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CHURCHILL AND THE TONYPANDY RIOTS

IN 1910, when Winston Churchill was Home Secretary, the south Wales coalfield witnessed a series of strikes and lockouts, picketings, riots, hardships, lootings, injuries and prosecutions which gave the area a widespread reputation as the great cauldron of industrial confrontation. Police from the main towns of south Wales and beyond, contingents of Metropolitan Police, cavalry and, finally, infantry were drafted into the coalfield in response to fears at local and national level that law and order had broken down. Above all, the so-called 'Tonypandy riots' acquired an evocative and venerable reputation in the history of the British working class.[1]

After the Second World War, the accusation that Winston Churchill had sent soldiers to south Wales as strike-breakers during the 'Tonypandy riots' of 1910 gained momentum. By 1949, for example, with talk of a general election beginning to emerge, criticism of Churchill's actions as Home Secretary almost forty years earlier became current in Labour circles. Churchill wrote a private letter to the Lord Mayor of Cardiff in February 1949:

> I see that one of the Labour men referred to Tonypandy as a great crime I had committed in the past. I am having the facts looked up and will write to you again on the subject. According to my recollection the action I took at Tonypandy was to stop the troops being sent to control the strikers for fear of shooting, and I was much attacked by the Conservative Opposition for this 'weakness'. Instead I sent Metropolitan Police who charged with their rolled mackintoshes and no one was hurt. The Metropolitan Police played football with the strikers at the weekend.[2]

Soldiers had, nevertheless, been drafted into the coalfield, and whatever reluctance Churchill may have shown in deploying them was rapidly overturned in 1911, when he used the military with alacrity in the face of a rising tide of industrial unrest. This remarkable change of policy can,

[1] The official account is contained in *Colliery Strike Disturbances in South Wales, Correspondence and Report, November 1910,* Cd.5568 (HMSO, 1911). Among the main secondary sources for the Tonypandy riots, see David Evans, *Labour Strife in the South Wales Coalfield, 1910-11* (Cardiff, 1911; 1963); R. Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners: Glowyr de Cymru: A History of the South Wales Miners' Federation, 1898-1914* (London, 1967); Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, Vol. I (London, 1924); Sir Wyndham Childs, *Episodes and Recollections: Being Some Records from the Life of Major-General Sir Wyndham Childs* (London, 1930); E. W. Evans, *The Miners of South Wales* (Cardiff, 1961); Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill, Young Statesman, 1901-14* (London, 1967); David Smith, 'Tonypandy 1910: Definitions of a Community', *Past and Present*, No. 87 (1980).

[2] Churchill to Lord Mayor of Cardiff, 7 February 1949. Photocopy of the original letter kindly supplied by David Maddox.

perhaps, be explained by an examination of what actually happened at Tonypandy in 1910.

As the general election drew close in early 1950, the Conservative party correctly anticipated that Labour would harp on the prevalent image of Churchill as the long-time enemy of the miners. In preparation for the onslaught, all Conservative candidates and agents in Wales were issued with a summary of the 'South Wales Miners Dispute, 1910', and were given copious quotations from Churchill's statements at the time. The document asserted that Churchill had stopped the troops and replaced them with Metropolitan Police, 'and then allowed the troops to be drafted into the area as a reserve to the police, but they were never used'.[3]

Churchill himself responded with characteristic pugnacity to the expected accusations. He went out of his way to refer to the Tonypandy controversy in a speech at Ninian Park, Cardiff, in February 1950, effectively repeating what his letter to the Lord Mayor had said. Churchill claimed that he had made an 'unprecedented intervention' in stopping the troops, albeit temporarily, and replacing them with policemen. He went on: 'The troops were kept in the background and all contact with the rioters was made by our trusted and unarmed London police, who charged not with rifles and bayonets, but with their rolled-up mackintoshes. Thus all bloodshed, except perhaps some from the nose, was averted.' This led Iorrie Thomas, Labour candidate for Rhondda West, to issue a blistering manifesto entitled *Troops in Tonypandy*, which suggested that Churchill was troubled by his conscience because of the 'part HE played in requesting the use of military forces'.[4] By this time the folk-history of the Rhondda tended to depict Churchill as the villain who had sent troops to Tonypandy to crush the legitimate aspirations of the miners in 1910. Professor David Smith recalls that, as a young man growing up in the Rhondda in the 1950s, he witnessed the unbridled hostility of a cinema audience when Churchill's face appeared on the screen.[5]

Before long the charge and counter-charge against Churchill and the Tonypandy riots became a matter for historiographical debate. Sir Alan Herbert in *The Spectator* (28 June 1963) endeavoured to absolve Churchill

[3] Memorandum on the 'South Wales Miners Dispute, 1910'. Enclosure with letter from Viola Price to J. P. L. Thomas, MP, 25 January 1950, Conservative Party Archives (Bodleian Library, CCO/2/1/16).

[4] *Western Mail*, 9 February 1950; typescript copy of the manifesto kindly supplied by David Maddox. In addition to Iorrie Thomas, other Labour figures took up the cudgels against Churchill, especially Ness Edwards, each accusing the other of telling lies. It has been suggested that Churchill's election campaign suffered adversely as a result of the controversy.

[5] Dai Smith, *Wales! Wales?* (Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 56.

from all blame; as did Randolph Churchill soon afterwards.[6] In 1970 Robert Rhodes James praised Churchill's 'restraint and skill' as Home Secretary in dealing with the crisis in the south Wales coalfield in 1910.[7] Most recently, Martin Gilbert has asserted that the Chief Constable of Glamorgan had 'appealed direct to the Army' for 400 soldiers, both cavalry and infantry, in such a way that Churchill had to act with great rapidity to employ police instead of military.[8] Only one major study, that by Jane Morgan, has placed Tonypandy within the context of Home Office endeavours to meet the challenge of nationwide strikes by national co-ordination of the police in the years leading up to 1914.[9] This important theme needs further consideration. For the most part, however, the Churchill controversy has been viewed from a parochial level, as witness the historical exhibition on the riots, organized by Tonypandy Grammar School in 1974, which provoked the novelist Alexander Cordell to write a letter to the local press headlined, 'You can't absolve Churchill'. Various points of view on the topic were expressed in the letter columns in subsequent weeks.[10]

The controversy, meanwhile, had re-emerged in the letter pages of *The Times*, when Sir John Walley protested at the way Churchill was remembered in the Welsh coalfield: 'Seemingly nothing will stop malevolents among the populations of the South Wales mining valleys pursuing Churchill, even beyond the grave, so long as they can pursuade [*sic*] the ignorant and the gullible that, in 1910, he sent troops to crush the Tonypandy rioters.'[11]

Within a few weeks, the issue had surfaced yet again. During a heated debate in the House of Commons on miners' pay in November 1978, the Prime Minister, James Callaghan, in response to a question from Winston Churchill's grandson, accused the Churchill family of maintaining a vendetta against the miners of Tonypandy in the third generation. There was immediate uproar in the Commons, with MPs from both sides of the House almost snarling at each other as they clamoured to be heard.[12] In an editorial comment the following day, the *Western Mail*, among other newspapers, explained why an apparently throw-away remark by the Prime Minister had generated such passions: 'The issue was: did Winston Churchill when Home

[6] Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, pp. 373ff.

[7] Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill: A Study in Failure* (London, 1970), p. 37.

[8] Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* (London, 1991), pp. 219ff.

[9] Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order: The Police and Labour Disputes in England and Wales, 1900-39* (Oxford, 1987).

[10] *South Wales Echo*, 18 December 1974 *et seq.*

[11] *The Times*, 3 October 1978.

[12] *House of Commons Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. 959, No. 22, 696ff.; Thursday, 30 November 1978.

Secretary send soldiers to Tonypandy to put down the miners' unrest? Or was he the one who stopped them and replaced them with police?'[13]

Given the continuing debate, there is need to clarify what actually did occur in 1910. Historians of the period must necessarily turn to *Colliery Strike Disturbances in South Wales, November 1910*, printed by HMSO with remarkable speed in the immediate aftermath of the Tonypandy riots and some six months before the strikers actually returned to work. The pro-Liberal *Rhondda Leader* said the publication contained 'full, impartial, and interesting particulars relating to the coalfield strike riots and the measures taken by the civil and military authorities to restore and preserve order'.[14] Although the documents undeniably give a fairly comprehensive picture of what took place, they are not altogether impartial—they were carefully selected and sometimes altered prior to publication to meet guidelines laid down by Churchill himself for the Blue Book on which he personally insisted. In addition, they need to be seen as part of the policy, initiated by Sir Edward Troup after 1908 when he became the permanent under-secretary at the Home Office, of developing centrally directed responses to local manifestations of industrial unrest.

