne peace, built in part on the appeasement of German expansionism in the East, Wilson instead was terribly anxious throughout the war lest a premature peace would permit Germany to establish a vast sphere of imperial control in Eastern Europe and in Asia Minor."[9]

Nonetheless, in the Fourteen Points that Wilson would present to Congress six weeks later on 8 January 1918, Wilson agreed with all but one of the five points Lansdowne had in his letter.[10] That one point was the form that the German government would take after the war. Lansdowne had stated that it was the Germans' right to choose their own form of government, but Wilson did not

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[7] Beaverbrook, Men and Power, p. xxxviii.

[8] Burton J. Hendrick, ed., The Life and Letters of Walter Hines Page (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1923), 2:327.

[9] N. Gordon Levine, Jr. Woodrow Wilson and World Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 84.

[10] Alden Hatch, Woodrow Wilson (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1947), p. 215.

address that point at all. Wilson, if he disagreed with Lansdowne at all, did so only by omission! Levine sidestepped this amazing convergence by stating that, "... while Lansdowne and [Lord] Milner were willing to negotiate with the German Government as traditionally constituted, the Wilson administration was agreed that peace could be discussed only with a liberalized Germany."[11] Wilson, born in Virginia and a prominent American historian in his own right, knew that a long war could be costly to both victors and vanquished, and one wonders if he would truly have rebuffed a serious peace offer from the Imperial German government.

Another historian who may have misread the situation in America was Lansdowne's biographer. Lord Newton wrote, "In the United States...war enthusiasm still ran high everywhere, and the letter excited little popular response. Few papers, outside New York, noticed it at all."[12] He was far from correct. From a small article in The Wilmington News of Delaware to several pages in the review section of the New York Tribune for 9 December 1917, articles on the letter were published in newspapers along the eastern seaboard. The Richmond News Leader, an evening paper, was one of the first to mention the letter on 30 November 1917, the day after it was published in London. Most of the articles were condemnatory either openly or by implication. The article in The Wilmington News, like two of The Times' articles, was actually written by a reporter in Am-

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[11] Levine, pp. 83-84.

[12] Newton, p. 471.

sterdam. Its author wrote, "The Marquis of Lansdowne's letter continues to be commented on extensively by the German press, the consensus being that pacifism is gaining ground in England."[13] Four major German papers were quoted as proof of this statement, including Der Tagblatt and Der Morgen Post.

The Richmond News Leader of 30 November 1917 did not express an opinion on the letter, perhaps because of its early publication date. Rather, it gave a summary of the five points in his letter, saying that it pleaded for a revision of war aims and an attempt to secure peace before, "the prolongation of the war leads to the ruin of the civilized world."[14] Lansdowne was not characterized as a pacifist extremist, but as a typical representative of the old Tory party and the British Cabinet system, and, being from such a group, "He is the last public man to be suspected of pacifist tendencies."[15] The author then suggested that Lansdowne's letter gave formal adhesion to President Wilson's policy of a League of Nations. He quoted Lansdowne's question, "What will be the value of the blessings of peace to nations so exhausted that they can scarcely stretch forth a hand to enjoy them?"[16] The News Leader's final comment was that the British Gov-

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[13] The Wilmington News, 2 December 1917.

[14] The Richmond News Leader, 30 November 1917.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

ernment claimed no previous knowledge of the letter and added that the British evening press suggested it was unwelcome to the Government.[17]

Since The Richmond News Leader was one of the earliest papers to break the story and had no editorial comment in its first article, it is interesting to follow the story in its pages over the next few days. Like many English papers, American regional papers took their cue from "the metropolis" — in this case Washington and New York. The News Leader carried articles on 1 December and 3 December 1917 by David Lawrence from Washington and copyrighted by The New York Evening Post Company. The headline of the 1 December article read, "Marquis Lansdowne Letter is Expression of Advanced Liberalism, Not Pacifism."[18] In this article, Lawrence wrote that whether the British Government had foreknowledge of the contents of Lansdowne's letter or not was irrelevant because no censorship was imposed on its publication, and so its export to other countries meant that the Government did not regard it as an expression of pacifism, but of advanced liberalism. In the next paragraph, Lawrence wrote that the United States had wanted a revision of Allied war aims for months but that President Wilson had not pressed this issue because it might cause dissension and division when military unity was needed.[19] Lawrence suggested that Wilson's

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., 1 December 1917.

[19] Ibid.

objective of a revision of Allied war aims might have been part of Colonel House's mission at the Allied Conference in Paris.

According to Lawrence, President Wilson realized there was a need for either a revision of the war aims or for a statement of principles upon which all of the Allies could agree. All Lansdowne had done was beat Wilson to the punch by publishing his letter. He suggested the possibility that Wilson agreed with Lansdowne, but both the White House and the State Department had maintained a discreet silence. After digressing with a discussion on how the Allies should treat Bolshevik-controlled Russia, Lawrence returned to whether talk of peace could lead to a premature peace. He was sure that even if he endorsed Lansdowne's suggestions, Wilson would still add a statement about first requiring a military and economic superiority over the enemy. Lawrence noted that Lansdowne's first point about the importance of not annihilating Germany as a great power reiterated what had been said by British and American statesmen. The war was not being fought against the German people, but against militarism, personified by the Kaiser and the German general staff.[20]

Lawrence wrote that two of Lansdowne's other points were seen to be in line with Wilson's ideas. They were that there should be no economic reprisals after peace had been declared and that the German people should not be forced to accept a form of government which they did not choose for themselves. Lansdowne's final two points, according to Lawrence, had also been stated and re-

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[20] Ibid.

stated by all Allied statesman. It was necessary to re-emphasize both the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means and freedom of the seas to counter what the German government was using as propaganda about Allied war aims. Lawrence ended by saying that Lansdowne was not a pacifist desiring a ruinous, premature peace.[21]

In his 3 December article, which also was carried by The Richmond News Leader, Lawrence had learned more of the attitude of the British press towards Lansdowne's letter. He did not agree with them and wrote, "...there were officials, who today adopted a sneering attitude and who promptly complained that what the prominent statesman had proposed was a compromise with the Kaiser and a surrender."[22] Lawrence said that Lansdowne was seen as hurting the Allied cause by his letter because, "It did not sufficiently emphasize the desire of all the Allies to continue the war with undiminished vigor and energy at the same time that a clarification of war aims is announced."[23] Lawrence continued to maintain that everything in Lansdowne's letter could be found in Wilson's speeches. In Lawrence's view, if Lansdowne had offended it was because he had given the impression that he was weary of the war. Had he reiterated a determination to fight until victory, while pointing out the advantages of a clear

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid., 3 December 1917.

[23] Ibid.

statement of Allied purposes, few people would have found fault with his proposals.[24]

Lawrence argued that neither Lloyd George nor Wilson could totally denounce the Lansdowne letter without playing into the hands of the German Junkers who wanted the war to continue and, in order to keep the German people behind the war effort, were saying that the Allies aimed to destroy Germany totally. Lawrence predicted that when the Allies did define their war aims they would probably include Lansdowne's views but at the same time make it clear that they were determined to win the war and be magnanimous as victors. The article concluded with the observation that President Wilson was about to make his State of the Union Address, but so far he had said nothing to the press about the Lansdowne letter or his views on it. Lawrence believed that Wilson's views would be guided by the opinions of Walter Hines Page, the American ambassador to Britain, and Colonel Edward House, his personal emissary to the belligerents.[25] In his articles, David Lawrence gave a far more objective view of the Lord Lansdowne's letter and its motives than any of the European journalists did.

Writers for the News Leader's morning counterpart, the Richmond Times Dispatch, were more alarmist. One article in the 1 December 1917 edition was headlined "Injurious Effect From Lansdowne Letter Is Feared." The article quoted both Robert Cecil's and Bonar Law's criticisms on the letter. The British Under-

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

secretary for War was quoted as saying, "Freedom of the Seas cannot be discussed with a piratical foe polluting the seas with his foul crimes."[26] The article said that Great Britain and her Allies must look to President Wilson to undo any mischief caused by the Lansdowne letter. This article stated that Wilson, not Lloyd George, was the man to lead the Allies out of the turmoil because he had already defined the issues of war and peace several times. It also observed that all editorial comments in other papers on Lansdowne's letter touch upon Wilson's definition of a just peace after the war was won.[27]

The writer assumed that Wilson could and would fix every problem that the letter had caused and that Lansdowne's letter had indeed caused real problems because he was so influential. The author of this article gave as evidence of the letter's injurious effect, "The fact that Lansdowne is so well known and esteemed, and the fact that he unquestionably commands a large following in all walks of life — he was but recently mentioned as a partner with Asquith in a government succeeding the Lloyd George regime — ."[28] The author then listed four of the letters' possible results:

1. A pacifist wave in England causing slackening of war industries
2. Distrust among the Allies, especially Italy
3. The heartening effect it may have on the Germans

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[26] "Injurious Effect From Lansdowne Letter Is Feared," The Richmond Times Dispatch, 1 December 1917.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

4. The effect it will have in the United States[29]

The article claimed the letter was an open challenge to Lloyd George's knockout-blow policy. It reassured the readers that Lloyd George had no knowledge of the letter before its publication and that The Times refused to print it because it did not reflect any responsible segment of British opinion.[30] To support the article's concern that the letter would be viewed as official and create problems in vigorously prosecuting the war, The Richmond Times Dispatch in the same edition carried a reprint of The Times article which reported that the German newspapers published the Lansdowne letter on their front pages as an indication that the Allies were ready to negotiate. Because of Lansdowne's former positions in the British government, the Times Dispatch said that the Germans understandably regarded the letter as a semi-official peace feeler.[31]

Yet another article in the December 1 issue, presumably by a staff writer, bore the title "Washington Not Afraid of Effect of Letter." It asserted that the letter was not being interpreted by Washington as marking any British compromise with the Kaiser. This article's author gave his views on Lansdowne's five points. The first three points he welcomed heartily, and the fourth and fifth together he saw as an admission that Britain would be willing to give up her control of the seas in the interest of international peace. Such a letter, he suggested, might even bring a

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[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] "Letter Causes General Satisfaction in Germany," Ibid., 1 December 1917.

closer agreement between England and the United States on war aims.[32] The writer then put the responsibility of seeking peace back upon the Germans by arguing that with all the letter's publicity the Germans must now realize how the rest of the world shunned the Kaiser's Imperial Court and its war aims. The Germans could only become disillusioned at their isolation. By giving as much negative coverage as possible to Lansdowne's letter, the Allies were contributing to this disillusionment of the Germans and thereby hastening peace.[33]

