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BRITISH DEFENSE POLICY AND ITS CRITICS, 1932-1939

BY
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A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the Creighton University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master Of Arts in the Department of History.

Omaha, 1971
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INTRODUCTION

It is the major misfortune of European civilization that no successful plan for international disarmament has ever been devised. In this century, as previously, nations of every political ideology have resorted to the force of arms in the pursuit of their interests.

On the other hand, pacifism, in which the abstention from armed force is the primary goal, has been a forlorn cause. In Britain during the 1930's, where all manner of political creeds were free to flourish as best they could, there was a persistent undercurrent of pacifist agitation against the Government on rearmament policy.

The pacifists had only one advocate of national stature in Parliament—the veteran George Lansbury, chief for a time of the Labour Opposition. Lansbury's pacifism stemmed from the fact that he was a practicing Christian who took the Christian taboo on fighting and killing more to heart than other temporal leaders in Christendom. Lansbury had the respect, or at least a sort of patronizing veneration of his colleagues in Parliament, but failed to exercise significant influence on British re-
armament decisions.

Pacifism was most popular among nonconformist religious sects, labor unions affiliated with the political left, and young people, groups far removed from the center of power in Britain. A generation later a former Winchester schoolboy (and later an officer in the Royal Air Force) wrote of his beliefs of that time as follows:

We were not sure whether Hitler could be successfully opposed with non-violence and turned from his evil ways, but at least there was a chance. If worst came to worst; if we opposed Hitler non-violently and he killed us, we should be dying in a good cause. That would be better than dying for Mr. Churchill and the Empire.¹

In the 1930's the alternative to pacifism and the martyrdom it might require proved to be rearmament, in spite of the efforts of British diplomacy to negotiate a third course. Rearmament meant the re-creation with allowances for advancing technology, of the military establishment which had lent weight to the British position in European power politics before the First World War.

The generation of Englishmen which had experienced the war and its aftermath was more sensitive to the implications of rearmament than the previous genera-

tion had been at the turn of the century. Jingoism had gone out of fashion in a country that counted seven hundred thousand killed in a war the causes of which only the academically inclined could remember or explain.

The heavy drain of arms contracts on funds that would have otherwise been left in the private sector or appropriated for social betterment, the harmful influence of arms lobbies pursuing their narrow interests, the phenomenon whereby armaments, as they accumulate to a certain level, become a cause of internal tension rather than just a symptom of it—were all known and feared by the British in the 1930's as they are in the United States today.

In the Europe of the 1930's, Germany was the dynamic force. Germany was in this decade a homogeneous society of seventy million people, in the center of Europe, highly industrious and amenable to discipline, with a government pledged to overthrowing the disadvantageous provisions of the Versailles Peace Treaty as quickly as possible.

At the beginning of 1933 Germany came under the absolute dictatorship of Adolf Hitler, a man whose lifestyle and personal values were very different from those of the men who governed in Britain. Hitler had made his
great plans for Germany clear enough in his 1924 treatise *Mein Kampf*. How seriously he would pursue the traditional National Socialist platform once burdened with the responsibility for governing Germany was in the first years of his dictatorship a large, unanswered question. What was the German attitude toward the smaller, weaker states created by the Treaty of Versailles out of the demise of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires? Because of the instability in Hitler's personality one historian of the period doubts that the correct answer remained the same from one day to the next. "Did he aim at a Bismarckian policy of limited risks and limited objectives, or at a Napoleonic policy of perpetual expansion? No one knew, perhaps not even the Fuhrer himself."2

Regardless of Hitler's motives, each successive year of his dictatorship brought increased international tension, culminating in the Second World War.

The discussion in the following pages deals with the question of armaments as it was thrashed out in the British politics of the 1930's. The question of armaments is bound up in the wider question of diplomacy, and it impossible to treat the one without allusions to the other. However, I have made an attempt to emphasize

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the narrower, practical aspects of rearmament faced by
the responsible ministers and their critics.

The time frame begins with the opening of the
Geneva Disarmament Conference in February 1932 and ends
with the British declaration of war on Germany, September
3, 1939. The arrangement of chapters was inspired by,
but does not exactly follow, Professor A. J. P. Taylor,
who saw four stages in the progression of British re­
armament:

1. The decision to rearm fully in the autumn
of 1935.

2. The beginning of deficit arms financing in
April 1937.

3. Arms production at the expense of consumer
goods, March 1938.

4. Arms production "to the limit," February
1939.\(^3\)

CHAPTER I

THE FAILURE OF EUROPEAN DISARMAMENT IN THE 1930's

From archaeological evidence there is nothing to suggest that the desire for domination by force and if necessary killing is not as deeply seated a human emotion and urge as any other.