The Home Office files for the Tonypandy riots have recently been opened by the Lord Chancellor's Instrument. Although the documents fill four large boxes at the Public Record Office, a great deal—for whatever reason—is no longer extant. Nevertheless, enough remains to piece together the editorial policy demanded by Churchill and carried out mainly by Troup. Revealing discrepancies emerge when surviving original documents are compared with the version published by the government. Furthermore, a consideration of what documents in particular may have been left out of the official account gives further insight into Churchill's strategy and tactics as Home Secretary. It is worth recording that the initial editorial procedures were refined still further, and a draft copy of the Blue Book was then reduced by another thirty pages to give us a final version. Churchill was closely involved from start to finish.[15]

At this juncture it is hardly relevant to consider in detail either the background or the events associated with the Tonypandy riots. As is well known, the colliery owners sought to reduce production costs, mainly by reducing wages; the miners had to combat the threat to their earnings caused by 'abnormal places' and the effects of the Eight Hours Act. Colliers were

[13] *Western Mail*, 1 December 1978.
[14] *Rhondda Leader*, 25 March 1911.
[15] Public Record Office, HO 144/1551-4/199678 (1551 is box 1; 1552 is box 2; and so on).

paid for what they produced, but deteriorating seams and the limit placed on the length of the working day meant that they could hardly be expected to produce as much coal in eight hours as they had formerly produced in nine or ten.[16]

It is against this general background, in which unrest became endemic in the coalfield, that the specific events leading to the 'Tonypandy riots' need to be examined. The emergence of powerful colliery combines should also be noted as a factor in the fractious relationship of employers and workmen. In the Tonypandy area the Naval, Cambrian, Glamorgan, and Brittanic Merthyr collieries, which adjoined each other, were part of the Cambrian Combine. The managing director was D. A. Thomas, and the general manager was Leonard Llewellyn. D. A. Thomas, 'the czar of the coalfield' in the words of Kenneth O. Morgan, 'symbolises the tycoon in politics, a dedicated and ruthless industrialist in his political as in his industrial career'. His interest in politics meant that he spent comparatively little time at his collieries, which were supervised on a day-to-day basis by Leonard Llewellyn.[17]

Although the conventional picture of the overmighty and heartless combine needs to be modified in the light of what Peter Stead calls the face-to-face relationship of man to master, both living within the same community, the coalowner and his managers were clearly the arbiters of individual destinies and enjoyed a life-style far removed from the aspirations of the workforce in general.[18] Leonard Llewellyn seems to have been particularly high-handed and autocratic, and might even be seen as a catalyst to riot. Sir Nevil Macready, who was sent to the coalfield to restore order, talks of 'Leonard Llewellyn, a forceful autocratic man, admired by the miners for his sporting instincts and gallantry whenever a disaster took place in one of his mines, but a man who, by his rough-and-ready methods, was apt to drive those working for him to a state of desperation'.[19]

[16] L. J. Williams, 'The Road to Tonypandy', *Llafur*, 1, no. 2 (1973); B. McCormick and J. E. Williams, 'The Miners and the Eight Hours Day, 1863-1910', *Economic History Review*, XII (1959). To counter an anonymous pamphlet the established leaders of the SWMF issued their own circular (6 March 1908), denying that wages would suffer as a result of the Eight Hours Act. For a very sympathetic account of how the act adversely affected the miner's wife as much as the miner himself, see Sir Wyndham Childs, *Episodes and Recollections*, pp. 80-81. It is ironic that, as president of the Board of Trade, Churchill had been largely responsible for the act; when he addressed the 1908 miners' gala in the Rhondda he accordingly received 'thrice prolonged applause'. Paul Addison, 'Churchill and the Working Class, 1900-14', in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Working Class in Modern British History: Essays in Honour of Henry Pelling* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 52.

[17] Kenneth O. Morgan, 'D. A. Thomas: The Industrialist as Politician', *Glamorgan Historian*, Vol. III (1966), pp. 33, 48.

[18] Peter Stead, 'The Welsh Working Class', *Llafur* (May 1973), pp. 46-47.

[19] Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 140. See also Sir Wyndham Childs, *Episodes and Recollections*, pp. 88-89.

It was a dispute over the price to be paid for coal from a new seam at the Ely pit of the Naval Colliery company which lay behind the stoppage of all the Cambrian Combine collieries. The dominant personality among the miners of the south Wales coalfield was William Abraham, known as Mabon, who felt that employers and workmen had a community of interest, and that industrial relations should reflect compromise and consensus rather than confrontation.[20] At a mass meeting on 9 September 1910, he pleaded with Rhondda miners not to strike: 'My friend Mr D.A. Thomas has been suffering from poor health; and I feel sure that on his holiday in France he will not benefit in health if he were to hear of such a strike as this.'[21] Mabon's remarkable statement speaks volumes for the way in which he regarded the owners, and for the way in which the workers must increasingly have regarded Mabon.

By the beginning of November 1910, a crisis nevertheless seemed imminent in the Rhondda and the Aberdare valleys. There were also open conflicts between employers and workmen in Maesteg and in Monmouthshire. The Home Office was naturally concerned about developments in south Wales and, as we shall see, had already 'interfered in an unprecedented way in a strike at Newport docks' in May.[22] In the face of another crisis in November 1910, the Home Office asked Captain Lionel Lindsay, the Chief Constable of Glamorgan, for further details.[23] Page Arnot has described the Chief Constable with insight and wit: 'Captain Lindsay had begun his career as part of the British Army of Occupation in Egypt: and it may seem that he never quite disabused himself of the notion that he was part of the Coalmasters' Army of Occupation in South Wales.'[24]

In early November 1910, Captain Lindsay turned to the local JPs for advice. At this stage, the main source of discontent seemed to be in the Aberdare valley, where the magistrates included the very substantial coalowners Lord Aberdare, Lord Merthyr, D. A. Thomas (the future Lord Rhondda), E. M. Hann, and Captain F. N. Gray. Virtually the only voice likely to speak for the working man was Edmund Stonelake, a miner recently appointed to the magistracy. Stonelake was a Labour councillor but was

[20] E. W. Evans, *Mabon (William Abraham, 1842-1922): A Study in Trade Union Leadership* (Cardiff, 1959).

[21] Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners*, p. 177.

[22] Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, pp. 43-44.

[23] Home Office to Chief Constable, 2 November 1910; Chief Constable to Home Office, 2 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, Nos. 1,2.

[24] Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners*, p. 182.

opposed to the strike.[25] A similar situation obtained in the Pontypridd and Rhondda region. The list of magistrates was headed, for alphabetical reasons, by William Abraham, but there were also several coalowners among the JPs.[26] The senior magistrate in the area was T. Pascoe Jenkins, whose shop in Tonypandy was the first to be attacked by the mob. According to David Smith, this was deliberate, the result of 'social fracture' in the Rhondda.[27] Even though co-operative stores were also attacked, the social fracture thesis does perhaps highlight the way in which magistrates tended to be seen as the well-to-do representatives of property.

Having consulted the justices, Lindsay decided to send for extra police from the nearest large towns or cities—30 from Swansea, 50 from Cardiff, 63 from Bristol. It is evident that Lindsay was effectively a spokesman for the local men of property; he regarded the maintenance of law and order as equivalent to the maintenance of property.[28] Although the government had been recommending mutual aid agreements among police forces, Lindsay's requests for assistance were more far-reaching than they should have been. Indeed, the standing joint committee in Glamorgan, made up of justices and county councillors, subsequently tried to avoid paying for the provincial police brought in by Lindsay, but were forced to honour the debt. In other words, Lindsay's autocratic powers in respect of borrowing police had been confirmed.[29]

The strikers realized that their success depended totally upon effective picketing. They had stopped most mines in the locality, but the fortress-like Glamorgan Colliery at Llwynypia could not be coerced. On Monday 7 November, Leonard Llewellyn and some sixty employees were inside the Glamorgan Colliery, while in the power station nearby were a hundred police, led by Captain Lindsay in person. A cold and wet but good-humoured crowd of men, women, and youths gathered outside.[30] There has been some debate as to whether the crowd intended to seize the Glamorgan Colliery or not, but

[25] *Aberdare Almanack*, 1910; A Mòr O'Brien (ed.), *The Autobiography of Edmund Stonelake* (Cardiff, 1981), p. 141.

[26] *Pontypridd Almanack*, 1910; 1911. It has been claimed that 'most of the magistrates were either directors of or shareholders in the Cambrian Colliery Company'. K. O. Fox, 'The Tonypandy Riots', *The Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, Vol. 104, No. 1 (October 1973).

[27] David Smith, 'Tonypandy, 1910'.

[28] When Lindsay asked for military assistance, it was specifically 'for the protection of colliery property', *Pontypridd Almanack*, 1911, p. 61. Cf. Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, p. 32: 'In practice, the power of appointment to the chief constableship in a county was an opportunity for county magnates to appoint county men, usually with military backgrounds, men who had a social outlook similar to their own ... An extreme case was Captain Lionel Lindsay, who had succeeded his military father as chief constable of Glamorgan in 1891.'

[29] Morgan, *Conflict and Order* pp. 32, 48-49.

[30] Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners*, pp. 183ff.

suffice it to say that if they had wanted to take the premises, they could have done so. In the present context, the important point is the popular reaction to Leonard Llewellyn. He seems to have been so disliked that his very presence provoked a crisis. When he tried to address the crowd in jocular fashion, he was jostled and the police immediately intervened. As the right-wing *Western Mail* remarked, 'The apparent calm which had distinguished the crowd in the earlier part of the evening disappeared, and after the first truncheon charge by the police upon the appearance of Mr Llewellyn there was a continued period of wild disorder'.[31]

Captain Lindsay then implemented an earlier arrangement by telegraphing Shrewsbury, Chester, and Salisbury Plain for troops. He received a reply from Salisbury Plain at 3.30 a.m. to the effect that infantry and cavalry were on their way. The Chief Constable's reaction is so well known that it comes as something of a surprise to find that details are not included in the Blue Book. Historians have to turn, instead, to the near-contemporary survey by David Evans, a journalist for the *Western Mail* and an apologist for the coalowners.[32] It is perhaps fair to claim that Lindsay, seeing the trouble at first hand, succumbed to panic. General Macready puts it tactfully in his autobiography by suggesting that Lindsay, cheek-by-jowl with Leonard Llewellyn at the mine, lacked an overview.[33] So far, Winston Churchill had not been directly involved in events.

Churchill, at his own request, had been made Home Secretary some months earlier—at the very moment when industrial unrest was assuming crisis proportions. In May 1910 there was almost a dress rehearsal for the Tonypandy riots when a short-lived dock strike at Newport—one of the main exporting centres for south Wales steam coal—was exacerbated by the employers' determination to bring in outside labour. The Newport docks strike has a number of interesting features. It occurred when Churchill had left for a short holiday in Lucerne, and Haldane, the Secretary of State for War, was acting temporarily as Home Secretary. Haldane was an expert on the whole question of local and national responses to industrial unrest, and was ably assisted by Sir Edward Troup. All sides acknowledged that violence would result if blacklegs (the so-called 'free labour men') came to Newport docks, and Haldane accordingly decided that the rights of the individual

[31] *Western Mail*, 9 November 1910.