If the Richmond papers were partially objective and, in the balance, pro Lansdowne, The Baltimore Sun had a different opinion. It carried a reprint of an article by America's leading hawk, Theodore Roosevelt, who originally had written the article for The Kansas City Star. It was picked up by other papers inclined to his views. He asserted that, "Lansdowne's proposal is for a peace of defeat for the Allies and of victory for Germany."[34] Under such a peace, oppressed peoples would remain under the yoke of tyrants. He thought the creation of a league of nations to ensure peace after a negotiated peace with the Entente powers would reward the oppressors and not change the status of those oppressed. Roosevelt saw Lansdowne's proposals as a way of rewarding Germany for causing and waging the war. Roosevelt lamented that Lansdowne's proposal was unworthy of

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[32] "Washington Not Afraid of Effect of Letter," Ibid., 1 December 1917.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Theodore Roosevelt, "Lansdowne Proposes Peace of Defeat," The Baltimore Sun, 2 December 1917.

his distinguished services and reputation. He reminded his readers that the only thing Germany respected was strength. Germany would use as ammunition any yearnings for peace that the pacifists provided but would disavow peace overtures if they were no longer useful to her war aims. The only safe course for the Allies was to fight the war to victory no matter what the costs.[35]

Roosevelt, who had run for President against Wilson and still wanted a say in foreign policy, then gave his terms for peace. They were the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France; the creation of a Polish state, a greater Bohemia, and a great Jugoslav commonwealth; and the restoration of Rumanian Hungary to Rumania and of Italian Austria to Italy. He also wanted Turkey to be driven from Europe and Armenia and for Syria and Arabia to be freed from Turkey.[36] Once victory had been achieved, there could be arrangements to increase the likelihood of international peace. However, this peace should not be substituted for military preparedness. Roosevelt then suggested a national policy of universal military training for all young men.[37] There were many writers who would follow Roosevelt's lead.

Albert Fox, a writer for The Washington Post, agreed with Roosevelt's view of Lansdowne's letter and quipped that, "President Wilson's determination to

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

force lasting peace by crushing the German military menace will not be altered by the Marquis of Lansdowne's eloquent appeal for compromise."[38] Fox remarked that although the letter had stirred official circles in Washington and had aroused comment among senators and representatives, it had made no apparent impression at the White House or the State Department. According to Fox, diplomatic sources said the letter would not affect Allied plans. It, he wrote, was diametrically opposed to the policy of Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau which had been announced prior to the Paris conference. Fox had difficulty explaining how Lansdowne's five points and those stated aims were diametrically opposed, but he tried. The Allies' policy was "Peace by military victory" with variations: Lloyd George's was to force peace by smashing the "German Machine," Clemenceau's was simply victory, and Wilson's, according to Colonel House, was that war aims would not be discussed. Thus, in his convoluted reasoning, Fox could say that, because Wilson had agreed that the Allied Supreme War Council should devote its efforts exclusively to military matters, Lansdowne's letter was to them a distraction that would permit German military power to remain intact and democracy would then have to bargain with autocratic militarism. The Germans would still be in control in the field and exact peace terms favorable to themselves. His letter was therefore certain to encourage the Germans and embarrass the Allies. Pub-

[38] Albert Fox, "Firm on War Policy," The Washington Post, 1 December 1917.

lic consideration of it would be interpreted by the Germans as proof that the Allies believed the cause was lost.[39]

To buttress Fox's analysis, The Washington Post's article from the Associated Press correspondent in London gave the story of the resolutions passed by Unionist bodies denouncing the letter, and Bonar Law's opposition to the letter was explained. The British had not dared suggest disarmament to Germany before the war began because she had a proud army. Four years into the war Germany still had a proud and unbowed army and it would be folly to broach disarmament. Bonar Law had come to the same conclusion as Fox. If peace were concluded immediately, the Germans who had plunged the world into anguish and misery would still be in power with the machinery to repeat their atrocities at the earliest opportunity.[40] Law was quoted as saying that Germany would not be bound by a Pact of Nations or treaties to promote peace. They must be defeated while the Allies were armed and organized against them.

This article by the Associated Press correspondent was unique in reporting that Lansdowne consulted Lord Loreburn, former Liberal Lord Chancellor, and the Earl of Rosebery, Liberal Prime Minister 1894-1895, before publishing his letter. Both Loreburn and Rosebery were already considered pacifists and so Lansdowne was being painted with the same brush. The article then quoted several British newspapers with their views on the letter, and, of those publications

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[39] Ibid.

[40] "Lansdowne Repudiated by British Statesmen," Ibid., 1 December 1917.

quoted, most were negative. However, a few were quoted that believed that Lansdowne had the right idea and that his views were similar to those of other world leaders.[41]

Albert Fox wrote another article that appeared in the 2 December 1917 edition of The Washington Post. This one focused on the expectation that Lansdowne's letter would cause the Germans to press for a premature peace. Fox 's article illustrated the thinking that made a statesman appear to be a traitor. "The Kaiser's puppets have steadfastly advised the German people to keep their nerves steeled to the hardship of war and wait for the enemy to crack under the strain."[42] Russia had finally cracked, but the other Allies were holding out. The Lansdowne letter had been taken by Germany as the first sign that Great Britain would be next to abandon the fight to the finish. Fox believed that the United States, Great Britain, and France must offset the impression that the letter was representative of the views of the Allied governments and their people and that that must be done quickly to correct any unfavorable impressions that the letter had made. Already, the letter's effect had, "Encouraged the enemy, strengthened the German war party and assisted Germany's campaign to spread dissension among the Allies."[43] While Lansdowne may not have intended this result,

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Albert Fox, "Marquis Aided Kaiser," Washington Post, 2 December 1917.

[43] Ibid.

the effects of the letter, and not its motives, are what worried the Allied Leaders. Fox exemplified the impossibility that poor Lansdowne faced in making himself understood when he argued in his article that, if the letter were carefully analyzed, there was nothing that opposed the idea of winning the war by breaking the military power of Germany, but, in Fox's opinion, the general public was not discerning enough to realize this. "In other words, it was not what the Marquis of Lansdowne really meant that counts, but what the public thought he meant."[44] For the Entente governments to accept the proposal of the Marquis would be to admit that they had been beaten and wanted to throw in the sponge with a camouflage of high-sounding humanitarian phrases. The German war leaders would use the letter as proof that they had been right when they told the German people to watch for signals of surrender. "Officials here say that the German people will, more than ever, be nerved to fight on now as a result of the signs of weakening in the enemy camp."[45]

Fox wrote that in the past the lack of any indication that any responsible parties in Great Britain would bargain with Germany had discouraged the Germans from making peace. Fox had thus put himself in what is now known as a "catch 22." No responsible parties in Great Britain could speak of peace because that was to give the Germans the victory, and no Germans could speak of peace because no responsible parties in Great Britain would speak to them. Fox's solu-

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[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

tion for getting himself out of this trap was to blame the Germans. The Germans wanted peace only on the terms promised by their leaders. Fox wrote that Lansdowne's peace was a German peace with Germany defeating the Entente and the United States. So far, the Kaiser and his generals had failed to get peace, but, no matter what terms Germany offered for a truce, it still had a victorious war machine and that would be the deciding factor. An undefeated Germany could make — or later take — whatever territorial adjustments it wanted. Fox concluded that President Wilson would not encourage hope in Lansdowne's ideas because neither he, nor the Administration, supported them. Fox believed that the Wilson government saw the letter as very advantageous and timely — for Germany.[46]

The Associated Press article in the same edition alluded to the letter's effect in Germany. It said the German Foreign Secretary, Richard von Kuehlmann, referred to the Marquis of Lansdowne's letter as a hopeful sign that moderation was gaining ground. Von Kuehlmann added that, because the western powers had not responded to the Pope's message, it seemed that France and England were resolved to rely on violence. "Therefore the German people will stand up and be prepared to beat force with force until the dawn of the better and more humane understanding which is beginning to appear in the eastern sky shall arise in the nations of the west, which are as yet filled with greed for money and

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[46] Ibid.

power."[47] Although nothing he could have written would have persuaded the Associated Press correspondent to believe in German moderation, von Kuehlmann could hardly have said anything more certain to convince the Allies that the Germans were prepared to keep fighting.

Lansdowne's biographer, Lord Newton, though wrong when he said there was little American interest in the letter, was correct when he said there was great interest shown by the New York papers. While the New York Times did not print anything until 9 December 1917, the New York Tribune printed several articles, including a section in their Sunday Review on 9 December 1917. The first Tribune article was in the 2 December 1917 edition. Its headline read, "Lansdowne Peace Is Repudiated by Britain's Leaders." It also gave an account of the Unionist party meeting where Bonar Law called the letter a disaster and quoted Law as saying, "I disagree absolutely not only with the arguments, but with the whole tone of the letter."[48] This utterance was made after Law admitted he had never met anyone more patriotic or disinterested than Lansdowne.[49] The remainder of the article was the same as the Associated Press article in the Washington Post.

Three smaller articles appeared the same day. Two reiterated ideas carried in other papers: that the letter was viewed as a semi-official feeler in Ger-

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[47] Quoted in "German Peace Plea," Ibid., 2 December 1917.

[48] "Lansdowne Peace Is Repudiated by Britain's Leaders," The New York Tribune, 2 December 1917.

[49] Ibid.

many and that President Wilson would reply to the letter.[50] The third article was distinctly different. It was entitled "People's Council Hails Lansdowne as Convert." A group opposed to America's drift into war, the People's Council found comfort in Lansdowne's letter. "When a British Unionist leader, like Lansdowne, arrived at the same conclusion as the American common people united in the People's Council, certainly the alleged pro-Germanism of our movement becomes a myth. Our basic contention has been, and is that 'a peace without victory,' achieved through negotiation and conciliation is the only basis for a durable peace."[51] The Executive Secretary for the People's Council of America concluded that England is now sharply divided between the "bitter enders" and the "peace through negotiators," with the latter in ascendency.[52]

On 3 December 1917 The Tribune published an article by Arthur S. Draper. He wrote that Europe was waiting for President Wilson's decision. According to him, Europe was divided into two camps, but the division was not so sharp that Wilson could not influence the lineup. Draper quoted George Bernard Shaw, who wrote that, even after the Battle of Waterloo, peace had to be negotiated. As Shaw said, "We are plagued with two sorts of cowards, cowards who are afraid to go on with the war, and much worse cowards who are afraid to stop

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[50] "Lansdowne's Letter Semi-Official 'Feeler' Is View in Germany," Ibid., 2 December 1917.