— Stuart Piggot, Ancient Europe.

A discussion of how the powers of Europe abandoned hopes for general disarmament and began a new arms race in the 1930's, as in the case of the other shocks and disappointments of the decade, begins with the momentous treaty which defeated Germany was forced to sign in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles in June 1919. Within a year the faults of the treaty were accurately pointed out in a book called The Economic Consequences of the Peace, written by John Maynard Keynes, a former treasury official and representative at the Versailles treaty drafting sessions. In addition to his detailed criticism of the reparations and other economic arrangements in the treaty, Keynes held that as a whole, the Versailles document was an ineffective compromise between two of the victors.

The one party, France, wanted a treaty like

those traditionally concluded at the end of a war, a treaty which named territories, fortresses, and sums of money to be forfeited by the loser. Specifically, the French wanted to move their border with Germany back to the Rhine, as it was in Napoleon's time.

Opposed to the French traditionalist approach was the American ideal, embodied in President Wilson's Fourteen Points for the future conduct of international affairs, which forbade annexations and indemnities. But the French found that by employing what Keynes called "delicacy of draftsmanship" they were able to partly offset their disappointment over the Rhine frontier with all manner of vindictive, destructive treaty provisions clothed in Wilsonian language.²

For their part, the British Government catered to the unsophisticated electorate by advocating that Germany pay enormous "reparations," which were theoretically different than the forbidden indemnities and was otherwise anxious to dissociate itself from European problems as quickly as possible.

Keynes was proved right in time. The treaty was quick to show a fatal weakness often seen in doomed laws and treaties—scarcely had it been signed before new dis-

cussions began over which parts of it should actually be enforced. The French made one supreme effort to enforce the reparations clauses by occupying the Ruhr after Germany defaulted on payments in 1923. Only Belgium actively associated itself with the action of France. Britain and the United States looked on with apathy, mixed with hostility when commercial activity was interfered with. The British public tended to sympathize with the Germans. The Ruhr occupation lasted eleven months before a face-saving formula was found to end what had become for France an embarrassing fiasco. The authority of the Versailles Treaty was shown to be both weak and unpopular.

After the First World War ended, Britain wanted nothing so much as tranquil times and the expansion of trade, the only circumstances under which pre-1914 prosperity could be at least partially restored. Under this premise it may be said that the foremost servant of British interests on the Continent was Gustav Stresemann, in 1923 Chancellor of Germany and Foreign Minister throughout the 1920's. Although his tenure as chancellor was brief, his influence in successive cabinets was greater than usual for the foreign minister; he remained the most powerful politician in Germany. Stresemann, a so-
cialist of the non-revolutionary type, was out to scrap the Treaty of Versailles and restore Germany's pre-war prosperity as soon as possible, but in such a way as not to disturb the peace of Europe.

Stresemann condoned a certain amount of evasion of the military strictures of Versailles, chiefly through experiments and training with forbidden weapons in cooperation with the Soviets. But the main thrust of his policy was in the economic field, where he arranged a flow of American capital into Germany, where it was used to prime the pumps of the German industrial economy. Once Germany had recovered economically, it would be in a position to meet the dwindling claims of the reparations creditors.

But by the end of 1929 Stresemann was dead and the flow of foreign capital had dried up, due to the Wall Street crash. The economic depression that followed in Germany badly undermined the credibility of the Stresemann approach to Germany's problems. In the Reichstag the stable majority of the parties of the center was threatened by extremists from both the right and the left. In the elections of September 1930 the majority of disaffected voters switched to Adolf Hitler's National Socialist Party, whose strength increased from 12 to 107 seats, transforming it overnight from the
ninth and smallest party in the Reichstag to the second largest. Hitler picked up significant support from the industrialists and the Army, far afield from his traditional constituency of shopkeepers, petty bureaucrats, and the like. The election results forced Heinrich Brüning, Chancellor and head of the Catholic Center Party, to abandon the Stresemann tactic of patience and adopt a more militant attitude on issues arising from the Treaty of Versailles. One issue was the immediate equality for Germany in disarmament matters.  

The General Commission of the Geneva Disarmament Conference, the formal preparation for which had begun in May 1926, convened on February 2, 1932. The first session of the Conference lasted until July 1932. A second session convened in September 1932, ending in June 1933, and a third was in session between October 1933 and June 1934. The sessions themselves were marked by temporary adjournments for consultations, particularly in the later sessions.

In the beginning of 1932, delegates from 59 nations out of the 64 invited arrived in Geneva to form the

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General Commission of the conference. The Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and El Salvador stayed away, but many nations with an equally small impact on European affairs were in attendance.