[32] David Evans, *Labour Strife*, p. 43. There were soldiers closer to hand in barracks at Brecon and Cardiff, but they probably had too many local affiliations to assume the traditional role of soldiers when faced by riot.

[33] Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 138.

could be suspended in a case of grave emergency.[34] The firm of Houlder Brothers at Newport was then told not to bring in blackleg labour. Houlders responded by claiming successfully that they were entitled to the protection of the state, and that compensation ('demurrage') was payable by the local authority. In effect, the legal right of employers to bring in strike-breakers had been confirmed.[35]

Although Haldane was the acknowledged expert on the whole question of military intervention to assist the civil power, it is somewhat surprising that he should have been acting as Home Secretary at this time.[36] A few months earlier, overwork had, in his own words, brought on 'an attack of iritis in one eye, so serious that the doctors had despaired of saving it'. He was also found to be suffering from diabetes, which had killed his father, but was fortunate that insulin had in the mean time been discovered.[37] Most of the day-to-day supervisory work at the Home Office thus fell in Churchill's absence to Sir Edward Troup.

Troup was a dour Scotsman, aged fifty-three in 1910. He had been a brilliant scholar at Aberdeen and Oxford, before joining the Home Office in 1880. His abilities were such that, after six years as assistant under-secretary of state, he had become permanent under-secretary in 1908. His mission was to bring about a more centralized or uniform response to incidents of industrial unrest. For instance, in a circular to mayors in England and Wales he had strongly recommended that police authorities should enter into

[34] When the Merthyr magistrates contacted the War Office about regulations 'respecting the calling upon the Military Force to assist the civil power to maintain the peace', the War Office in reply enclosed a copy of the Special Army Order, 17 December 1908, 'containing the evidence given by Mr. Haldane before a Select Committee on the question'. Magistrates' Clerk, Merthyr Tydfil, to War Office, 2 November 1910; War Office to Magistrates' Clerk, 4 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, Nos. 3,4. Cf. Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 136: 'Some years previously the whole question of the use of troops in aid of civil power had been revised, the position being clearly explained by the presentation of evidence given by Mr. Haldane before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, which in concise and unmistakable language set forth the powers and limitations of officers who might be called upon to assist the civil power with the troops under their command.'

[35] I am grateful to Peter Stead for lending me transcripts of the Home Office files on the Newport docks strike (PRO, HO 45/192905).

[36] The British government was already alarmed by the threat of war with Germany, and it might be expected that, given Haldane's position and links with Germany, he would have been tied up with foreign affairs in May 1910, or even with the further reform of the army.

[37] R. B. Haldane, *An Autobiography* (London, 1929), pp. 262-64. In the Haldane Papers there is a letter from Churchill referring to the eye injury and revealing something of the friendship between the two men: 'My dear Haldane, I did not realise you ran any danger of permanent injury to your eyesight! How awful! I am indeed thankful you are preserved. You work too hard, and have done so for many years. I do trust your recovery is going to be complete. My wife sends her best wishes. Our [election] victory, though substantial is clearly Wagram not Austerlitz, Yours always, Winston S. Churchill.' Churchill to Haldane, 24 January 1910, Haldane Papers (National Library of Scotland, MS 5909 f.1).

agreements for mutual assistance against working-class discontent. His circular also recognized 'the value of mounted police in both dealing with actual rioters and in breaking up a crowd'.[38]

Churchill was equally aware of the likely efficacy of mounted men in dealing with a riot. During the Newport docks strike, he agreed by telegram that Metropolitan Police could be sent to Newport, and ordered that troops should be held in readiness, although he made it clear to the War Office that if the situation deteriorated, only mounted troops as opposed to infantry should be sent: '[Mounted troops] are far more effective than infantry in dealing with a riot, and the risk of their employment leading to loss of life is much less.'[39] Mounted soldiers could dispel rioters without bloodshed by using their steeds; foot soldiers had only rifles or bayonets at their disposal. This was the strategy he expounded to Mabon on the morning of 8 November, for Mabon reported to the Miners' Federation of Great Britain Conference in London the following day that the Home Secretary had promised to hold back the military unless the life and limb of innocent people needed to be protected. Even the cavalry would go no further than Cardiff, well over a dozen miles from the Rhondda valleys. Churchill also reiterated the distinction between cavalry and infantry:

> As to cavalry, he explained to us that they were different from infantry, and the difference was this, in regard to their use: the men he thought of sending would be men on horseback, cavalry, that is, without firearms, without sabres, and without anything to do injury to the people, but simply to move the crowd on with the horses.[40]

In other words, the 'troops' that Churchill might eventually agree, at this early juncture, to 'send in' were not 'troops' in the conventional sense of the term. According to the accepted account, however, his first action was to stop all potential military involvement in the coalfield unrest. In fact, the Secretary of State for War, not the Home Secretary, was the minister responsible for the deployment of troops.

Captain Lindsay had been told that soldiers from Salisbury Plain would reach Pontypridd at 9 o'clock on Tuesday morning, 8 November. Only after 9 a.m. did he inform the Home Secretary. (This telegram was received at 10 a.m.) Having dispatched a telegram to the Home Office, he also telephoned

[38] Sir Edward Troup, Home Office circular to mayors, 15 April 1909 (PRO, HO 45/10663/214312).

[39] Quoted R. S. Churchill, *Winston S.Churchill*, p. 372; Earl of Birkenhead, *Churchill*, 1874-1922 (London, 1989), pp. 199-200.

[40] MFGB Minutes (University College, Swansea), Special Conference, London, 9 November 1910, p. 36.

Churchill and expressed disappointment at the delay in the arrival of the military. As already mentioned, the telegram arrived at 10 a.m:

> All the Cambrian collieries menaced last night. The Llwynypia Colliery savagely attacked by large crowd of strikers. Many casualties on both sides. Am expecting two companies of infantry and 200 cavalry today. Very little accommodation for police or soldiers. Position grave. Will wire again.—Lindsay, Chief Constable of Glamorgan.'[41]

Captain Lionel Lindsay was the government's main source of information from the coalfield at this juncture, and there was a certain amount of pressure from the newspapers for Churchill to pay more heed to his warnings—from *The Times*, for example: 'The Chief Constable knows the local conditions and the character of the men with whom he has to deal; he has the fullest information and can command the best advice; and he is responsible for order in the district. If he asked for troops it was no doubt because he was convinced they were needed.'[42] Yet, the Chief Constable's frenetic demands for troops and more troops post-haste were ignored for the time being.[43]

The soldiers already on the way to south Wales were stopped at Swindon, not by Churchill but by Haldane, Secretary of State for War. This was in agreement with Churchill, who had not authorized their despatch and doubtless felt angry that a local chief constable had presumed to call in soldiers on his own initiative. In addition, Churchill had sound political motives for wanting to halt the troops. A second general election for the year was already looming, and he recognized that the government needed to be as non-controversial as possible. He was aware that Liberal MPs had opposed the use of the military in south Wales in the strike of 1898, and that Labour MPs and others might now be just as alienated by the cavalier deployment of troops in the south Wales coalfield.[44] If the potential strength of the South Wales Miners' Federation, with the Miners' Federation of Great Britain behind it, also ensured that the authorities would proceed with caution, there was the consideration that Churchill did not want infantry troops unleashed on the situation. Subsequently, his views seem to have changed.

David Evans is highly critical of the Home Secretary, accusing Churchill of being blind to the lessons of the 1893 and 1898 strikes, when the presence of

[41] Chief Constable to Home Office, 8 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 8.

[42] *The Times*, 9 November 1910.

[43] Captain Lindsay had long preferred soldiers to policemen for riot control, claiming that law-abiding people were reassured, and would-be lawbreakers were impressed with the futility of their action by the presence of troops. Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, p. 38.

[44] Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners*, p. 187.

troops ostensibly prevented a great deal of rioting; and he blames him, in view of the approaching general election, for putting political expediency before the protection of property and the maintenance of peace.[45] This tends to ignore the role of Haldane. The situation was very much like that in 1893, when Metropolitan Police and troops had been dispatched to Derby, Nottingham and Yorkshire to maintain public order and protect property during a miners' strike. At that time, four or five men had been shot at Featherstone near Pontefract.[46] Haldane had been part of the official inquiry into the shootings, and was seen as a great constitutional expert on the basic principles regarding the utilization of troops in civil disturbances.

Now, as Secretary of State for War, he made sure that the troops *en route* for south Wales were stopped, albeit temporarily. Arguably, this was to re-establish War Office prerogatives against the encroachments of the Home Office. Having halted the troops, Haldane and Churchill consulted senior officials, including Sir Edward Troup, as a matter of urgency, before Churchill informed Captain Lindsay that seventy mounted constables and 200 foot constables of the Metropolitan Police would be sent to Pontypridd, five or six miles from Tonypandy. These men, who could be deployed at the behest of the Home Office, were expected to be sufficient for any emergency. In addition 200 cavalry would be moved into the district, though the infantry were to remain at Swindon. Churchill emphasized that troops were to be used only as a last resort. General Macready was to command the military and to act in conjunction with the civil authorities if required.[47]

Most historians of the Tonypandy riots have missed a significant constitutional point. Kenneth O. Morgan is one of the very few to note that, by countenancing this development, Churchill was 'in effect countermanding Haldane'.[48] However, Haldane subsequently (15 November 1910) told the Commons that 'a substantial force of cavalry and a substantial force of infantry were sent at my insistence', after careful consultation with Churchill and local authorities. Although Macready writes in his memoirs that, as soon as he left London, 'I came under the direct authority of the Home Office, except as regards purely military matters connected with the troops', this was

[45] David Evans, *Labour Strife*, p. 43.