[51] "Peoples Council Hails Lansdowne as Convert," Ibid., 2 December 1917.

[52] Ibid.

the war."[53] Draper quoted several British newspapers on the letter. Most of those quoted were the same ones The Washington Post had quoted. One that was not quoted by The Washington Post was The Daily News, which said "Lansdowne's letter is a torch in the darkness."[54]

Unlike other journalists, Draper took the trouble to get Lansdowne's reaction to the furor. He wrote, "To all inquiries, Lord Lansdowne replies that he stands by his letter as written, desiring to add or withdraw nothing, but anxious to have the world know that it represents his personal views."[55] The article ended with a quote from The Manchester Guardian replying to Bonar Law's assertion that it was not enough to defeat Germany militarily, but that the feelings of the German people must change. "It seems then, that moral considerations do not count, and the state of mind of the people of Germany is the really important element making for success or failure in the war. That is precisely Lord Lansdowne's case."[56]

Reporters were not the only people who paid attention to Lord Lansdowne's letter. Richard Gottheil wrote a letter to The Tribune's editor saying that the letter was a blow not only to Americans, but to Americans who admired the

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[53] Arthur S. Draper, "Europe Looks to Wilson in Issue Raised by Lansdowne," The New York Tribune, 3 December 1917.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid.

British people. He said it sounded like some drivel by Lord Haldane.[57] Haldane had been dropped from the first Coalition Cabinet because some people thought he was pro-German. (He was fluent in the language and read German philosophy, but he did not participate in any pro-German activities.) Gottheil thought that the backbone of English valor was to be found not in the politicians or state officials, but in the English workingman. He quoted the president of the British Transport Workers' Federation, W. Harry Gosling, "But the workingmen of England know that if all our sacrifice is not to be in vain, there can be only one end, and that is the complete overthrow of German tyranny."[58] Gottheil feared that peace by compromise would lead to the realization of all pan-German schemes. Not only would there be a Berlin-Baghdad Railroad, but South America, India, and Africa would all be Germanized. Lansdowne, by publishing the letter, had besmirched his land in such a manner that its well-wishers could only hope that he would be swiftly and completely repudiated.[59]

Instead of debating just the pros and cons of the letter, an article that appeared in The New York Tribune Review, 9 December 1917, broke new ground and gave a brief biography of Lansdowne. It provided pertinent facts about his career, especially noting that he had almost fifty years of diplomatic experience before his official service ended. It quoted The New York Times as saying that

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[57] Richard Gottheil, letter to editor, The New York Tribune, 3 December 1917.

[58] Quoted in Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

when Lansdowne led the House of Lords from 1902 to1905 he was the absolute master of the assembly.[60] In addition, "He, on the Unionist side, and Mr. Asquith, on the Liberal side, were the two most lucid and deliberate debaters since the disappearance of Joseph Chamberlain...."[61] Lansdowne also was known by both sides as a fair-minded man whose judgment on international affairs was endorsed by both sides. "He is a man of charming manners, but adamant in will and quite indifferent to public opinion...."[62] The article concluded that, even though he was the opposition leader in the House of Lords, his influence in public affairs was still great. As examples he cited the passage of the 1909 budget and the Parliament Bill by the House of Lords. It concluded that this influence and his speeches would make Lansdowne remembered.[63]

The title of another article in the same edition was "Lansdowne, Conservative Tory, Launches a Liberal Bomb." The article said that Lansdowne was a typical Conservative and the last person to be called a pacifist. Therefore, his letter came as a total surprise. The writer said the response to the letter from the embattled Allies was to emphasize the gap between moderates and bitter-enders

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[60] The New York Tribune, 9 December 1917.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

in the Allied countries while it was favorably received in Germany.[64] This article again listed and quoted Lansdowne's supporters and detractors. Among the detractors were the Northcliffe Press (The Times, et al.), Bonar Law, Lord Robert Cecil, and Austen Chamberlain. The least derogatory statement made was from The Evening News, "...while he would be the last man to betray his country, he is old and in poor health."[65] Among the supporters was The London Star, which poked fun at the Northcliffe press by asking if it were so unreasonable for allies to ask each other to say what they want. "Let us at least be men. Let us not make ourselves ridiculous by pretending that Lansdowne's violently prudent letter is a white flag. It is merely a mild and timid request for sanity."[66] The article ended by saying the United States, as a whole, was unfavorable to the letter. Ex-President Taft, as well as Teddy Roosevelt, denounced it. In addition to the general denunciation, there were comparisons of his letter to Bolshevism, a far cry indeed from the view of some detractors that Lansdowne's letter was a veiled appeal to the German aristocracy for cooperation in saving them and the English aristocracy from the fate of Russia's.[67]

After so much coverage by The New York Tribune, The New York Times finally published something on the letter, but it gave it scant coverage. It said the

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[64] "Lansdowne Conservative Tory, Launches a Liberal Bomb," Ibid., 9 December 1917.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

Lansdowne letter had served the one useful purpose of uniting the opinion, "That the military argument should be ended as it was begun by Germany."[68]

If the New York Times failed to give the letter much coverage, one of the weekly news magazines made up for it. The Outlook, which was published in New York, carried three articles in its 12 December 1917 issue. The first was merely an editorial comment on the letter in a section called "The Week." The author wrote in it that Lansdowne's propositions would be an assurance that the Allies do not intend to beat Germany badly.[69] He went on to say that, "It has been said that this war will be lost by those whose nerves crack first. Until now there has been little evidence that British nerves were not as strong as they have always proved to be."[70] Lansdowne's letter, if it expressed the majority opinion of the British public, could be the signal of a great calamity. It could mean that Britain is ready to crack. The contents of the letter were contrasted with the recent speech of German Chancellor Georg Frederick von Hertling. He spoke of the triumph of arms, while Lansdowne wrote of the ruin of war. Lansdowne wanted to assure the Germans that the war will be curtailed, while von Hertling bid them,

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[68] The New York Times, 9 December 1917.

[69] The Outlook, 117, 12 December 1917, p. 587.

[70] Ibid.

"Wait! Hold out! Endure!"[71] The author concluded by saying Lansdowne's view was not from the heart of Great Britain.[72]

The second article, "A Poll of the Press," gave a brief biography and described Lansdowne as being of the Tory cast of mind. "Lord Lansdowne has been deemed in general the leader of the aristocracy against the onslaught of democracy."[73] It quoted The London Mail as ascribing the letter's chief motive to a perception that a war-wearied future would allot very small space to the decorative and unproductive elements of society (the aristocracy).[74] Then it continued with a selection of views from newspapers already quoted elsewhere. One of the few not already reviewed was The New York Sun, which, in opposition to most other papers, said, "Lord Lansdowne is something besides a statesman of keen vision and judgment ripened by wide experience and he is a patriotic Englishman, as staunch a supporter of his country's cause and its flag as Lloyd George or Lord Northcliffe or any other Briton in public life."[75] The letter must therefore be seen in this light and not as unpatriotic or divisive to the Allied cause.

> On no other basis than this can the propositions and suggestions contained in Lord Lansdowne's pronouncement be considered.... His purpose is the same as that which Woodrow Wilson and Clem-

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[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid.

[73] "A Poll of the Press," Ibid., 12 December 1917, p. 596.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., p. 597.

> enceau and Lloyd George represent in common. And instead of dealing a blow at efficient unity of action by proposing once more a clearer definition of the aims of war as a means towards peace, Lansdowne is seeking to strengthen the solidarity of the Allies by co-ordinating opinions now vaguely or diversely entertained in different quarters.[76]

The third article in The Outlook was entitled "The President's Message, Peace by Victory." It made the claim that Lansdowne believed in peace without victory but not in making the world safe for democracy. The author claimed that Lansdowne feared Lloyd George as much as the Kaiser. "The only end he perceives is 'saving the world from a recurrence of the calamity that has befallen this generation.' That calamity to him is a great war, not an undisturbed despotism."[77]

The article claimed that in contrast to Lansdowne, Wilson was animated by a different spirit and guided by a different purpose. While Lansdowne spoke to the British people, Wilson speaks to the American people. "He is impatient with all proposals to secure peace by any sort of compromise. He wishes justice done at every point and to every nation, our enemies as well as our friends"[78] Wilson insisted, "That the war shall not end in vindictive action of any kind; no nation or people shall be robbed or punished because the irresponsible rulers of a single country have themselves done deep and abominable wrong."[79] Wilson, by impli-

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[76] Quoted in Ibid.

[77] "The President's Message, Peace by Victory," Ibid., 12 December 1917, p. 593.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid.

cation, placed blame for the war on Germany and saw Austria-Hungary as Germany's vassal. Germany must be defeated to make the world safe for democracy. The article agreed with Wilson because Germany's defeat was the only way the world could prove to Germany that those who take up the sword would perish by the sword.[80]

The American press viewed the Lansdowne letter in many lights. It was seen as an encouragement to German aggression, the ranting of an old and sick man, a political maneuver to oust Lloyd George, and even a reaction to the trend towards democracy. It was also seen as a catalyst to formulate Allied war aims, as an echo of the ideas of Woodrow Wilson's speeches, and rarely as an expression of pacifism. The American press was, on the whole, more objective than the European press, and more kindly to an old statesman who wished to do one more thing for his country.

Of course, the reporting of newspapers of actual events and the quoting of newspapers by one another and especially editorials are all construed to make a public impact. Sometimes that public impact can be seen in elections and sometimes the public impact can be seen in correspondence. The Lansdowne letter and its coverage generated a flurry of letters. Both Wilson and House received letters, even some letters from abroad. Dr. H. A. Garfield wrote to the President on 30 November 1917, "Lord Lansdowne's letter, published in The Washington Post of this morning, is the most noteworthy and noblest document that has come

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[80] Ibid., pp. 593-594.

out of England. It seems to me to run with your purpose and I can well believe brings you both encouragement and relief. Lloyd George, and one might well add Roosevelt, are dangerous leaders in the present emergency."[81] In another complimentary letter from New York, Thomas Wilson Lamont of the Morgan Law Firm wrote the President on 9 January 1918, "I found over there (England), outside of Government circles, much more sympathy with the Lansdowne point of view than newspaper reports would indicate."[82]

On a darker note, in a letter marked confidential the Secretary of the Interior, Franklin Knight Lane, quoted Colonel George Harvey's opinion that Lansdowne's letter was an appeal from English Tories to German Tories to stop the war in the interest of their class. It was a play to put Lloyd George out of office. "...Harvey said it was his knowledge of English politics and English politicians, of whom he says Lansdowne is the most shrewd and farsighted, that gave him this knowledge."[83]

Of particular interest, considering House's contacts with Lansdowne, are two letters to him from London. On 30 November 1917, shortly after the letter was published, William Hepburn Butler wrote to Colonel House from London that, "The prospect of a purely military victory is remote. Lansdowne suggests using

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[81] Arthur S. Link, ed., The Papers of Woodrow Wilson, vol. 45, 11 November 1917-5 January 1918 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 173

[82] Ibid., p. 548.