The President of the Geneva Disarmament Conference was Arthur Henderson, Foreign Secretary in the British Labour Government from 1929 to 1931. The head of the British delegation was another Labourite, J. H. Thomas. In the great Labour Party rift of 1931 Thomas, unlike Henderson, had gone with the Government and become a National Labourite. Consequently he held the cabinet post of Dominions Secretary in the post-1931 National Government officially headed by his fellow National Labourite, James Ramsay MacDonald.

The man who counted most in the British politics of 1932 was not MacDonald but Stanley Baldwin, Lord President of the Council and head of the Conservative Party. Baldwin held at least 450 votes out of just over 600 in the House of Commons. As a politician, Baldwin was always astute in his assessment of where people should serve, as most recently witnessed by his own abstention from the Prime Ministership during a period of unpopular government economies. That the Geneva Disarmament Conference was a suitable place for a political enemy and a doubtful political ally, gave evidence of
what Baldwin and his friends really thought of the conference and its chances.

Disarmament was a complicated business. To be a success, the Geneva Disarmament Conference required patience and mutual trust to a degree not commonly seen in diplomatic history, not only among the delegates, but from the governments who sent the delegates their instructions. Required above all was the basic will to disarm, a refusal to face a failure to disarm, on the part of all major military powers. These exacting requirements were not met. In fact, the story of the Disarmament Conference was a story of impatience, mistrust, and a willingness of several governments to see it fail, provided someone else could be blamed.

The core of the problem was Germany versus France. The Germans demanded an end to all discriminatory treatment in military matters arising from their defeat in the First World War. For them equality of armaments was an issue of national honor and more; at bottom it was the inequality in armaments that enabled the wartime allied powers to enforce their reparations demands so highly unpopular in Germany.

The French demanded security against any renewed aggression by her larger neighbor. That security was provided by a large army and air force. If the army
and air force were to be abolished or greatly reduced as part of a general disarmament plan, France's lost security must be made good by a meaningful new military alliance or an effective international police force before any reduction took place.

The respective demands of Germany and France were not diametrically opposed to one another. It would have been possible, theoretically, for every power to disarm down to the level of Germany, and from the token forces remaining form some organization, perhaps a League of Nations Army, sufficient to maintain the peace. Unfortunately a third requirement introduced a fatal complication—the requirement of the British Commonwealth and the United States that they should not take on any serious obligations in Europe, particularly in the military sphere. Britain had mutual security obligations under the Locarno Treaty of 1925, but those obligations were so loosely worded as to reserve to Britain unlimited freedom of inaction in carrying them out. The United States had no obligations at all, and powerful influences in the legislative branch of the United States Government were at work to maintain the isolationist policy.

Yet the active cooperation of Britain was a necessity and the active cooperation of the United
States most desirable for any security plan that would satisfy France. There were other problems that might have been sufficient to wreck the conference, but none so large and obvious as that of German equality versus French security versus Anglo-American isolationism. This discrepancy in national policies resulted in protracted and meaningless debates at Geneva. The situation reached a critical point with the temporary withdrawal of Germany from the conference in September 1932.
Whatever the disappointment of the British Government and the Conservative Party and its allies over the lack of progress in the disarmament negotiations, it was not a great surprise to them. The obviously divergent national interests of the conferees and the constant glare of publicity the negotiations were exposed to worked against any real settlement. The Opposition, however, pronounced itself shocked as well as disappointed. In holding the Government up for censure, Labour politicians said that the Geneva Conference would have produced an agreement already if the British Government had provided proper leadership. In particular, the Government should set an example to the other powers by scrapping more of the fleet.

The Opposition here employed the sort of double standard often discernible in foreign policy debates, in which the home country is judged harshly while the sins of foreign countries are not emphasized. Japan, for instance, had waged a slow war in north China for a year before the Conference began. Japan had chosen the very eve of the opening of the Conference to aggravate the situation by shelling the native quarter of Shanghai—the biggest artillery barrage since the end of the Great War, it was said. Japan's role in the Disarmament Conference was much more passive than the British, show-
ing a lack of real concern over the outcome. They did not offer to scrap more of their fleet. But Japan was not held up for censure by the British Labour Party, primarily because this would distract the public from the point it wished to make about the National Government's deficient policies, and perhaps also because the Japanese Government was known to be insensitive to British Labour opinion.