[46] Asquith to Queen Victoria, 9 September 1893, *The Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3rd Series, Vol. II, 1891-1895 (London, 1931), pp. 311-13.

[47] Home Secretary to Chief Constable, 8 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 10. The Metropolitans were said to be experienced at handling recalcitrant crowds, but in fact, 'Police training and methods were aimed at strike-breaking rather than an impartial maintenance of public order'. K. O. Fox, 'The Tonypandy Riots'.

[48] Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales: Rebirth of a Nation, 1880-1980* (Oxford, 1981; 1982), p. 147.

really a private arrangement between Haldane and Churchill. Officials at the War Office were not necessarily enamoured of the arrangement. Significantly, General Macready at first was receiving instructions from the War Office or via the War Office.[49]

It was therefore Haldane, not Churchill, who sent in the troops. A commentator in the *York Herald* hit the nail on the head:

> The Home Office does not shine very brilliantly in its actions with regard to the Welsh strike riots. From his answers given in the House of Commons yesterday, it is clear that Mr. Haldane was prepared to do his duty in providing troops to quell the riots but Mr. Churchill showed that he was more concerned about votes than about law and order.[50]

Yet, it was Churchill who presented himself as the man with personal responsibility for deployment of the military. Haldane took a back seat. It may be that he was too much the patrician to face Churchill down in a rough-and-tumble dogfight on the conflicting prerogatives of the Home Office and the War Office. As already mentioned, his health was not good, and most of his energies were currently devoted to chairing the royal commission on university education in London. Moreover, he was soon to be raised to the peerage and appointed a member of the judicial committee of the Privy Council (March 1911). He was also very friendly with the Churchill family. Furthermore, his stint as temporary Home Secretary during the Newport docks strike had shown that he was in agreement with the Home Office policy of developing a central response to riots. For all these reasons, he may have been willing to let Churchill take charge—as he did when both men desired to assume command of the Admiralty on the outbreak of war in August 1914.[51]

If Churchill had asserted the Home Office against the War Office, he had also given notice of his centralist or interventionist aspirations by putting General Macready in charge of the military. Macready had already been a professional soldier for many years, and had seen active service in Egypt, Ceylon, and India. He also fought in the Boer War, before taking an

[49] Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 137. To stop the cavalry, Churchill had to ask the Adjutant-General at the War Office to issue the necessary order to Macready. Home Secretary to Adjutant-General, 8 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 11.

[50] *York Herald*, 16 November 1910.

[51] R. B. Haldane, *An Autobiography*, pp. 229-31. When Churchill wrote a thank-you letter to Haldane for his wedding present, he had been moved to add, 'I remember the long succession of encouragements and friendly services which you have accorded me during my political life. I look forward to years of fruitful and effective co-operation and comradeship in office and opposition. I am confident that our friendship will never be even ruffled by the incidental divergencies of honest opinion inseparable from the perplexities of politics and affairs.' Churchill to Haldane, 7 September 1908 (N.L.S., MS 5908 ff. 51-52).

appointment in the War Office as Assistant Adjutant-General in 1907. His main job in the First World War was to secure and deploy manpower for the army, and in 1918 he became Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. Subsequently, he was to become Ireland's Commander-in-Chief when Sinn Fein and the Black and Tans were in violent opposition. In 1910, however, the hidden agenda seems to have been that Macready, on behalf of the Home Office, had to assert himself against the local police authorities. As Jane Morgan has written, 'In a highly significant move, rather than leave the direction of public order in the hands of local magistrates, Churchill placed constitutional power in the safe keeping of General Macready.'[52] In short, Macready had to impose himself upon the Chief Constable of Glamorgan.

In the afternoon of Tuesday 8 November, Captain Lindsay telephoned the Home Secretary and said that the force of 300 Metropolitan Police would be sufficient to keep order in the troubled area, and that there would probably be no need for the cavalry that night, especially as the difficulties of accommodation were so great.[53] Churchill therefore ordered the cavalry to be halted at Cardiff, more than a dozen miles from the Rhondda valleys. Nevertheless, General Macready—still on his way to south Wales—did have discretionary powers to move the cavalry into the disturbed district in a grave emergency.[54] At first, Macready was ostensibly supposed to complement the authority of Captain Lindsay, but there was inevitably some conflict between them. Hints of the personality clash can be gleaned from the Blue Book, but there is direct evidence in the original files that Churchill instructed Macready to 'make your views prevail', without upsetting the Chief Constable if possible.[55] Churchill was aware of the potentially adverse political repercussions if publicity were given to a split between the chief of police and General Macready. Perhaps fortunately for Churchill, the situation developed in such a way that Lindsay was increasingly willing to defer to Macready's authority. Centralism appeared to triumph over localism.

On that evening of Tuesday 8 November there was more hand-to-hand fighting outside the Glamorgan Colliery. According to David Evans, who

[52] Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, p. 45.

[53] Editorial comment, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, pp. 4-5.

[54] Home Secretary to Adjutant-General, 8 November 1910; Home Office to Chief Constable, 8 November 1910; Adjutant-General to General Macready, 8 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, Nos. 11,13,14.

[55] Churchill to Macready, 14 November 1910 (PRO, HO 144/1551/199768). The telegram is in code, marked 'Rougeberry' (i.e. 'Secret and personal'): 'Am telegraphing Chief Constable to act ('abonido') in consultation with you in all matters affecting distribution of police forces, especially London police and military forces. You should therefore make your views prevail so if possible Chief Constable will not be offended. I am confident he will act in deference to you if difficulties arise and [if] you desire more definite authority I will secure it to you with regard to London police. However it will be easiest to me in meeting of Parliament if it can be avoided.'

consistently maintains that the strikers wished to seize the colliery, the conflict was 'unparalleled in recent years in the grim fierceness with which it was fought and in the bloodshed which it entailed'.[56] General Macready, in the mean time, had reached Cardiff and there received a very disquieting telephone message from Captain Lindsay. The Chief Constable reported that things were grave in the Aberdare and the Rhondda valleys. 'Near Tonypandy the situation had been serious all day, five constables were injured last night, and the rioters were now attacking the officials in the Glamorgan Mine. He also reported that if the engines in this mine were stopped it would mean the destruction of some four hundred horses.' An hour later, when General Macready was just reaching Pontypridd, Lleufer Thomas, the local stipendiary magistrate, sent a telegram to the Home Office: 'Police cannot cope with rioters at Llwynypia Rhondda Valley. Troops at Cardiff absolutely necessary for further protection. Will you order them to proceed forthwith. Am ready to accompany them.' This meant he was ready to read the Riot Act. As Home Secretary, Churchill was almost bound to react.[57]

Churchill made enquiries by telephone and discovered that a further confrontation was taking place, especially at Tonypandy, where shops were being looted. He therefore sent a telegram to General Macready: 'As the situation appears to have become more serious you should if the Chief Constable or Local Authority desires it move all the Cavalry into the disturbed district without delay.'[58] Nothing was said about infantry. It is frustrating, too, that we do not know exactly to whom he spoke on the telephone. He was on the phone again a couple of hours later, speaking with both Lindsay and Macready, before arranging for a second contingent of Metropolitan Police to be dispatched by special train early next morning. According to the Home Office communiqué issued subsequently, the situation was well under control, even though the disorders were not yet over.[59] In this response can be seen the calming influence of General Macready. Although reports from responsible authorities within the coalfield painted a frightening picture, Macready two days later could state that these messages were exaggerated and that the strikers did not wish to seize the

[56] David Evans, *Labour Strife*, p. 45.

[57] General Macready to Home Office, 8 November 1910; Stipendiary Magistrate, Pontypridd, to Home Office, 8 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, Nos. 19,17. The magistrates at Aberdare had been issued with placards in preparation for reading the Riot Act. *Autobiography of Edmund Stonelake*, p. 141.

[58] Home Secretary to General Macready, 8 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 15.

[59] Home Office Communiqué 9 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances* No. 26; Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 139.

Glamorgan Colliery. As he notes in his memoirs, he had satisfied himself that 'the situation, though still dangerous, had been exaggerated both by the mine owners and by the magistrates of the district'.[60]

Winston Churchill was also playing down the seriousness of the situation. In his daily digest for the king, he talked of 'a few trifling incidents of window breaking'. Subsequently, he told the Commons that in his opinion 'the riots were largely caused by rowdy youths and roughs from outside, foreign to the district'.[61] He had nevertheless responded to the panic-stricken messages of Lleufer Thomas and Lionel Lindsay, first by allowing cavalry, and then infantry, to be drafted in to the troubled coalfield. Once sent in, they obviously had to stay for a time, otherwise Churchill could have been charged by political opponents with rashness, impetuosity, and lack of judgement. With hindsight, it seems that the role of the troops may have persuaded him that they might be more effective and more welcome to law-abiding people than police: local police kowtowed to the magistrates, whilst imported police had little sympathy for the inhabitants. Soldiers were both unbiased and amenable to government direction.

The fact that a general was in charge of law enforcement may have helped distort the folk-memory of what the troops actually did when they came to the coalfield, but Macready quickly showed masterly qualities in a very difficult situation. Not only did he have the complication of dealing tactfully with Captain Lindsay, but he faced a potential conflict of interest between the Home Office and the War Office. He had arrived to take charge of the military: this meant, presumably, that he still had to report to Haldane at the War Office. Having effectively assumed command of the civil forces, however, Macready then became responsible to Churchill at the Home Office. The very nature of coalfield society proved to be another complicating factor, for women actively identified themselves with the cause of the strike as much as did their menfolk. Although historians habitually talk about the cohesion of mining communities, there was also the problem that the traditional leaders of the South Wales Miners' Federation were under pressure from the rank and file, or at least from militants with a facility for inflammatory speeches. Furthermore, the employers in the coalfield were typically arrogant and intransigent, and the strikers were determined to ensure success for their

[60] General Macready to Home Office, 11 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 43; Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 145.