[83] Ibid.

the Entenţé's economic supremacy to obtain Germany's acceptance of the Entenţé's peace terms. He also suggests that the disinterestedness of the Entenţé be made clear to German militarists on five points they have used to keep Germany at war."[84] On 15 December 1917, however, Sir William Wiseman, Chief of British Intelligence serving in Washington, wrote House from London that, "Wilson's speech to Congress was enthusiastically received. It expresses British sentiment and is an antidote to the Lansdowne letter, now generally recognized as an unfortunate blunder."[85] Of course, Wiseman's reporting is suspect because he may have been instructed to put forth a certain position.

The first generation and even the second generation of American reviewers of Lansdowne's letter were clearly in disagreement on its meaning and effect. If nothing else, however, the attention they showered on it proved that it created a mighty ripple across the pond.

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[84] Ibid., pp. 174-175.

[85] Ibid., p. 312.

CHAPTER V
OTHER EFFORTS FOR PEACE

Before the war started no one had any idea of the destructiveness of the new weapons and machines. The carnage that would result from their use was incomprehensible until it had already taken place. In the words of historian James Stokesbury, "More than any other conflict in human history, World War I illustrates the wastefulness of war as a social process."[1] The technological advances that changed the nature of war at the end of the nineteenth century had not been mastered fully by the soldiers tactically or by the strategists who placed them in battle.[2] No one in command from the politicians to the generals seemed to listen to anyone who had ideas about ending the war by any means other than force. By 11 November 1918, twelve million soldiers would be dead in a massive, mechanized version of the Charge of the Light Brigade.

From the earliest days of the conflict, Woodrow Wilson had offered to mediate an honorable solution. He wrote a letter to the belligerents to that effect on 12 September 1914,[3] and his offer would be repeated several times until he fi-

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[1] James L. Stokesbury, A Short History of World War I (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1981), p. 138.

[2] Ibid., p. 14.

[3] Princess Evelyn Blücher, An English Wife in Berlin (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1920), p. 28. Princess Blücher was an Englishwoman who had married the grandson of General Blücher, who fought at Waterloo. When the war began she and her husband were living in England. They were deported to Germany as enemy aliens and remained there throughout the war. The German government used Princess Blücher as a quasi-diplomatic contact with the English.

nally asked Congress to declare war on 2 April 1917.[4] Pope Benedict XV also tried to induce the combatants to negotiate. In 1914, he made the same offer as President Wilson.[5] The Germans, at least, were curious enough to inquire if the English had been behind the Pope's appeal. In May 1916, Princess Evelyn Blücher was asked to write the Duke of Norfolk to find out if English Catholics were associated with the Pope's efforts.[6] On 1 August 1917 Pope Benedict again appealed to the heads of all belligerent nations for peace,[7] and again Germany gave the most positive response. This time the Kaiser urged the Papal Nuncio to use his influence to resolve the conflict between the Catholic countries of Austria and Italy.[8]

Even the political leaders of the belligerent nations would propose peace by negotiation, but their proposals always had conditions attached which made them unacceptable to the other side. In addition, the Allies made an agreement on 5 September 1914 not to consider a separate peace or any peace offer with-

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[4] Stokesbury, p. 222.

[5] Blücher, p. 28.

[6] Ibid., pp. 138-139.

[7] Riddell, p. 281.

[8] Wilhelm Hohenzollern II, Emperor of Germany; 1888-1918, The Kaiser's Memoirs, English translation by Thomas R. Ybarra (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922), p. 265.

out consulting each other.[9] Furthermore, Lloyd George told Lord Riddell on 30 July 1917 that any peace made with Austria or Turkey must be preceded by a military victory.[10] Thus, in theory, peace without victory over all enemy belligerents was not an option for the Allies.

On the opposite side, Germany already had a victory which it would not toss away without compensation. In April 1916, Chancellor Theobold von Bethmann-Hollweg told the Reichstag that Germany would evacuate Belgium and end the war if her vital interests could be safeguarded.[11] Sensing a quid pro quo proposal, Lloyd George replied that Bethmann-Hollweg's speech disclosed for the first time German plans of territorial settlement after the war.[12] On 23 June 1916, Lord Esher wrote to Asquith that Germany had sent an emissary to the French to discover terms upon which an armistice might be granted, but the French refused to discuss peace until the German armies were withdrawn from French and Belgian soil.[13] The French and German proposals were irreconcilably at odds about which came first. The subject was again broached in Esher's Journal entry for 11 August 1916. "If the Germans were to ask for an armistice to-morrow, a war

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[9] W. B. Fest, "British War Aims and German Peace Feelers During the First World War, (December 1916-November 1918), " The Historical Journal 15, no. 2 (June 1972), p. 285.

[10] Riddell, p. 258.

[11] Turner, p. 99.

[12] Riddell, p. 169.

[13] Esher, 4:35.

council would be hastily summoned....Meanwhile the French, having well considered what they would require take the lead and keep it."[14] Apparently the Germans were tempting France with a separate peace, which would have violated the Allies agreement against a separate peace.

Toward the end of 1916, "Germany again sent out peace feelers through various embassies. They came to nothing because it was obvious that Wilhelm wanted a peace based on his own terms, based on the grip of his armies astride Russia, France and Belgium."[15] In addition, General August von Mackensen's victory over Rumania in December reinforced German sentiment that any direct offer of peace through the neutrals should be on Germany's terms.[16] Woodrow Wilson in another attempt to negotiate sent a note to all belligerents asking them to state their terms for peace. The Germans evaded the question. The Allies stipulated that Germany should offer complete restitution of occupied territory, full reparation for war damages, and effective guarantees that it would not happen again.[17] The note got the same results as the actual fighting--a stalemate with no change in the status quo.

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[14] Ibid., p. 47.

[15] Marshall, p. 267.

[16] Konrad H. Jaraush, The Enigmatic Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg and the Hubris of Imperial Germany (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press), 1973, p. 250.

[17] Riddell, p. 237.

The winter of 1916-1917 would become known as the "Turnip Winter" in Europe and altered the nature of the war. Shortages caused by the Allied blockade of the Central Powers and the loss of shipping to unrestricted submarine warfare by the Germans reduced the Europeans to eating what they considered animal fodder, turnips.[18] Until the Turnip Winter, Bethmann-Hollweg had managed to kept the High Seas Fleet from using unrestricted submarine warfare by warning the admirals that it could cause the United States to enter the war on the side of the Allies. On 8 January 1917, the German Admiralty decided to take this risk and try to take Britain out of the war by starving her within six months.[19] On 31 January 1917, the Germans notified the United States that unrestricted submarine warfare would begin the next day.[20] Bethmann-Hollweg's fears were proved correct. On 3 February 1917, Wilson broke off diplomatic relations with Germany. He waited for an overt act of hostility before asking for a declaration of war on 6 April 1917.[21]

Germany and Wilhelm may not have been interested in serious peace negotiations as 1916 turned into 1917, but Austria's new Emperor was a relatively unknown quantity. The old Austrian Emperor, Franz Josef, had died 21 November 1916. It was his intransigence on the treatment of Serbia following the as-

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[18] Stokesbury, p. 194.

[19] Ibid., p. 204.

[20] Ibid., p. 220.

[21] Ibid., p. 221.

sassination of his Heir Presumptive in 1914 that had triggered the events that led to war. His successor, Charles, was married to an Italian Princess, Zita. The two of them would use Prince Sixté (Sixtus) de Bourbon (Zita's relative) as an intermediary for peace negotiations. On 24 March 1917, the Emperor Charles, without consulting his German allies, gave Prince Sixté de Bourbon a secret letter for Raymond Poincaré, the French President. Lloyd George also had several interviews with Sixté de Bourbon in London and Paris. Paul Cambon, the French ambassador to London, formally rejected de Bourbon's offer on 22 April. In a last ditch effort, de Bourbon had an audience with King George V sometime between 20-23 May 1917 (no specific date given).[22] Austria did not include Germany in these peace feelers. The most Austria did was sound out Germany's position on Alsace-Lorraine. General Erich Ludendorff said France would not get the territory as part of a negotiated peace.[23] This doomed the promise made by Emperor Charles to use his influence to restore Alsace-Lorraine to France if she made a separate peace with Austria.[24]

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[22] Jones, pp. 127-128.

[23] Marshall, p. 319.

[24] Bernhardt von Bülow, Memoirs of Prince von Bülow, The World War and Germany's Collapse 1909-1919, translation by Geoffrey Dunlop, vol. III (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1932), pp. 309-310.

The German military leaders were unwilling to negotiate on Alsace-Lorraine because they still believed they could defeat the Entente and have peace on their own terms. In Lloyd George's estimation,

> General Ludendorff was convinced that the pacifist movement in Britain was formidable and was growing in power day by day. He was of the opinion that a reeling blow struck at the British Army would precipitate a political crisis in England, throw out of office what he conceived to be a bellicose and implacable War Ministry, and substitute for it a more pacific and amenable combination headed by Mr. Asquith and Lord Lansdowne.[25]

Some of the German civilians, sick of turnips and war-weary, took a different view. Princess Blücher wrote in her diary for April 1917 (no date), "People blame the German Chancellor for not meeting Edward Grey half-way when he put out very decided feelers for peace six months before the German peace proposals were dreamt of."[26] They should have blamed their military leaders.

Apparently, the suffering of the past winter made both the German and French populations believe a peace would come soon. In a letter to the Reverend C. D. Williamson, dated 5 May 1917, from Paris, Lord Esher seemed to confirm this by writing, "I still think peace will be forced upon Europe almost immediately by famine and hardship. We are all getting to the end of our tether. Submarines and blockade are both telling their tale."[27] The summer and fall saw an-

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[25] David Lloyd George, War Memoirs of David Lloyd George, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1936), 2:17.

[26] Blücher, p. 168.