Since the election disaster of 1931, in which Arthur Henderson and other major Opposition figures had temporarily lost their seats in the House of Commons, the parliamentary Labour Party was lead by George Lansbury. Lansbury as a pacifist held the same uncompromising view of armaments as some fundamentalist clergymen had toward alcoholic drink. On November 10, in response to a long, legalistic defense of Government policy at Geneva by Simon, Lansbury said

the question of disarmament and peace has got to be brought right down to bed rock. Do we really want total disarmament or not? I want total disarmament, and if there is any nation which proposes total disarmament, it is the duty of the British Government to support it and get it carried by other nations. You do not like the Russian proposition, you do not like the Italian proposition—nobody can please you. And then Mr. Hoover comes along with proposals and they are discussed and talked about but nothing happens. The right hon. and learned Gentleman makes speeches here and at Geneva but nothing comes of them; and after weeks we have another set of proposals, the French proposals.
Here Lansbury was speaking about the Herriot Plan, a slight departure from the original French position, allowing a larger, short service German army to replace the Versailles Reichswehr.

All I have to say is that if these proposals mean an increase of military forces in Europe, no matter whether they are conscript or voluntary, or militia—if they mean an increase, it is good-by to disarmament and to peace.4

In early December MacDonald and Simon, together with French, Italian, and American representatives were able to prevail upon the Germans to return to the Disarmament Conference by agreeing that:

The Governments of the United Kingdom, France, and Italy have declared that one of the principles that should guide the Conference on disarmament should be the grant to Germany and to other Powers disarmed by treaty, of equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations. . . . 5

The return of Germany to the conference was a recovery of lost ground rather than a net gain toward the goal of disarmament, but still a satisfactory development to close out the year. The British Prime Minister left London for a long holiday in Scotland. From a scan of the leading articles in The Times, it would seem that the two most pressing questions awaiting his

5Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 270 (1932), 627.

return for the opening of Parliament in January concerned whether British Broadcasting Company announcers should be permitted to editorialize on the air, and whether the same off-the-track betting procedures permitted in horse racing should be extended to dog racing. But as so often was the case in the 1930's, the British Government was soon faced with rapidly developing events in Europe affecting British interests but out of British control.

Two governments fell on Saturday, January 28, 1933—the French Government of Paul-Boncour, and the German Government of General von Schleicher. The fall of a French cabinet was an oft-repeated event of little significance in comparison to the situation in Germany. To replace the General, President von Hindenburg sent for Adolf Hitler, who was henceforth Chancellor, and soon absolute dictator of Germany. None of Hitler's many writings and utterances boded well for disarmament; in 1930 he had said, "We will see to it, when we have come to power, that out of the present Reichswehr a great Army of the German people shall arise."\(^7\)

The arrival of Hitler could be considered in retrospect the death blow for the Geneva Disarmament Conference, but at the time official optimism continued.

\(^7\)Shirer, p. 198.
to prevail.

In February 1933 a proposal naming definite ceilings on the strengths of various European armies and air forces was drawn up by Anthony Eden, alternate delegate to the Disarmament Conference, and adopted by the British Government as the MacDonald Plan.

If the MacDonald Plan was not foredoomed by the events inside of Germany, its ultimate failure was contributed to by the political ineptitude of MacDonald and his advisors themselves. MacDonald and the Foreign Secretary, Sir John Simon, on whose salesmanship the success of the plan depended, were not the best possible men for the job.

In 1933 MacDonald was past his prime as an executive and as a persuasive orator. On one occasion he was supposed to have said to Lansbury, "George, do you feel your age now? I do. Often I am speaking and I have no idea how the sentence I am saying should finish. . . ."8 He was afflicted with eye trouble that prevented him from reading what he should. His political position was not healthy; he had deserted the Labour rank and file over the issue of cutting the dole in 1931 and was hated by many of his former political friends. He remained

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Prime Minister on the sufferance of the Conservatives, in order to give an all-party appearance to the cabinet of the National Government.

Simon had impeccable credentials as a minister of the state. His career as a Liberal in Parliament extended back to the election of 1905. He was an intelligent, cultured man of patrician appearance, at ease in positions of responsibility. But Simon was no leader.
He filled his autobiography with lucid accounts of British diplomatic failures to which he had contributed a substantial share.

The momentum of the MacDonald plan suffered two checks. A rival plan sponsored by Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator, and the month-long recess of the Disarmament Conference in observance of Easter distracted the attention of the governments. MacDonald and Simon aggravated the situation by appearing as much in favor of the Italian plan as their own. Right after introducing the MacDonald Plan at Geneva, the two were flown to Rome in an Italian seaplane piloted by Marshal Balbo, Commander-in-Chief of Italy's showy air force. Lord Londonderry, the Secretary of State for Air, was with the party, and perhaps with some envy described Balbo in these terms:

He did not attempt to conceal his determination that, no matter what happened at Geneva, no one should put a finger on his beloved Air Force. When he said that, he meant it. Moreover, as an important Fascist leader he could enforce his viewpoint with far more likelihood of ultimate success than an ordinary minister in a country where authority depends on a majority vote.9

MacDonald and Simon had come to Rome to negotiate upon Mussolini's Four Power Pact. The Four Power

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Pact between Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, eventually signed the following July, was an attempt to set up a "directory of Europe" among the big powers, perhaps to the detriment of the smaller powers. The Four Power Pact of July 1933 "unhappily had neither substance nor good consequence."