[61] Churchill to the King, *c.*10 November 1910, cited R. S. Churchill, *Winston Churchill*, p. 373; Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners*, p. 235.

campaign by resolute picketing to stop all workmen at the collieries, even if they did not belong to the Miners' Federation.

The thorny question of picketing had been highlighted by the Newport docks strike and debated in Parliament (22 June 1910). In theory, the Trades Disputes Act of 1906 had guaranteed the right to picket; in fact, it had failed to clarify the narrow line between 'peaceful persuasion' and 'illegal intimidation'.[62] As William John, one of the strike leaders, told a mass meeting at Tonypandy: 'The Cambrian Workmen's Committee will strain every nerve to bring the fight to a successful issue, and it is our intention to stop any man from doing any work at the collieries.'[63] In short, picketing would become coercion. This, in turn, would inevitably push the employers into importing 'free labour', with a commensurate likelihood of further clashes.

In this powder-keg situation, Macready had to win the trust of both sides, even though they were obviously polarized. Tact and absolute impartiality were required in large measure if there were to be the slightest hope of maintaining law and order. It is a measure of Macready's ability that, more or less, he succeeded. In the words of T. Marchant Williams, the Aberdare stipendiary in 1910: 'What a tactful man he is! The whole district, both Rhondda and Aberdare, are greatly indebted to him and his officers.'[64] It is notable that Macready forbade the traditional practice whereby officers would be billeted with colliery managers, since he was determined that the soldiers must not be seen as 'merely the blind agents of the employer class'.[65] This was a wise and novel move. It angered the mine owners but enabled Macready to point out to the striking workmen that the military kept a totally impartial position. In previous disputes, the comparatively small number of troops had, in effect, been deployed at the behest of the employers and magistrates, who had also continued to hold sway over the police; now, the Home Office took to itself the prerogative of preserving law and order in the provinces.

Despite the telegraph and the telephone there were enormous difficulties in obtaining accurate, first-hand, objective information from the crisis zone.

[62] Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, pp. 152-53.

[63] Cited Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners*, p. 183. Will John (1878-1955) had been elected a checkweigher in 1909 and became chairman of the Cambrian strike committee in 1910. Soon afterwards, he was sentenced to twelve months' hard labour for 'riotous assembly'. While in prison, he was elected miners' agent. Subsequently, he became MP for the Rhondda in succession to Mabon, and served in Parliament for thirty years (1920-50). He was a committed chapel-goer, and in 1936 became president of the Welsh Baptist Union.

[64] T. Marchant Williams to Sir Alfred Thomas, MP, 19 November 1910. Photocopy of original letter kindly supplied by David Sutton.

[65] Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 140.

Churchill was fully aware that he had to be 'guided by the men representing the Home Office down there'.[66] In the first instance, this meant he had to react to the messages of Captain Lindsay, especially as Lleufer Thomas, the stipendiary magistrate, seemed to corroborate the Chief Constable's assessments. Subsequently Churchill could rely far more on the clear-sighted General Macready.

The Home Office also sent to the area a confidential agent, J. F. Moylan. Having left London in such haste that he had to borrow a fur coat from Churchill, he arrived on the afternoon of 9 November. General Macready's staff officer, Captain (later Major-General Sir Wyndham) Childs, describes Moylan as 'a sort of liaison officer' with a particular responsibility to Churchill: 'Moylan, afterwards to become Receiver of the Metropolitan Police, reported direct to the Home Office on all matters connected with the strike. I always felt, for my part, that Moylan's primary duty was to warn Winston if he saw any signs of the soldier-man being likely to do anything particularly drastic.'[67] This system of industrial surveillance was, nevertheless, 'a considerable novelty'.[68] Moylan, who was supplied with a secret code, effectively personified the central response to a localized dispute. Although still young, he possessed a commanding intellect and a gift for getting to the heart of a problem. His reports underlined that the use of blacklegs would provoke renewed trouble.

The memory of the Newport docks strike was still fresh, and the coalowners were determined to assert their legal right to import labour to help man the pumps. Macready saw the danger in this development and met magistrates and coalowners to insist that mine managers had to inform him beforehand if they intended to bring in blacklegs, adding that he could permit it or not.[69] Churchill made the same point in a telegram on 11 November, having consulted the law officers on this issue in May, during the troubles at Newport.[70] Nevertheless, Leonard Llewellyn decided to import blacklegs, and did so without consulting General Macready.[71]

There is a large body of evidence to show that the coalowners and their immediate officials were actively disliked by many of the government's chief

[66] MFGB Minutes, Special Conference, 9 November 1910, p. 36.

[67] Sir Wyndham Childs, *Episodes and Recollections*, p. 79.

[68] Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, p. 46.

[69] General Macready to Home Office, 11 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 39.

[70] Home Secretary to General Macready, 11 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 43.

[71] Macready to Home Office, 21 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 81: 'Mr. Llewellyn informed me he was getting in eleven men from Cardiff in order to keep the Glamorgan mine going at Llwynypia.'

agents in the coalfield. Captain Childs certainly makes his opinion of the owners abundantly clear, while not missing the opportunity to mention the fact that he was sympathetic towards the workmen and on friendly terms with some of the strike leaders.[72] J. F. Moylan points out that the owners preferred to call on the military rather than the police because soldiers were cheaper.[73] The coalowners assumed that the troops would be at their own disposal, and were none too pleased to learn that this was not the case. The Home Office had clarified this matter at Newport in May, and it was clearly vital to the centralist strategy being pursued by Churchill, Haldane, and Troup. In addition, General Macready was a serving soldier with orders against letting the old system of local hegemony prevail. Beneath the veneer of gentlemanly restraint and good manners, his autobiography confirms that his personal opinion of the mine owners in general, and of certain individuals more than others, was far from flattering. As one example of his oblique approach, he contrasts the Cambrian strike committee with the owners: 'In justice to the strike committee in the Rhondda Valley I must say that when they gave their word to me to carry out any undertaking it was scrupulously adhered to, a line of conduct which the employers might well have imitated.'[74]

On Wednesday 9 November, the MFGB conference in London had expressed regret for any disturbances; it asserted that civil authority would be sufficient to keep order; and it sent a letter to Churchill asking him to recall the military. This latter course would have been politically inexpedient, though Churchill's reply doubtless gives his genuine assessment of the situation at that time:

> Mr Churchill hopes and expects that the strong force of police drafted to the scene of the disorder will be sufficient promptly and effectively to prevent riot. If, however, this is not so, we will not hesitate after what has occurred to authorise the employment of the military, and the responsibility for any consequences which may ensue must rest with those who persist in courses of violence.[75]

The welcome accorded to the troops in south Wales, however, and their almost impeccable behaviour, may well have convinced him that centrally directed troops would be better at controlling industrial unrest than the police. As part of his public relations programme, Churchill nevertheless

[72] Sir Wyndham Childs, *Episodes and Recollections*, ch.IX passim.

[73] J.F. Moylan to Home Office, 13 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 54.

[74] Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 142.

[75] Miners' Federation to Home Secretary, 9 November 1910, Home Secretary to Miners' Federation, 9 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, Nos. 27, 28; MFGB Special Conference, 9 November 1910.

complimented the police, in a telegram to Captain Lindsay: 'Please express to the police officers under your charge, particularly those who bore the strain yesterday, my appreciation of the courage, discipline and good spirit which they have shown throughout these troubles. Their fine qualities are the only means of avoiding the employment of the military.'[76] As must be the case with politicians, Churchill obviously had an eye on his potential audience (then and later) in the choice of words he utilized in conveying this message. He was always aware of the need to project a particular image, and the Blue Book, which he insisted on having produced early in 1911, was doubtless designed to give his words a wider audience.

It may, therefore, be that the need to project an image of moderation and restraint helps to account for a significant gap in the official record: there is no mention of how and why the infantry were drafted into the coalfield. The first reference to the actual deployment of infantry appears (retrospectively) in Churchill's telegram to the Chief Constable, sent at 1.45 p.m. on Wednesday, 9 November: 'Besides the 200 infantry ordered to Pontypridd, 300 more will be moved at once to Newport.' According to the Home Office press communiqué issued 'in the forenoon' of 9 November, 'Two hundred Infantry have been moved from Swindon to Pontypridd, and will, if necessary, be used to guard certain special points'.[77] In other words, infantry had already been dispatched to Pontypridd, but the published documents do not show exactly when (and therefore why) it happened, and at whose instigation. Haldane almost certainly had to be involved, but it is a surprising omission from the official account, especially in the light of Churchill's repeated distinction between cavalry and infantry. Admittedly the situation, according to the stipendiary magistrate, had deteriorated and the police could not cope, which may well have spurred Churchill into action, but the details are missing. In the absence of written evidence, his change of heart cannot be documented, and the direct responsibility for ordering infantry soldiers into the crisis zone must remain at least a matter for conjecture. As will be seen subsequently, the official account, edited primarily by Sir Edward Troup and J. F. Moylan, does not refer to incidents or developments which unkind critics might have used to embarrass Churchill.

It is regrettable that we do not know what he actually said on the telephone to the men in charge at Tonypandy in November 1910, but it does seem likely that his comments to the police were more bellicose than the official version

[76] Home Secretary to Chief Constable, 9 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 24.

[77] Home Secretary to Chief Constable, 9 November 1910; Communiqué from the Home Office to the press, 9 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, Nos. 21, 26.

admits. In the Blue Book, document 21 (Churchill to Lindsay, 9 November 1910) confirms a telephone conversation in which the Home Secretary had promised 500 Metropolitan Police. Comparison with the original telegram, however, shows that one passage has been omitted in the official account. The following verbatim transcript contains the missing passage in italics:

> Following is in confirmation of our conversation this morning. The 500 Metropolitan police I sent you yesterday and this morning should raise your force of constables to 1,100, of whom 120 are mounted. This force should enable you during the daytime not merely to hold the threatened collieries but to deal actively and promptly with any sign of disorderly gathering.
>
> *It is important that the rioters should be made to feel during the daytime that the police have the upper hand, and if you have sufficient strength gangs or groups of men armed with sticks or otherwise menacing in character should be vigorously broken up and thus prevent a renewal of the disorder after dark.*
>
> I am counting upon the action of the police in this respect to avert the necessity for using the military.[78]

The missing passage shows that Churchill was encouraging the police to be more forceful, even more violent, than the official account reveals. This omission would seem to be a deliberate editorial policy by the compilers of the Blue Book, because the Home Office files at the Public Record Office reveal other instances of a similar character.