[27] Esher, 4:112.

other spate of peace efforts. The previously-mentioned effort of the Pope had come to naught, even though it had been supported by the Kaiser, because Catholic Austria and Italy rejected it. Princess Blücher wrote that German Protestants also opposed any peace proposals made by the Pope.[28]

On 3 August 1917, Lloyd George told Lord Riddell peace would be possible if the Germans would vacate France and Belgium, but he did not think they would because of criticism by their own people.[29] The same month, Major Armand, a representative of the French War Minister, was in Switzerland for meetings on a separate peace with Austria. The terms proposed were for a complete and unconditional evacuation of Belgium, mutual compensation for the desolation in occupied territories, and some concessions in Alsace-Lorraine. The Germans were intransigent, as Lloyd George had predicted.[30] Intransigence was indeed the order of the day. The French would not budge unless they got Alsace-Lorraine.

People were no longer able to blame Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg for not meeting the Allies halfway. He retired 14 July 1917, having lost his struggle for control with Hindenburg and Ludendorff.[31] "He had literally exhausted himself in keeping the military and naval chieftains in rein all through 1916. Events were

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[28] Blücher, p. 179.

[29] Riddell, p. 262.

[30] Fest, p. 298.

[31] Stokesbury, p. 299.

simply out of his control in 1917...."[32] Hindenburg and Ludendorff were now in full control of Germany politically, as well as militarily. Their views on the war are best described by former Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow in his memoirs.

> In 1917 peace would have been perfectly feasible on condition that our enemies saw no weakness in us. That is to say we could have made it, if we had not seemed to them overanxious for it, had we abstained from all naïve peace demonstrations and puerile peace resolutions. It had literally then become a case of showing the world a bold front—a face of unshakable resolution, with a hint of defiance in it. Yet at the same time, through some suitably chosen agent, we ought to have made it clear to the Allies that we should not refuse a peace by mutual understanding.[33]

The thinking of Lloyd George, Bonar Law, and many of Lansdowne's critics was eerily echoed in the German government.

Even if the British government were not controlled by its armed forces, the military leaders had enough clout through the Northcliffe press to force Lloyd George's Cabinet to continue to clamor in public for "the knock-out blow." It seemed that, "The knowledge that [Sir William] Robertson [Chief of the Imperial General Staff] and almost all other senior officers favored a guerre à l' outrance undoubtedly had a restraining influence on ministers who otherwise might have been more ready to consider a negotiated peace."[34] Even though Lloyd George would eventually replace the popular Robertson as Commander-in-Chief of the

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[32] Arthur S. Link, Wilson, The Diplomatist, A Look at His Major Foreign Policy (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), p. xiv.

[33] von Bülow, p. 294.

[34] Rothwell, p. 8.

General Staff, there was no one he could appoint to replace General Haig, who also wanted to fight the Germans to the end. As Maurice Hankey wrote, "Haig was sometimes a danger, but the Prime Minister could not discover a Commander-in-Chief who would be easier for him to work with and at the same time equally reliable."[35] Even the men in the trenches, who should have known better, believed their commanding officers had the winning solution. General Sir Douglas Haig, the Commander-in-Chief in France, and Robertson were not great military leaders, but they had shown concern for the physical well-being of the men who served under them and were liked by the rank and file. "The leaders of the British army were held in enormous popular prestige during the First World War, and if they had appealed to the country to consider a negotiated peace, it is impossible to calculate what the results would have been."[36] "Moreover, Britain's soldiers, usually silent in peacetime were far from being so during the war, and some of them showed a dangerous contempt for the 'Frocks' and seemed to believe that military men could do a better job of directing the war."[37] Thus, there were no brakes on the war effort from the British military leaders.

While the clout and popularity of the military of both countries might be able to force Bethmann-Hollweg's resignation and keep Lloyd George talking

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[35] Hankey, 2:867.

[36] Rothwell, p. 8.

[37] Gordon A. Craig, Europe Since 1815, 3rd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1971), p. 477.

about "the knock-out blow," some seemed oblivious to their influence. The Kaiser summoned a Crown Council on 11 September 1917 to discuss the Papal note of August, but the results were inconclusive. On 8 October the Allied ambassadors met in Paris, and the British indicated that they were willing to receive communications from the German government. They did not receive a direct reply, but the next day Foreign Minister von Kuehlmann rejected the French claim for Alsace-Lorraine in the Reichstag. On 10 October Lloyd George groused that no statement could be more calculated to prolong the war.[38]

The attempts at peace continued to be frustrated throughout October. On 18 October Lloyd George's Secretary, Phillip Kerr, told the Prime Minister that the Germans were making frantic efforts for peace. British public sentiment suspected the Germans of speaking of peace as a diversionary tactic. Lloyd George held that communications must not be stopped by public suspicion, for the time might come when the Germans would offer acceptable terms.[39] Some Germans looked for another basis on which to establish peace. Princess Blücher's diary entry for October 1917 (no date) confirmed that Matthias Erzberger, leader of the Center Party, was abroad trying to establish peace negotiations on a financial basis for reparations, but had failed.[40] At the end of the month, Germany reverted to her previous all-or-nothing stance. Lord Esher offered a possible explanation

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[38] Jones, pp. 129-130.

[39] Riddell, p. 183.

[40] Blücher, pp. 178-179.

for the about face in his journal. The journal entry, "notes from a conversation in Paris," 30 October 1917, said,

> They explained that owing to internal dissensions, and because of the dynastic fears of the Emperor, it was absolutely necessary that any peace proposals made, now or hereafter, which were not the outcome of complete victory or complete defeat, should be made semi-officially and secretly, so that Germany could, if negotiations failed, be able to deny that they had taken place.[41]

The situation in revolutionary Russia became another factor in peace negotiations. Until November 1917, the Allies had been fretting over Belgium and Alsace-Lorraine and deciding to make war or peace on who controlled them. November 1917 brought a new twist. "The Soviet authorities appealed to the Allies to begin peace negotiations on a basis of no annexations and no indemnities."[42] They were trying to protect their fledgling government from the Germans, and were considering leaving the war on Germany's terms. The Allies held a conference in Paris from 30 November to 4 December to discuss Allied strategy and the Russian situation.[43] They came to no agreement on the Russian situation and left the Russians — White or Red — to fend for themselves. The Bolsheviks made a separate peace in March 1918 at Brest-Litovsk.

The day before the conference was to begin Lord Lansdowne's letter was published in the Daily Telegraph. Against the background of all the negotiations

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[41] Esher, 4:146.

[42] Link., Wilson the Diplomatist, p. 131.

[43] Fest, p. 303.

and political maneuvering going on in late 1917 it seems strange that Lansdowne was singled out so much that he was mobbed by irate Londoners after its publication.[44] Neither the British nor the German military — and thus their governments — had any intention of negotiating at this time.[45]

Oddly enough, the uproar over the Lansdowne letter did not stop further attempts —or feints — at a negotiated peace. On 12 December 1917, after the fall of Bucharest to the Germans, Berlin proposed peace negotiations. Wilson cagily told them to define their war aims, but their reply was as evasive as it had been in 1916.[46] On18 December Jan Smuts, South African representative to the Imperial War Cabinet, acting for Britain, went to Switzerland to discuss peace with Count Albert Mensdorff, former Austrian ambassador to London, acting for the Austrian Foreign Minister, Czernin. Nothing was accomplished because Mensdorff did not have the power to negotiate a separate peace for Austria.[47] With all the negotiations that took place 1917 was called the year of "peace moves," but there was no peace.[48] "The winter of 1917-1918 was a profoundly depressing period for the Allied cause.... It was not altogether surprising that the

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[44] Stokesbury, p. 260.

[45] Blake, p. 363.

[46] Riddell, p. 302.

[47] Jones, p. 131.

[48] Rothwell, p. 105.

possibility of a negotiated peace began to be considered in some quarters."[49] In 1918 Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson would make their own peace proposals.

Lloyd George's proposal came in a speech at Caxton Hall on 5 January. According to Peter Rowland, he asked Grey and Asquith for comments before he delivered the speech because he was convinced the pacifists were pinning their hopes on a Peace Ministry headed by Asquith and Lansdowne, and he wanted Asquith to be identified with the government in order to stop this movement.[50] His terms for peace were:

1. Evacuation of Belgium, Serbia, Rumania and Montenegro
2. Evacuation of territory in France and Italy
3. Reopening French claims to Alsace/Lorraine
4. The re-establishment of Poland as a nation
5. Self-government for all nationalities of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.[51]

Not surprisingly, the content of Lloyd George's speech was compared to Lansdowne's letter.[52] Only three days later Woodrow Wilson unveiled his Fourteen Points in his State of the Union address.[53] It would also be compared to Lansdowne's letter, but unlike Lloyd George's terms it included the Soviet call for no annexations and no indemnities.

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[49] Blake, p. 363.

[50] Rowland, p. 428.

[51] Stokesbury, p. 299.

[52] Turner, p. 269.

[53] Ibid. Wilson's Fourteen Points are included as Appendix C.

From January to March, 1918, German Chancellor Georg von Hertling and Austrian Foreign Minister Czernin sent favorable replies to Lloyd George and Wilson. Czernin went so far as to suggest secret meetings in Switzerland, but then changed his mind. On 21 March 1918 the Germans began their 1918 offensive on the Western Front and negotiations came to an end.[54]

Still there was talk of peace in Germany. Princess Blucher wrote on 9 April, "Talk of a peace movement between France and Austria. Speculation that the Austrian Empress, not the Emperor, wrote to Clemenceau suggesting peace negotiations."[55] For all the talk, there was nothing that remotely seemed promising. Not until Princess Blücher's diary entry of 29 October was there more than wishful thinking, "I see that Balfour and Lloyd George have gone to Paris, and that Lord Grey and Henderson have joined Lord Lansdowne in his 'peace campaign.'"[56] Thirteen days later the armistice was signed.

Perhaps the Allies were right to wait for the German military leaders to sue for peace. "One reason why the Foreign Office was reluctant to consider German peace overtures was, as always, the suspicion that they were a trap designed to weaken the war-will of the Allied peoples."[57] Surely Wilson and Lloyd George must have felt misled in March 1918 when Hindenburg launched his big offensive.

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[54] Jones, p. 132.

[55] Blücher, pp. 213-214

[56] Ibid., p. 262.

[57] Rothwell, p. 204.

In fairness to the Germans, they may have had a stalemate on the Western Front, but they were winning the war in the East. Unless Germany was clearly defeated — and she was not defeated until late 1918 — there was no reason for her to offer peace terms that the Allies would view as equitable.

