



Source 3

A telegram from the British Foreign Secretary to the British ambassador in Germany, 1 August 1914

(Catalogue ref: FO 438/2)

How to use this source:

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

- Why was the Foreign Secretary unhappy?
- According to the telegram, how did people in Britain feel about Belgium?
- Is it possible to tell from this source why people felt this way?
- What did the Germans want from the British?
- How did the British respond?
- According to the telegram, how important was public opinion in Britain?



Source 3

Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen.

(No. 256.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, August 1, 1914.

I TOLD the German Ambassador to-day that the reply of the German Government with regard to the neutrality of Belgium was a matter of very great regret, because the neutrality of Belgium affected feeling in this country. If Germany could see her way to give the same assurance as that which had been given by France it would materially contribute to relieve anxiety and tension here. On the other hand, if there were a violation of the neutrality of Belgium by one combatant while the other respected it, it would be extremely difficult to restrain public feeling in this country. I

said that we had been discussing this question at a Cabinet meeting, and, as I was authorised to tell him this, I gave him an *aide-mémoire* of it.

He asked me whether, if Germany gave a promise not to violate Belgian neutrality, we would engage to remain neutral.

I replied that I could not say that; our hands were still free, and we were considering what our attitude should be. All I could say was that our attitude would be determined largely by public opinion here and that the neutrality of Belgium would appeal very strongly to public opinion here. I did not think that we could give a promise of neutrality on that condition alone.

The Ambassador pressed me as to whether I could not formulate conditions on which we would remain neutral. He even suggested that the integrity of France and her colonies might be guaranteed.

I said that I felt obliged to refuse definitely any promise to remain neutral on similar terms, and I could only say that we must keep our hands free.

I am, &c.

E. GREY.