Apart from excluding sensitive passages, the editors—under Churchill's direction—seem on occasions to have engineered a subtle re-writing of the documents released with such remarkable rapidity to the general public in March 1911; a correlation between the wording of the originals and of the published documents does not always emerge. Document 23 in the account published by HMSO, for example, quite accurately reveals that Churchill, having spoken to General Macready on the telephone, ordered him to Tonypandy itself (6 p.m., 9 November). This is substantially what the original says, but there are certain differences which are best highlighted by a verbatim transcript of the document from the Home Office file. The two versions are placed side by side:

[78] Home Secretary to Chief Constable, 9 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 21; PRO, HO 144/1551/199768, envelope 10.

In confirmation of our conversation I think it desirable that you should proceed to Tonypandy tonight as that seems to be the point where disturbances are most likely. If the emergency comes to the point where the police and civil authorities apply to you for the direct use of the military, you should then assume general control

and act as you think best for the preservation of order and the prevention of bloodshed. You will at the last moment consider whether the police forces can be used any further to quell riot without actually involving the military. Captain Lindsay is drafting the whole, or the greater part, of the third contingent of 300 Metropolitan foot police into Tonypandy immediately. With this force it should be possible to deal very effectively
with any riotous assemblage around the colliery or in the town, and you and the authorities on the spot should bear in mind that vigorous action by the police may be the best means of preventing recourse to fire-arms. I am sure that you and Captain Lindsay will work together in your difficult and responsible duties with complete cordiality. Please keep me informed by telephone and telegraph of any further development.[79]

In confirmation of our conversation I think it desirable that you should proceed to Tonypandy tonight as that seems to be the point where disturbances are most likely. If the emergency comes to the point where the police and civil authorities apply to you for the direct use of the military, you should then assume control of all the police and military on the spot
and act as you think best for the preservation of order and the prevention of bloodshed. You will consider
whether the police forces can be used any further to quell riot without actually involving the military. Captain Lindsay is drafting the whole, or the greater part, of the third contingent of 300 Metropolitan foot police into Tonypandy immediately. With this force it should be possible to deal very effectively by police charges with any riotous assemblage around the colliery or in the town, and you and the authorities on the spot should bear in mind that vigorous baton charges may be the best means of preventing recourse to fire-arms. I am sure that you and Captain Lindsay will work together in your difficult and responsible duties with complete cordiality. Please keep me informed by telephone and telegraph of any further development.[80]

[79] Home Secretary to General Macready, 9 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 23.
[80] Home Secretary to General Macready, 9 November 1910 (PRO, HO 144/ 1551/199768, envelope 10).

'Control of all the police and military' had thus become 'general control', thereby underlining the fact that General Macready, the police, and the soldiers were in the area to preserve law and order for everyone. The phrase 'at the last moment' in respect of the further utilization of the police did not appear in the original, but carries the message that the authorities were reluctant and exceedingly careful in the use of force. Most significantly, perhaps, the references to 'police charges' and 'vigorous baton charges' have been excluded. It may be argued that the original and the edited version are substantially the same, and that the alterations do not attempt to deceive. Equally, the original document is potentially more embarrassing to Churchill than that actually published, and the very fact of tampering—for whatever reason—cannot be denied. In a sense, Churchill was already laying the foundations for his later claim that the police used rolled-up mackintoshes rather than truncheons in dealing with the rioters.

Churchill even appears at one stage to have felt that it was preferable to employ foot-soldiers rather than outside policemen in the area of unrest. Responding to a query from the War Office, Churchill acknowledged that the Metropolitan Police could not stay in south Wales at full strength indefinitely, even though the tension remained acute. In order that they could be withdrawn to London or moved elsewhere, he suggested that 'the infantry force in the valleys should be quietly strengthened under cover of the police'.[81] This idea was then dropped, but it is an intriguing pointer that Churchill's earlier reluctance to deploy soldiers was being eroded. It also indicates, incidentally, that he seems to have regarded the troubles in the south Wales coalfield as part of a more widespread movement of discontent and direct action, in line with what later historians were to describe as 'the great unrest'.

The task of editing the documents contained in the Blue Book fell in the main to Sir Edward Troup and J. F. Moylan. Even though Churchill had given specific editorial instructions, Troup felt that the publication was unwise:

> It seems to me quite impossible to say that even with the omissions suggested there are not many points on which troublesome questions might be asked or a debate raised in the House. If however you feel bound to present some papers I would suggest that at least General Macready's reports might now be omitted. Apart from the possibility of their reopening controversies which seem at the moment to

[81] Home Secretary to the Adjutant-General, 12 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 44. The Adjutant-General's reply, No. 45, shows that the War Office was still asserting its right to be responsible for the deployment of troops.

> be closed, there is a good deal of objection to their publication on the ground that it would create a precedent for the publication of official reports made to the Home Office by an officer who is carrying out the Secretary of State's directions.[82]

The following day (2 March 1911) Churchill agreed that Macready's reports should be cut down to a minimum. Given that a Blue Book was being produced, of course, even the most uncritical reader would be suspicious if nothing from General Macready were included. The editors were keeping in close touch with him anyway, and subsequently noted that he concurred with all that they had done. If his reports contained anything damning, they no longer remain in the Home Office files, but the sort of thing he was apt to write can perhaps be worked out from other sources. In his autobiography, General Macready includes a report in jocular vein to the effect that on one occasion troops used bayonets with minimum force to drive the strikers into the arms of the police:

> During the rioting that occurred on November 21st throughout the Tonypandy valley, the Metropolitan police while driving the mob before them along the main road were heavily stoned from the side tracks, and suffered severe casualties. In order to counter these tactics on the part of the strikers on the next occasion when trouble was afoot, small bodies of infantry on the higher ground, keeping level with the police on the main road, moved slowly down the side tracks, and by a little gentle persuasion with the bayonet drove the stone throwers into the arms of the police on the lower road. The effect was excellent; no casualties were reported, though it was rumoured that many young men in the valley found that sitting down was accompanied with a certain amount of discomfort for several days. As a general instruction the soldiers have been warned that if obliged to use their bayonets they should only be applied to that portion of the body traditionally held by trainers of youth to be reserved for punishment.[83]

This document is also cited by Page Arnot, though no source is acknowledged.[84] It should be noted, too, that Macready's autobiography usually quotes almost verbatim from the reports he sent each day to the Home Office, so it is unlikely that the above account was simply something dependent on a muddled memory fourteen years after the event. The version in Macready's autobiography is almost certainly close to the version he sent to the Home Office at the time.

There had undeniably been considerable conflict, especially at Penygraig

[82] Letter from Sir Edward Troup, 1 March 1911 (PRO, HO 144/1553/199768, envelope 300).
[83] Sir Nevil Macready, *Annals of an Active Life*, p. 152.
[84] Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners*, p. 204.

and Tonypandy on 21 November, and troops were certainly called in. In the present context, the interesting question is why Macready's statement that bayonets had been used—or, at least, unsheathed—was not included in the Blue Book. The whole affair as described by General Macready was obviously of minor significance in his estimation, but it could have caused Winston Churchill a degree of embarrassment if publicized. Although the government was sufficiently concerned by the events of that day to publish an appendix to the official account, made up of statements from several local people dealing specifically with 21 November, the Blue Book, predictably, reveals nothing, and the original of Macready's report cannot be located in the Home Office files.

In fairness, it should be noted that Macready's account was not endorsed by the local press. The *Rhondda Leader* reports that the Lancashire Fusiliers, stationed at Tonypandy, were called out but that they 'took no part in quelling the disturbances', and that the cavalry were also 'hastily requisitioned'.[85] According to J. F. Moylan, 'the police had the situation well in hand before the military arrived'; and Churchill informed the king that 'the military were at hand but did not have to fire'.[86] The whole incident may well have been an aberration, but the disappearence of the document tends to show that Churchill was adept at safeguarding his political position.

On 18 November Parliament had been told that a general election was to be held. Within a few days, the *Western Mail*, which was in many respects a mouthpiece for the coalowners, commented unfavourably on the police response to the situation in the coalfield:

> A state of anarchy prevails in the Rhondda. Outrages occur every day and there is apparently little effort made to put a stop to them. It is amazing to learn that not a single arrest has been made throughout the whole of this disgraceful terrorism.—What are the police doing? Have they received instructions that they are not to intervene even when innocent persons are set upon by the mob?[87]

This was an implicit criticism of both Captain Lionel Lindsay and Winston Churchill. It helps to explain Churchill's telegram to General Macready the following day: 'Arrest and prosecution should follow in all cases where evidence is forthcoming against lawbreakers.'[88] In traditional terms, this was

[85] *Rhondda Leader*, 26 November 1910. The only reference to bayonets comes a fortnight later, when the paper notes that sentries on guard duty outside the Glamorgan and Naval collieries had bayonets. Soldiers on guard duty would presumably have bayonets as a matter of course.

[86] J. F. Moylan to Home Office, 22 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 82; Churchill to the king, quoted Earl of Birkenhead, *Winston Churchill*, p. 202.

[87] *Western Mail*, 21 November 1910, cited David Evans, *Labour Strife*, p. 88.