At the same time, the Allies were unwilling to make concessions, with the most obvious sticking point being Alsace-Lorraine. The "lost sisters" were a small bone, but they repeatedly choked negotiations. Proposals by most of the civilian and especially the military leaders were bargaining ploys, diversionary tactics, and lacked sincerity. Lansdowne's brutally honest "The Emperor has no clothes" call to avert disaster is perhaps what made his letter unique and caused others to revile him.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

Why did everyone in 1917 automatically take Lansdowne's letter as a plea for a negotiated peace, and why did his contemporaries consider him a pacifist? He was not in the Speaker's Corner at Hyde Park denouncing the government for continuing the war; nor was he leading demonstrations past Number 10 Downing Street demanding that Lloyd George bring an end to the war or resign. As agitators go, Lansdowne was not loud enough nor obnoxious enough to receive all the attention he got from the press and politicians.

Perhaps part of the reason for the outcry was the definition of pacifist in current usage during the First World War. In the preface to The Union of Democratic Control, Marvin Schwartz wrote, "During the First World War, the term 'pacifist' was used to describe any person who favored making peace short of military victory."[1] In The First World War, An Illustrated History, A. J. P. Taylor gave a more menacing explanation, writing that, "...anyone advocating peace without victory was a Bolshevik — or next door to it. A harsh verdict on poor Lord Lansdowne."[2] The war would have to be fought to the bitter end to save society

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[1] Marvin Schwartz, The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics during the First World War (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. xiv.

[2] A.J.P. Taylor, The First World War, An Illustrated History (New York: Capricorn Books, 1972), p. 204.

from Bolshevism, which would end civilization more surely than the war itself, according to Clemenceau and Lloyd George.[3]

David French, in The Strategy of the Lloyd George Coalition, 1916-1918, suggested another possibility for the government's outrage. On the reasons for Britain's involvement in the war effort, he wrote, "In 1914 British policy-makers had entered the war determined to strengthen their post-war security against both their enemies and their allies. They remained committed to these goals throughout the war."[4] "These objectives did not change under Lloyd George, but the need to pursue them became more urgent."[5] If that were true, the British government could not state its ulterior war aims without looking basely hypocritical, possibly foolish, and certainly "perfidious." They could have been afraid Lansdowne might force the exposure of their real objectives in fighting the war, and so he had to be disgraced.

The advocates of the "knock-out blow" were not the only people to view Lansdowne as a pacifist. "The Union of Democratic Control [Britain's true pacifist organization] used the Lansdowne letter and the Bolshevik Revolution to strengthen its appeal for peace by negotiation."[6] One of its founders, Arthur Ponsonby, wanted to make Lansdowne Prime Minister, but he refused to lead a po-

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[3] Ibid.

[4] French, p. 3.

[5] Ibid., p. 7.

[6] Schwartz, p. 192.

litical movement solely in favor of peace by negotiation.[7] J. Ramsay MacDonald of the Independent Labor Party also said that he would welcome a Lansdowne government, if it would bring the war to an end.[8] As Lansdowne's biographer observed, "Rather to his surprize, this arch-reactionary Irish landowner became the hero of the radicals and the socialists."[9] So much for the claim of those who said he was appealing to the German aristocracy to save the privileges of their class!

Even though he had not demanded outright a quick, negotiated peace in the letter, Lansdowne's subsequent actions indicate that he did want the war to end as soon as possible with as little additional bloodshed as possible. On 5 March 1918 he published a second letter in The Daily Telegraph that said Chancellor von Hertling's speech seemed to mark an advance toward peace. Lansdowne drew attention to the points at which the speech corresponded with President Wilson's proposal of 18 December 1917.[10]

On 19 March 1918, Lansdowne brought forward his proposals for peace in the House of Lords during a debate on the League of Nations. He expressed his hopes for a great peace conference which would ripen into the League of Nations. Lansdowne again argued that military victory and the imposition of crush-

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[7] Ibid., pp. 193-194.

[8] Newton, pp. 474-475.

[9] Ibid., p. 475.

[10] Ibid., p. 474.

ing terms on the defeated nations definitely would not give the security that to many was the chief argument for going to war.[11] On 8 May 1918, Lord Denbigh asked the British Government to suppress pacifism. Lord Lansdowne countered with a plea for peace by negotiation.[12]

After the publication of the "Peace Letter," Noel Buxton, F.W. Hirst, Henry W. Massingham of The Nation, and the businessmen from Liverpool who had once backed E. D. Morel's campaign against Belgian atrocities in the Congo, formed the Lansdowne Committee for a peace by negotiation. Lansdowne declined to serve on the committee just as he had refused to lead any political movement for peace by negotiation. The agitation by the Lansdowne Committee flourished until the decisive victory of the Allies in the late summer of 1918.[13] On 31 July 1918, Lansdowne wrote a letter to the chairman of the Lansdowne Committee. Again he cited the tremendous loss of life and suffering caused by the war and the widespread desire for peace among the enemy nations. He wrote that the chief obstacle to peace was the lack of a definite expression of terms on which the Allies were prepared to open discussions. Once more he asked for a restatement of Allied war aims.[14]

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[11] Ibid., p. 475.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Taylor, The Troublemakers, p. 150.

[14] Newton, p. 475.

Since Lord Lansdowne refused to lead or be part of a political movement, what motives did he have for publishing the original "Peace Letter?" Lord Newton did not give any insight on his motives in his biography, and most of the other authors who write about the letter admitted that they have no idea. In British Politics and the Great War, John B. Turner wrote, "At the same time his motives seem impenetrable, and in the absence of any evidence from his own papers, they seem likely to remain so."[15] He then speculated that the most likely explanation of Lansdowne's intentions was the obvious one: that he wanted to express a direction in which foreign policy should move.[16] In view of Lansdowne's refusal to become involved in any of the proffered organized political movements, this seems unlikely.

His refusal limited any chance of his ideas being accepted by those with the authority to actually implement them. As Lord Newton wrote,

> The Lansdowne peace effort ...never had much chance of success, but there was nothing to be ashamed of in an unsuccessful attempt to persuade a tormented world to listen to counsels of moderation, instead of pursuing a course which threatened universal ruin; and at all events he earned the credit of inspiring President Wilson's Fourteen Points, which formed the basis of the Armistice conditions.[17]

Bentley Gilbert in his biography of Lloyd George suggested another possibility. He wrote that Lansdowne and Lloyd George had both concluded that Brit-

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[15] Turner, p. 249.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Newton, p. 481.

ain was not winning, but losing, the war. "The nation could either fight harder or it could negotiate a peace.... Lansdowne invited the Cabinet to make a choice." If Gilbert is correct, then, ironically, the Lloyd George who castigated Lansdowne was as pessimistic as Lansdowne about the course of the war.[18]

Unfortunately, the Armistice conditions, however much they embraced Lansdowne's letter or Wilson's Fourteen Points, were not the terms of any of the treaties ending the war. At the same time, victory was not achieved by Lloyd George's knock-out blow. James L. Stokesbury wrote in A Short History of World War I that, "The Germans did not win the war; unfortunately they did not lose it so decisively that they were unwilling to try again a generation later."[19] The peace treaties reflected all the vindictiveness and pettiness that Lansdowne's ideas sought to transcend. Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Orlando of Italy were pleased with the Versailles terms. Wilson still wanted to enforce peace based on his Fourteen Points but could not get the backing of the Allied leaders or of Congress.[20] Some Frenchmen even realized the terms of the treaty were unfair and would merely anger the Germans. At the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, 28 June 1919, "Marshall Foch burst out, 'This isn't peace! This is a truce

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[18] Bentley Brinkerhoff Gilbert, p. 376.

[19] Stokesbury, p. 318.

[20] Ibid., p. 316.

for twenty years!' Twenty years and sixty-seven days later Britain and France declared war on Germany."[21]

[21] Ibid., p. 323.

APPENDIX A

The Daily Telegraph, November 29, 1917

CO-ORDINATION OF ALLIED WAR AIMS

LETTER FROM LORD LANSDOWNE

To The Editor of "The Daily Telegraph,"

Sir—We are now in the fourth year of the most dreadful war the world has known; a war in which, as Sir W. Robertson has lately informed us, "the killed alone can be counted by the million, while the total number of men engaged amounts to nearly twenty-four millions." Ministers continue to tell us that they scan the horizon in vain for the prospect of a lasting peace. And without a lasting peace we all feel that the task we have set ourselves will remain unaccomplished.

But those who look forward with horror to the prolongation of the war, who believe that its wanton prolongation would be a crime, differing only in degree from that of the criminals who provoked it, may be excused if they too scan the horizon anxiously in the hope of discovering there indications that the outlook may after all not be so hopeless as is supposed.

The obstacles are indeed formidable enough. We are constantly reminded of one of them. It is pointed out with force that, while we have not hesitated to put forward a general description of our war aims, the enemy have, though re-

peatedly challenged, refused to formulate theirs, and have limited themselves to vague and apparently insincere professions of readiness to negotiate with us.

The force of the argument cannot be gainsaid, but is directed mainly to show that we are still far from agreement as to the territorial questions which must come up for settlement in connection with the terms of peace. These are, however, by no means the only questions which will arise, and it is worth while to consider whether there are not others, also of first-rate importance, with regard to which the prospects of agreement are less remote.

Let me examine one or two of these. What are we fighting for? To beat the Germans? Certainly. But that is not an end in itself. We want to inflict signal defeat upon the Central Powers, not out of mere vindictiveness, but in the hope of saving the world from a recurrence of the calamity which has befallen this generation.

What, then, is it that we want when the war is over? I know of no better formula than that more than once made use of, with universal approval, by Mr. Asquith in the speeches which he has from time to time delivered. He has repeatedly told his hearers that we are waging war in order to obtain reparation and security. Both are essential, but of the two security is perhaps the more indispensable. In the way of reparation much can no doubt be accomplished, but the utmost effort to make good all the ravages of this war must fall short of completeness, and will fail to undo the grievous wrong which has been done to humanity. It may, however, be possible to make some amends for the inevitable incom-

pleteness of the reparation if the security afforded is, humanly speaking, complete. To end the war honourably would be a great achievement; to prevent the same curse falling upon our children would be a greater achievement still.

This is our avowed aim, and the magnitude of the issue cannot be exaggerated. For, just as this war has been more dreadful than any war in history, so we may be sure would the next war be even more dreadful than this. The prostitution of science for purposes of pure destruction is not likely to stop short. Most of us, however, believe that it should be possible to secure posterity against the repetition of such an outrage as that of 1914. If the Powers will, under a solemn pact, bind themselves to submit future disputes to arbitration; if they will undertake to outlaw, politically and economically, any one of their number which refuses to enter into such a pact, or to use their joint military and naval forces for the purpose of coercing a Power which breaks away from the rest, they will, indeed, have travelled far along the road which leads to security.

We are, at any rate, right to put security in the front line of our peace demands, and it is not unsatisfactory to note that in principle, there seems to be complete unanimity on this point.

In his speech at the banquet of the League to Enforce Peace, on May 28, 1916, President Wilson spoke strongly in favor of [...]

A universal association of nations . . . to prevent any war from being begun either contrary to treaty covenants or without warning and full submission of the cause to the opinion of the world.

Later in the same year the German Chancellor, at the sitting of the Main Committee of the Reichstag, used the following language:

When, as after the termination of the war, the world will fully recognise its horrible devastation of blood and treasure, then through all mankind will go the cry for peaceful agreements and understandings which will prevent, so far as is humanly possible, the return of such an immense catastrophe. The cry will be so strong and so justified that it must lead to a result. Germany will honourably co-operate in investigating every attempt to find a practical solution and collaborate towards its possible realisation.

The Papal Note communicated to the Powers in August last places in the front rank:

The establishment of arbitration on lines to be concerted and with sanction to be settled against any State that refuses either to submit international disputes to arbitration or to accept its awards.

This suggestion was immediately welcomed by the Austrian Government, which declared that it was conscious of the importance for the promotion of peace of the method proposed by his Holiness, viz., "to submit international disputes to compulsory arbitration," and that it was prepared to enter into negotiations regarding this proposal. Similar language was used by Count Czernin, the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister, in his declaration on foreign policy made at Budapest in October, when he mentioned as one of the "fundamental bases" of peace that of "obligatory international arbitration."

In his dispatch covering the Allied Note of Jan. 10, 1917, Mr. Balfour mentions as one of the three conditions essential to a durable peace the condition that [...]

Behind international law and behind all treaty arrangements for preventing or limiting hostilities some form of international sanction might be devised which would give pause to the hardiest aggressor.

Such sanction would probably take the form of coercion applied in one of two modes. The "aggressor" would be disciplined either by the pressure of superior naval and military strength, or by the denial of commercial success and facilities.

The proceedings of the Paris Conference show that we should not shrink from such a denial, if we were compelled to use the weapon for purposes of self-defence. But while a commercial "boycott" would be justifiable as a war measure, and while the threat of a "boycott," in case Germany should show herself utterly unreasonable, would be a legitimate threat, no reasonable man would, surely, desire to destroy the trade of the Central Powers, if they will, so to speak, enter into recognisances to keep the peace, and do not force us into a conflict by a hostile combination. Commercial war is less ghastly in its immediate results than the war of armed forces, but it would certainly be deplorable if after three or four years of sanguinary conflict in the field, a conflict which has destroyed a great part of the wealth of the world and permanently crippled its resources, the Powers were to embark upon commercial hostilities certain to retard the economic recovery of all

the nations involved. That we shall have to secure ourselves against the fiscal hostility of others, that we shall have to prevent the recurrence of the conditions under which, when war broke out, we found ourselves short of essential commodities, because we had allowed certain industries, and certain sources of supply, to pass entirely under the control of our enemies, no one will doubt, subject however to this reservation, that it will surely be for our interest that the stream of trade should, so far as our own fiscal interests permit, be allowed to flow strong and uninterrupted in its natural channels.

There remains the question of territorial gains. The most authoritative statement of these is to be found in the Allies' note of Jan. 10, 1917. This statement must obviously be regarded as a broad outline of the desiderata of the Allies, but is anyone prepared to argue that the sketch is complete, or that it may not become necessary to re-examine it?

Mr. Asquith speaking at Liverpool in October last, used the following language:

No one pretends that it would be right or opportune for either side to formulate an ultimatum, detailed, exhaustive, precise, with clauses and sub-clauses, which is to be accepted verbatim et literatim, chapter and verse, as the indispensable preliminary and condition of peace.

"There are many things," he added, "in a worldwide conflict such as this, which must of necessity be left over for discussion and negotiation, for accommodation and adjustment, at a later stage."

It is surely most important that this wise counsel should be kept in mind. Some of our original desiderata have probably become unattainable. Others would probably now be given a less prominent place than when they were first put forward. Others again, notably the reparation due to Belgium, remain, and must always remain in the front rank, but when it comes to the wholesale rearrangement of the map of South-Eastern Europe we may well ask for a suspension of judgment and for the elucidation which a frank exchange of views between the Allied Powers can alone afford.

For all these questions concern our Allies as well as ourselves, and if we are to have an Allied Council for the purpose of adapting our strategy in the field to the ever-shifting developments of the war, it is fair to assume that, in the matter of peace terms also, the Allies will make it their business to examine, and if necessary to revise, the territorial requirements.

Let me end by explaining why I attach so much importance to these considerations. We are not going to lose this war, but its prolongation will spell ruin for the civilised world, and an infinite addition to the load of human suffering which already weighs upon it. Security will be invaluable to a world which has the vitality to profit by it, but what will be the value of the blessings of peace to nations so exhausted that they can scarcely stretch out a hand with which to grasp them?

In my belief, if the war is to be brought to a close in time to avert a world-wide catastrophe, it will be brought to a close because on both sides the peoples of the countries involved realise that it has already lasted too long.

There can be no question that this feeling prevails extensively in Germany, Austria, and Turkey. We know beyond doubt that the economic pressure in those countries far exceeds any to which we are subject here. Ministers inform us in their speeches of "constant efforts" on the part of the Central Powers "to initiate peace talk." (Sir E. Geddes at the Mansion House, Nov. 9.)

If the peace talk is not more articulate, and has not been so precise as to enable his Majesty's Government to treat it seriously, the explanation is probably to be found in the fact, first, that German despotism does not tolerate independent expressions of opinion, and second, that the German Government has contrived, probably with success, to misrepresent the aims of the Allies, which are supposed to include the destruction of Germany, the imposition upon her of a form of government decided by her enemies, her destruction as a great commercial community, and her exclusion from the free use of the seas.

An immense stimulus would probably be given to the peace party in Germany if it were understood:

(1) That we do not desire the annihilation of Germany as a Great Power;

(2) That we do not seek to impose upon her people any form of government than that of their own choice;

(3) That, except as a legitimate war measure, we have no desire to deny to Germany her place among the great commercial communities of the world;

(4) That we are prepared, when the war is over, to examine in concert with other Powers the group of international problems, some of them of recent origin, which are connected with the question of "the freedom of the seas";

(5) That we are prepared to enter into an international pact under which ample opportunities would be afforded for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.

I am under the impression that authority could be found for most of these propositions in Ministerial speeches. Since the above lines were written, (1), (2), and (3) have been dealt with by our own Foreign Minister at the public meeting held in honour of M. Venizelos at the Mansion House.

The question of "the freedom of the seas" was amongst those raised at the outset by our American Allies. The formula is an ambiguous one, capable of many inconsistent interpretations, and I doubt whether it will be seriously contended that there is no room for profitable discussion.

That an attempt should be made to bring about the kind of pact suggested in (5) is, I believe, common ground to all the belligerents, and probably to all the neutral Powers.

If it be once established that there are no insurmountable difficulties in the way of agreement upon these points, the political horizon might perhaps be scanned with better hope by those who pray, but can at this moment hardly ven-

ture to expect, that the New Year may bring us a lasting and honourable peace,

--I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

LANSDOWNE

Lansdowne House, Nov. 28

APPENDIX B

LORD LANSDOWNE'S MEMORANDUM OF NOVEMBER 13, 1916

The members of the War Committee were asked by the Prime Minister some weeks ago to express their views as to the terms upon which peace might be concluded. I do not know whether there has been a general response to this invitation, but the only reply which I have seen is one written last month by the First Lord of the Admiralty, in which he deals at length with the problems which might have to be discussed at any peace conference. Mr. Balfour observes truly that these questions cannot be profitably examined except upon an agreed hypothesis as to the military position of the combatants at the end of the War, and he proceeds to assume that the Central Powers, either through defeat or exhaustion, have to accept the terms imposed upon them by the Allies.

I venture to suggest that the attention of the War Committee might with advantage be directed to a somewhat different problem, and that they should be invited to give us their opinion as to our present prospects of being able to "dictate" the kind of terms we should all like to impose upon our enemies if we were in a position to do so.

We are agreed as to the goal, but we do not know how far we have really travelled towards it, or how much nearer to it we are likely to find ourselves even if the War be prolonged for, say another year. What will that year have cost us?

How much better will our position be at the end of it? Shall we even then be strong enough to "dictate" terms?

It seems to me almost impossible to overrate the importance of these considerations, because it is clear that our diplomacy must be governed by an accurate appreciation of them.

We have obtained within the last few days from the different departments of the Government a good deal of information as to the situation, naval, military, and economic. It is far from reassuring.

From the president of the Board of Trade we received on October 26 a most interesting and carefully compiled memorandum tending to show the daily growing shortage of tonnage and its consequences. Mr. Runciman comes to the conclusion that our shipbuilding is not keeping pace with our losses, and that, although the number of our vessels is down, the demands on our tonnage are not diminished. We must look forward to depending more and more on neutral ships, but we can be under no illusions as to the precarious nature of that resource. I do not think I exaggerate when I describe this most important document as profoundly disquieting. But in a later memorandum, dated November 9, the President paints the picture in still gloomier colours, and anticipates, on the advice of his experts, "a complete breakdown in shipping . . . much sooner than June 1917."

The President of the Board of Agriculture has recently presented to the Cabinet his report on Food Prospects in 1917. That report goes to show that

there is a world's deficit in bread-stuffs, that the price of bread is likely to go higher, that there has been a general failure of the potato crop, that the supply of fish is expected to be 64 per cent. below the normal, that there is considerable difficulty in regard to the supply of feeding-stuffs, that the difficulties of cultivation steadily increase, that land is likely to go derelict, the yield to decline, and the number of livestock to diminish greatly.

Lord Crawford's later note, dated November 9, on Home Food Supplies, shows that these anticipations were not unduly pessimistic. The position has, he tells us, become much worse, and owing to the inroads made upon the agricultural population by the demands of the Army, it is in some parts of the country "no longer a question of maintaining a moderate standard of cultivation, but whether cultivation will cease."

Turning to our naval and military resources, we have a report from the First Lord of the Admiralty, dated October 14, from which we learn that, in spite of the tremendous efforts which we have made, the size of our Home Fleets is still insufficient, that we have nearly reached the limit of immediate production in the matter of capital ships, that we have not got nearly enough destroyers to meet our needs for escort and anti-submarine work, that we shall certainly not have enough for our Allies, and that the position in regard to light cruisers is not much better. From the same report we may infer that, in spite of all our efforts, it seems impossible to provide an effectual rejoinder to it. The increasing size of the enemy submarines, the strength of their construction (which will apparently oblige

us to rearm our merchantmen with a heavier gun), and their activity in all parts of the world, point to the same conclusion.