[88] Home Secretary to General Macready, 22 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 88.

a role for policemen, not soldiers, but Churchill now overturned tradition; he ensured that Macready directed the troops 'to assume a policing role'.[89] In reacting to the situation in south Wales as it developed, Churchill seems also to have come to the conclusion that troops were preferable to police as agents of the Home Office response to industrial unrest. At the same time, of course, he continued to search for other, more immediate expedients.

There are hints in the surviving Home Office documents that Churchill kept closely in touch with Lloyd George during the crisis.[90] This relationship is not mentioned in the Blue Book, presumably because it might have reflected adversely on Churchill or redounded to the credit of Lloyd George. At any rate, from other sources it is possible to record that on 13 November Churchill, recognizing that the Metropolitans would have to be withdrawn fairly soon and fearing that this would 'leave the soldiers in much more naked contact with the population than is now necessary', wrote to Lloyd George with an appeal to use his influence with the Cabinet and in Wales to restore order.[91] Lloyd George must have known that no easy solution was possible and consequently made little public comment on the dispute, but he was travelling through mid-Wales at the end of November as part of the Liberal election campaign when the *South Wales Daily News* prevailed upon him to send a message to the strikers. Despite having been given the opportunity to intervene as Churchill had requested, his message was manifestly non-committal.[92] Clearly, he did not wish to get involved; and arguably, he was effectively pushed into providing a message in the first place. The problems had to remain in Churchill's lap.

The one politician to make most capital out of the unrest was Keir Hardie. It is perhaps curious to note that Hardie, on at least one occasion, probably acted on behalf of General Macready, as the general's report for 13 November recalls: 'Mr Keir Hardie lunched at the hotel and I afterwards asked him to have a talk with me. We had a very friendly conversation and he agreed to contradict the rumours which had been spread about that the military were here for an ornament and would in no case take any action.'[93] This is mentioned in the draft copy of the Blue Book but was omitted from the final version, arguably because it could have been more embarrassing for

[89] Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, p. 47.

[90] E.g. Churchill's footnote to a summary of Moylan's telegram, 8 November 1910: 'I communicated this news to Mr. Lloyd George' (PRO, HO 144/ 1551/199768, envelope 10).

[91] David Evans, *Labour Strife*, p. 136.

[92] *South Wales Daily News*, 1 December 1910.

[93] Macready to Home Office, 13 November 1910, No. 58 in the draft copy of the Blue Book (PRO, HO 144/1553/199768).

Churchill than for Keir Hardie. It nevertheless underlines the role of the military—impartially helping to keep order by their very presence as agents of the state—in contrast with the confrontational role of the police.

When Parliament reassembled on 15 November (after an adjournment since 3 August), Keir Hardie, fresh from his own visit to the area, forced a debate on events in south Wales. He stated that people had been denied their legal right to picket by the police, who had also indulged in unnecessary violence. Churchill consistently refused to censure the police or allow an official inquiry into police conduct, but Hardie quite naturally persisted and emphasized the whole question of accountability. He not only condemned police behaviour but also attributed much of the disturbance to Captain Lindsay. Significantly, he made little reference to the military, although he did suggest that the presence of troops might actually provoke disorders.[94] In arguing that soldiers made it seem that the government was siding with the coalowners and seeking to intimidate the workmen, he was implicitly contradicting the reality imposed by Macready. Yet, it may be that the events of Tonypandy had, for a time, clinched the case for the deployment of troops during strikes or other incidents of industrial unrest.

A short time before the troubles at Tonypandy there had been a railway strike in France, which—according to Tom Mann—had revealed 'the utter inability on the part of the military to frighten the Strikers, to run trains, or to in any way change the situation beyond posing for photographs'.[95] This doubtless created fears in some quarters of an international strike conspiracy, but the situation in south Wales proved to be different. Troops showed that they did not necessarily have to resort to violence or coercion, even though Churchill's critics on the political left and on the right assumed this to be the case. Even before soldiers had come to the coalfield, Enoch Edwards, MP, chairman of the Miners' Federation conference in London, predicted 'that the military are organised for the purpose of killing, and South Wales is no place for them to go to kill. It is a crime to ask the military, who are the brothers of the people down there, to go down and shoot their brothers because that is what it will come to. Their very presence might bring that about.'[96]

[94] Page Arnot, *South Wales Miners*, pp. 195, 213ff.

[95] Tom Mann, 'All Hail Industrial Solidarity', *The Industrial Syndicalist*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (October 1910).

[96] Enoch Edwards, MP at MFGB Special Conference, 6 November 1910, p. 31. This bears a resemblance to the famous 'Don't Shoot' appeal to British soldiers for which Tom Mann and others were imprisoned in 1912. Perhaps significantly, the syndicalists were not particularly concerned with the prospect of military intervention against industrial disturbances: 'the question of whether British troops shall or shall not fire upon their British brothers is not of such moment from the economic and political standpoint to Syndicalists as some would think.' *The Syndicalist*, March-April 1912.

It is ironic that the main burden of right-wing complaint against Churchill in 1910 should have been the exact opposite of later accusations. For example, Arthur Balfour, the former Prime Minister, said in the Commons that 'had he not held back the military and not shown some hesitation and doubt at a critical moment, much destruction of property, many unhappy incidents, and many circumstances which all, whatever their opinions, must look upon as a great blot on the procedure of civilised society, might have been wholly avoided'.[97] Despite being pressed by the coalowners and others more than once, Churchill had insisted that 'a premature display of military force' would not have prevented rioting, and might well have made the situation worse.[98] If this (more or less) remained his avowed standpoint throughout the period of unrest, the question arises as to why he allowed troops to be sent in at all. There was no sudden change in his thinking. When Lindsay reported after the riots of 21 September that the infantry had done well, Churchill changed the word 'infantry' into 'military' before allowing the document to be published.[99] The suspicion arises that he was virtually stampeded into sending troops into the coalfield in the first place, but that he then came to see their efficacy as the best means of guaranteeing a co-ordinated national response to potentially nationwide outbreaks of unrest.

It was the police rather than the military who provoked most antipathy in the coalfield, and they were widely accused of being too apt to use their truncheons. Churchill was wrong when he claimed forty years later that they had used only rolled-up mackintoshes, and that no one was hurt. Even so, Henry Pelling has accepted the rolled-up mackintosh version of events.[100] So has William Manchester: 'Strikers charged the bobbies, but the policemen swung rolled-up mackintoshes and beat them off. Elsewhere, however, two miners were killed, and when a unit of soldiers was stoned, they fixed bayonets and prodded the strikers into retreating.'[101] It may be, however, that different police forces reacted in different ways, since a number of official reports praise the restraint and discipline of the Metropolitan

[97] Balfour to House of Commons, 6 February 1911.

[98] Home Office to Monmouthshire and South Wales Coal Owners' Association, 12 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 41.

[99] Chief Constable to Home Secretary, 23 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 84; PRO, HO 144/1552/199768, envelope 111.

[100] Henry Pelling, *Winston Churchill* (London, 1974; 1989), pp. 136-37.

[101] William Manchester, *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill: Visions of Glory, 1874-1932* (London, 1983), p. 417.

Police.[102] Yet, local memories and the testimony of Keir Hardie in Parliament suggest that the Metropolitans could also be rather brutal (even if the worst reputation belonged to the Bristol police).[103]

The source for Churchill's statement about rolled-up mackintoshes would seem to be Sir Wyndham Childs, staff officer to General Macready. In his autobiography Childs describes an occasion when the Metropolitans drove a number of rioters off a coal tip: 'When we got near the tip the Metropolitan Police deployed and up they went. I noticed that none of them drew their truncheons, but merely used their mackintosh capes, which, when closely rolled, are rather formidable weapons, and can knock a man head over heels without really hurting him.'[104] Significantly, Childs was to be on duty before long at the south Wales ports, where a fresh outburst of industrial unrest demanded government-directed intervention.[105] Troops were now being deployed rather than police.

The local press clearly shows that during the period of the Tonypandy riots, soldiers had been well received by most people who habitually went out of their way to be friendly, or at least non-confrontational. There was never genuine physical contact between the soldiers and the strikers (apart from on the football field and from jealous husbands), even when infantrymen were drafted to the coalfield.[106] This was perhaps a surprising development, but it seems to have given Churchill considerable food for thought. His reactions in 1911 should possibly be seen as a logical response to the commendable role of

[102] Memorandum by General Macready on Certain Points Connected with the Strike in South Wales, 5 January 1911, *Colliery Strike Disturbances,* p. 48. The Metropolitans could not be deployed for any length of time, if only because unlike the military they tended to be married men with families. In fairness, it should be noted that some of them at least were well disposed towards local families. Cf. Moylan to Home Office, 29 November 1910, *Colliery Strike Disturbances*, No. 90: 'The strikers in some parts of the Rhondda are beginning to suffer severely in this very cold weather. The condition of the children in a row of houses overlooking the back of the Glamorgan Colliery, from which a great deal of stoning has been carried on, has appealed so much to the sympathies of the Metropolitan Police stationed at the colliery, that they have taken to conveying food to them.'

[103] As part of a long but apparently accurate account, Thomas Bartlett, born 1894, interviewed by Helen Trotman in 1974, said that the Metropolitans were 'bitterly disliked, they put the devil in the men'. Cf. the following: 'Three Pressmen attempted to follow the Lancashire Fusiliers from Tonypandy to Penygraig. They were pounced upon by a number of Metropolitan Police, who barred the road against everybody, and rushed at the Pressmen with drawn truncheons.' *South Wales Daily Post*, 22 November 1910.

[104] Sir Wyndham Childs, *Episodes and Recollections*, p. 87. Rolled-up capes were used against innocent people at Rotherhithe, June 1912, one shopkeeper having his finger broken after being struck several times by a policeman with his cape. Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, p. 176.

[105] *The Lancashire Fusiliers Annual*, Diary of the Second Battalion, 1911, pp. 124-26; with thanks to Major (Retired) J. Hallam, Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, Wellington Barracks, Bury.