The papers which we have from time to time received from the General Staff and from the War Committee prove that in the matter of man-power we are nearing the end of our tether. The last report of the Man-Power Distribution Board seems in particular, to sound a grave note of warning. The unexhausted supply of men is, they tell us, now very restricted, and the number available can only be added to by a still further depletion of industry. In the meanwhile Ireland still declines to add to the available supply the 150,000 men who would be obtainable from that country, and I am not aware that any serious attempt is to be made to secure them.

All these seem to me to be very serious factors in the calculation which it is our duty to make. It will be replied and no doubt truly, that the Central Powers are feeling the pressure of the War not less acutely than we feel it, and I hope we shall also be told that our staying powers are greater than theirs; but, even if this be so, it is none the less our duty to consider, after a careful review of the facts, what our plight, and the plight of the civilized world, will be after another year, or, as we are sometimes told, two or three more years of a struggle as exhausting as that in which we are engaged. No one for a moment believes that we are going to lose the War; but what is our chance of winning it in such a manner, and within such limits of times, as will enable us to beat our enemy to the ground and impose upon him the kind of terms which we so freely discuss?

What does the prolongation of the War mean?

Our own casualties already amount to over 1,000,000. We have had 15,000 officers killed, not including those who are missing. There is no reason to suppose that, as the force at the front in the different theatres of war increases, the casualties will increase at a slower rare. We are slowly killing off the best of the male population of these islands. The figures representing the casualties of our Allies are not before me. The total must be appalling.

The financial burden which we have already accumulated is almost incalculable. We are adding to it at the rate of £5,000,000 per day. Generations will have to come and go before the country recovers from the loss which it has sustained in human beings, and from the financial ruin and the destruction of the means of production which are taking place.

All this it is no doubt our duty to bear, but only if it can be shown that the sacrifice will have its reward. If it is to be made in vain, if the additional year, or two years, or three years, finds us still unable to dictate terms, the War with its nameless horrors will have been needlessly prolonged, and the responsibility of those who needlessly prolong such a war is not less than that of those who needlessly provoked it.

A thorough stocktaking, first by each Ally of his own resources, present and prospective, and next by the Allies, or at all events by the leading Allies, in confidential consultation, seems indispensable. Not until such a stocktaking has taken place will each Ally be able to decide which of his desiderata are indispen-

sable, and whether he might not be prepared to accept less than 20*s.* in the pound in consideration of prompt payment. Not until it has taken place will the Allies as a body be able to determine the broad outline of their policy or the attitude which they ought to assume towards those who talk to them of peace.

I think Sir William Robertson must have had some such stocktaking in his mind when he wrote the remarkable paper which was circulated to the Cabinet on August 31. In that paper he expressed his belief that negotiations for peace in some form or other might arise any day, and he urged that, "We need therefore to decide without loss of time what our policy is to be, then place it before the Entente Powers, and ascertain in return what are their aims, and so endeavor to arrive at a clear understanding before we meet our enemies in conference." The idea may, for all I know, have been acted upon already.

Many of us, however, must of late have asked ourselves how this war is ever to be brought to an end. If we are told that the deliberate conclusion of the Government is that it must be fought until Germany has been beaten to the ground and sues for peace on any terms which we are pleased to accord to her, my only observation would be that we ought to know something of the data upon which this conclusion has been reached. To many of us it seems as if the prospect of a "knock-out" was, to say the least of it, remote. Our forces and those of France have shown a splendid gallantry on the Western Front, and have made substantial advances; but it is believed that these, any more than those made in 1915 with equally high hopes and accompanied by not less cruel losses, will

really enable us to "break through"? Can we afford to go on paying the same sort of price for the same sort of gains?

Judging from the comments supplied by the General Staff, I should doubt whether the Italian offensive, however successful, is likely to have a decisive effect.

At Salonika we are entangled in an extraordinarily difficult enterprise, forced upon us, against our better judgment, by our Allies, and valuable only because it occupies enemy troops who would otherwise be fighting the Russians and the Rumanians. On the Russian and Rumanian frontiers we shall be fortunate if we avoid a disaster, which at one moment seemed imminent. General Brusiloff's language is inspiring, but is it really justified by the facts? The history of the Russian operations has been very chequered, and we shall never, I am afraid, be free from the danger of miscarriages owing to defective strategy, or to failure of supplies, to corruption in high places or to incidents such as the disastrous explosion which has just lost us 10,000 tons of munitions at Archangel.

Again, are we quite sure that, regarded as political rather than military assets, our Allies are entirely to be depended upon? There have been occasions upon which political complications have threatened to affect the military situation in France. I quote the following sentences from a letter written a few days ago by a very shrewd Frenchman: *"Rappelez-vous bien que la démocratie française n'est pas menée par son gouvernement; c'est elle qui le mène: un courant d'opinion publique en faveur de la cessation de la guerre pourrait être irrésistible. . . . Au*

feu, le soldat français se battra toujours comme un héros: derrière, sa famille pourra bien dire: en voilà assez!" Italy is always troublesome and exacting. Sir Rennell Rodd, in a dispatch dated November 4, asks us to take note of the fact that there are already in Italy "certain symptoms of war weariness and discouragement the protraction of the struggle. . . . Great Britain is represented as the only country anxious to prolong the struggle à outrance for her own ends. . . . It would be wrong to pretend that there exists here the same grim determination to carry through as prevails in France and in the British Empire." The domestic situation in Russia is far from reassuring. There have been alarming disorders both in Moscow and in Petrograd. Russia has had five Ministers of the Interior in twelve months, and the fifth is being described as being by no means secure in his seat.

Our difficulties with the neutrals are, again, not likely to diminish. It is highly creditable to the Foreign Office that during the last two years we have escaped a breakdown of our blockade policy, which, in spite of continual obstruction and bad faith, has produced excellent results; but we have been within an ace of grave complications with Sweden and the United States. As time goes on the neutrals are likely to become more and more restive and intolerant of the belligerents, whose right to go on disturbing the peace of the civilized world they will refuse to admit.

I may be asked whether I have any practical suggestion to offer, and I admit the difficulty of replying. But is it not true that, unless the apprehensions

which I have sketched can be shown, after such an investigation as I have suggested, to be groundless, we ought at any rate not to discourage any movement, no matter where originating, in favor of an interchange of views as to the possibility of a settlement? There are many indications that the germs of such a movement are already in existence. One cannot dismiss as unworthy of attention the well-substantiated reports which have come to us from time to time upon this subject from Belgian, Scandinavian, Japanese, and Russian sources, or such circumstantial stories as those told in Sir Esme Howard's dispatch of August 24, as to the meeting held at Prince Lichnowsky's house, and in Lord Eustace Percy's memorandum as to the intimations made by the Rector of the Berlin University. The debates in the Reichstag show that the pacifist groups are active and outspoken. From all sides come accounts of the impatience of the civil population and their passionate yearning for peace.

It seems to me quite inconceivable that during the winter we shall not be sounded by someone as to our readiness to discuss terms of peace or proposals for an armistice. Are we prepared with our reply? Lord Crawford has dealt with the question of an armistice. I am not sure that he is right in holding that an unconditional refusal would be inadmissible.

As to peace terms, I hope we shall adhere steadfastly to the main principle laid down by the Prime Minister in the speech which he summed up by a declaration that we could agree to no peace which did not afford adequate reparation for the past and adequate security for the future, but the outline was

broadly sketched and might be filled up in many different ways. The same may be said of the not less admirable statement which he just made at the Guildhall, and of the temperate speeches which the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has from time to time delivered.

But it is unfortunate that, in spite of these utterances, it should be possible to represent us and our Allies as committed to a policy partly vindictive and partly selfish, and so irreconcilably committed to that policy that we should regard as unfriendly any attempt, however sincere, to extricate us from the impasse. The interview given by the Secretary of State for War in September last to an American correspondent has produced an impression which it will not be easy to efface. There may have been circumstances of which I am unaware, connected perhaps with the Presidential election, which made it necessary to announce that at the particular moment any intervention, however well meant, would be distasteful to us or inopportune. He said, indeed, that "the world must know that there can be no outside interference at this stage"—a very momentous limitation. For surely it cannot be our intention, no matter how long the War lasts, no matter what the strain on our resources, to maintain this attitude, or to declare, as M. Briand declared about the same time, that for us too "the word peace is a sacrilege. "Let our naval, military, and economic advisors tell us frankly whether they are satisfied that the knock-out blow can and will be delivered. The Secretary of State's formula holds the field, and will do so until something else is put in its place. Whether it is to hold the field, and if not, what that something else should

be, ought surely to depend upon their answer, and that again upon the result of the careful stocktaking, domestic and international, which, I hope, is already taking place.

L.

Postscript.—The above note had been written before the discussion which took place at to-day's Cabinet, from which we learned that the War Committee had already decided to take important steps in the direction which I have ventured to indicate.

L.

November 13, 1916. [1]

[1] Asquith, Memories and Reflections, pp. 138-147. According to Lord Newton, this is the entire text of the Memorandum.

APPENDIX C

WOODROW WILSON'S FOURTEEN POINTS - 8 JANUARY 1918

I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no secret international understandings of any kind. . . .

II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas . . . alike in peace and war....

III. The removal so far as possible of all economic barriers. . . .

IV. Adequate guarantees, given and taken, that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

V. A free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that . . . the interests of the populations must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.

VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and such a settlement of all questions affecting Russia as will secure the best and freest co-operation of the other nations of the world in obtaining for her an unhampered and unembarrassed opportunity for the independent determination of her own political development and national policy. . . .

VII. Belgium, the whole world will agree, must be evacuated and restored. . . .

VIII. All French territory should be freed and the invaded portions restored, and the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871 in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine. . . should be righted.

IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

X. The people of Austria-Hungary . . . should be accorded the freest opportunity for autonomous development.

XI. Rumania, Serbia, and Montenegro should be evacuated, occupied territories restored, and Serbia accorded free and secure access to the sea. . . .

XII. The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity for autonomous development, and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guaranties.

XIII. An independent Polish State should be erected. . . .

XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guaranties of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike. [1]

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[1] Alden Hatch, Woodrow Wilson (New York: Holt, Rinehardt & Wilson, 1947), pp. 215-217.

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