[106] *Pontypridd Observer*, 12, 19, 26 November 1910; 3 December 1910. Some of the troops housed in an ice-rink became excellent skaters. After the Lancashire Fusiliers had beaten Penrhiwfer Albions by six goals to two, the press commented: 'The Fusiliers seem to have come into great popularity in the football circles of Mid-Rhondda.' *Rhondda Leader*, 17 December 1910. See also K. O. Fox, 'The Tonypandy Riots', pp. 77-78.

the military at Tonypandy. Later commentators have distorted the picture by depicting the troops in pejorative terms. If the Blue Book was published out of solicitude for Churchill's political position, the irony is that the folk-memory has accused him of far more heinous crimes, and that some historians in their turn have damned him and the use of the military by implication or extension. To quote a recent survey: 'In 1910 a miners' strike made 30,000 idle, and at Tonypandy troops with fixed bayonets were used against the strikers.'[107] What this demonstrates is that, even today, the power of myth can bring about historiographical muddle, especially in respect of Churchill and Tonypandy. Despite the careful editing of *Colliery Strike Disturbances* and the contemporary weeding of Home Office files which Churchill initiated and directed as Home Secretary, the folk-memory will not be denied. Yet, by the close of 1910, Churchill seems to have convinced himself that soldiers were the most effective means of bringing about a unified, centralist response to manifestations of unrest. The irony is that they then upset his calculations by reverting to the traditional role of soldiers when faced with riot.

In January 1911 Churchill rapidly dispatched Scots Guards to help the police in the 'the siege of Sidney Street', and even managed to put in a personal appearance which was captured on film and—to the chagrin of his political opponents—shown on newsreels round the country. The whole business provoked a degree of press criticism. Churchill himself noted:

> *The Times* blamed me for stopping the soldiers going to Tonypandy and now blames me for sending them to Sidney Street. Their doctrine is now apparent, that soldiers should always be sent to put down British miners in trade disputes and never to apprehend alien murderers engaged in crime. This is on a par with Tory thought in other directions.[108]

Despite his unmistakable irony, Churchill's reaction to unrest in 1911 was almost invariably to 'send in the troops'. The clandestine message during the riots at Aberdare and Tonypandy had been to encourage the police to use vigorous methods, not excluding baton charges. He went to a great deal of trouble to keep this encouragement out of the Blue Book, doubtless responding to the storm of criticism created by police actions in late 1910. By 1911, he seems to have decided that soldiers were preferable to policemen precisely because they were less confrontational and because they were subject to central direction—of the Home Office, that is, rather than the War

[107] Trevor May, *An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1760-1970* (Harlow, 1987), p. 249.
[108] William Manchester, *The Last Lion*, p. 420.

Office.[109] At first, Churchill had been opposed to the very idea of troops; before long he conceded that cavalry could be deployed; and then he accepted the introduction of infantry and even thought of replacing Metropolitan Police by foot soldiers. What confirmed his reaction in 1911 was perhaps the way in which contemporaries favoured soldiers rather than policemen, even at Tonypandy. Furthermore, he shared the widespread conviction after Tonypandy that revolution was at hand, and therefore that centralist responses were necessary.

The Tonypandy riots were consciously seen by many well-informed contemporaries as marking a watershed in British society. It is significant that in the summer of 1911 the chief inspector of mines forecast a general strike which would be spearheaded by the miners of south Wales.[110] The government was sufficiently alarmed to commission a special investigation by G. R. Askwith into 'these menacing developments of industrial unrest'.[111] Looking back on the period from the 1930s, George Dangerfield also thought that a national stoppage would have been on the cards but for the intervention of the Great War.[112] More recent research has minimized the likelihood of a general strike, but this does not obviate the fact that many people at the time were convinced that a 'red revolution' was imminent.[113] The presence of agitators like the American, 'Big Bill' Hayward, in the coalfield in late 1910, not to mention Tom Mann, had been disquieting. According to the *Daily Mirror*, the arrival of 'the celebrated French anarchist agitator', Madame Sorgue, in south Wales 'added a fresh element of danger to the situation'.[114] There was also the enormous support enjoyed by Charles Stanton, miners' agent for Aberdare, who was thought to have issued a 'death threat' against

[109] In his book on *The Home Office* (1925), pp. 50-51, Sir Edward Troup writes: 'There was at one time a question whether the Home Secretary or the Secretary of State for War was responsible for the actual sending of troops but the Government decided in 1912 that the responsibility should remain with the Home Secretary.' Cited Jane Morgan, *Conflict and Order*, p. 64. Churchill had effectively settled this question during the troubles at Tonypandy.

[110] Memorandum by R. A. S. Redmayne, chief inspector of mines, July 1911, Cabinet Minutes, PRO, CAB 37/107.

[111] Cabinet Memoranda, 27 November 1911 (PRO, CAB 41/38/3). As a result of his investigations, Askwith became increasingly pessimistic, especially after the strike of 1912. Lord Askwith, *Industrial Problems and Disputes* (London, 1915;1974), p. 349.

[112] George Dangerfield, *Strange Death of Liberal England* (1935, London, 1966;1970), part 3, ch. 4, section 2.

[113] G.A.Phillips, 'The Triple Industrial Alliance in 1914', *Economic History Review*, XXIV (1974).

[114] *Daily Mirror*, 12 November 1910.

one of the coalowners.[115] Not surprisingly, the king counselled an iron fist when Liverpool seemed on the verge of revolution during the rail strike of 1911.[116] This fear of revolution, coupled with his confidence in the military, may well provide an explanation for Churchill's reactions in the aftermath of the Tonypandy riots.

At any rate, Churchill outraged many of his former supporters by 'sending in the troops' even before the civil authorities had requested their assistance. David Evans, correspondent of the *Western Mail* and an apologist for the coalowners, has no doubt that 'the lessons of Tonypandy had not been taught in vain, for during the seamen's and railway strikes and the South Wales anti-Jewish riots of July and August 1911, the military were employed without any regard for the policy of first exhausting the police forces'.[117] Even the earl of Birkenhead's very sympathetic biography maintains that Churchill must carry the personal responsibility for taking 'the dangerous step of mobilizing thousands of troops without waiting for requests from the local authorities, and sending them to all strategic positions'.[118] By the same token Churchill has a degree of personal responsibility for events at Llanelli two days after the rail strike had actually ended, when soldiers opened fire, killing two young men. According to the Chief Constable of Carmarthenshire, strikers had stopped a train near Llanelli station, and had then thrown stones at troops who came to the scene accompanied by three magistrates. Warning shots were fired and the Riot Act was read, but the stoning continued. Only then did the soldiers open fire in earnest. This was the official account, and it led an inquest jury to return a verdict of justifiable homicide. In fact, there is no evidence that the two men had even taken part in the stone-throwing. Four others were killed by an explosion when a truck containing detonators was set on fire.[119]

Six people died at Llanelli; only one, hit by an unidentified blunt

[115] On hearing that a Powell Duffryn colliery in Aberdare was still working commercially, Charles Stanton, the miners' agent, phoned the home of E. M. Hann, the local coal magnate: 'If there is going to be blacklegging over this, there is going to be murder'. E. M. Hann and several newspapers represented this as a death threat. In an expressive but inaccurate phrase, Dangerfield talks of 'Mr Hann perspiring at the end of his telephone'. Even if Hann genuinely believed his life to be in danger, it does not mean that Stanton had issued a death threat. Ironically, he then received an anonymous death threat from someone purporting to represent local tradesmen.

[116] King to Churchill, 16 August 1911, quoted in R. S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, p. 383: 'Strongly deprecate half-hearted deployment of troops; they should not be called upon except as a last recourse but if called on they should be given a free hand & the mob should fear them.'

[117] David Evans, *Labour Strife* , pp. 212-13.

[118] Earl of Birkenhead, *Churchill*, p. 204.

[119] Deian Hopkin, 'The Llanelli Riots, 1911', ante, Vol. III, No. 4 (1983). See also Roger Geary, 'Tonypandy and Llanelli Revisited', *Llafur*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (1987).

instrument, died during the Tonypandy riots.[120] It has been suggested that historians have somehow muddled the memory of the Llanelli riots with that of Tonypandy, 'doubtless because Tonypandy comes easier to the English tongue than Llanelly'.[121] Subsequently, Churchill's role in the general strike and lockout of 1926 created a widespread image that he was the hammer of the miners. It might be argued that his reaction in 1926 was shaped by his memories of 1910; and it even seems valid to claim that the south Wales folk-memory of Churchill as the arch-opponent of striking miners was based not so much on the events of the Tonypandy riots as on the popular perception of events in the general strike sixteen years later.[122]

In the aftermath of Tonypandy, and in pursuance of Home Office policy, Churchill turned soldiers into the role traditionally performed by police. Soldiers were not constrained by local loyalties and by local administration. They seemed to be an ideal instrument for a co-ordinated centralist response to industrial discontents. But soldiers are trained to react to a crisis in a particular way. Churchill must have been surprised when troops, so civilized and popular at Tonypandy, reverted to type elsewhere and, when faced by rioters, actually shot people dead.*

ANTHONY MÒR O'BRIEN

Pontypridd

[120] At the inquest, the coroner drew attention to a remark by Keir Hardie that the dead man had been killed as the result of a blow from a truncheon. The coroner had contacted Hardie and the Cambrian strike committee for evidence to bear out this statement but had not received a satisfactory reply. *Rhondda Leader*, 24 December 1910.

[121] R. S. Churchill, p. 386; Robert Rhodes James, *Churchill*, p. 39: 'In Labour mythology, indeed, Churchill became held responsible wholly unjustly for the deaths of two miners at Tonypandy, and his actions in the railway strike were transferred to the South Wales situation.'

[122] It may be that Churchill's role during or, certainly, after the general strike has also been adversely distorted by the folk-memory. See Peter Clarke, *A Question of Leadership: Gladstone to Thatcher* (Penguin, 1991), pp. 136-37.

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