Neither did the weak, platitude-filled speech delivered by MacDonald in the House of Commons on March 23, which praised both disarmament plans. In the debate following, Winston Churchill was moved to characterize the whole Geneva Disarmament Conference as "a solemn and prolonged farce."

Indeed, the work of the conference as of March 1933 could best be summed up in the parable quoted by Salvador de Madariaga, the Spanish delegate.

Birds and animals came together for a disarmament conference. The lion suggested to the eagle that it should dispense with its talons, the eagle appealed to the bull to give up its horns, the bull appealed to the tiger to give up its claws. Finally the bear suggested that all should disarm and join him in a universal embrace.

The Disarmament Conference ended its spring recess on April 27, its membership now reduced to 54 members.

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11 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 276 (1933), 544.
bers. The MacDonald Plan, by then thoroughly studied, was subjected to a long list of amendments, some incompatible with each other. For instance, Eden wrote that:

the Nazis want amendments to our chapter in the Convention on the size of armies. These would have prolonged the period of training and swollen the total of their trained troops. The Conference would not agree and I was asked to make this plain to the German delegate, which proved to be an unpleasant business, with Nadolny banging the table and being generally truculent.¹³

An atmosphere of gloom settled over the Disarmament Conference. Japan had withdrawn from the League of Nations in retaliation for the verbal harassment by the League over the war in China. In Germany where, since the Reichstag fire in February, nationalism and political oppression had broken all bounds, there was a rash of saber rattling speeches, climaxed by those of Konstantin von Neurath, the Foreign Minister, and von Papen, the Vice-Chancellor, on May 11 and 12 respectively. The new message carried in these speeches was that war was wholesome and natural, and even essential to the progress of human civilization. As befitted a virile nation-state, Germany faced the prospect of war with equanimity, if not anticipation.

But Hitler, who had a realistic appreciation of

¹³Eden, p. 42.
the state of affairs at Geneva, decided it would be well at this point to brighten disarmament prospects for the moment. His speech to the Reichstag on May 17 was conciliatory, reasonable. He said that "Germany would also be perfectly ready to destroy the small amount of arms remaining to her, if the neighboring countries will do the same thing with equal thoroughness."\textsuperscript{14} He also had his representative, Rudolf Nadolny, agree to the MacDonald troop ceiling proposals. This gesture did much to counteract the current bad publicity about Jew-bating and concentration camps, and inspired greater agitation by the British peace lobby for the Government to match Hitler's words with British deeds.

The MacDonald Plan with amendments was scheduled to be put to the test in a series of three "readings" and debates, in the British parliamentary style. However the mutual security provisions of the plan were effectively killed before the third reading by the action of the United States Senate, which forbade President Roosevelt to sign anything that might lead to American military involvement in Europe. The second session of the Disarmament Conference accordingly adjourned on June 30, after the second reading. There was no longer

any hope for the Macdonald Plan except possible salvage of its technical provisions when the third session began in the fall.

The third session of the Geneva Disarmament Conference gathered at the beginning of October 1933 under circumstances even less auspicious than those under which the previous session had ended. The World Economic Conference held in London over the summer had been a failure, and the technique of large, public conferences as a means of diplomacy was falling into disrepute. The Disarmament Conference had grown stale, and public interest in its proceedings had greatly diminished.

For Britain, disarmament had more than ever narrowed down to finding a way to stop German rearmament, which was known to be underway. The German Government was conducting basic military training of youths on a large scale, using a national physical fitness program as a front. The German aviation industry was designing airliners and sport planes that were obviously prototypes for military aircraft. A report reaching London in May said Germany had 125 "fighting machines," including 60 kept at Lipetsk Airfield, not far from Moscow. Also, the German Government had placed an order with the Dornier factory for 36 twin-engine
bombers of an advanced design. The most ominous indication of all was the analysis of Germany's imports of strategic materials since the advent of the National Socialist Regime, particularly metals—tungsten, nickel, chromium, and above all, scrap iron, the basic stuff of weapons fabrication.

The British and French governments accordingly came to accept the idea of getting signed and sealed whatever fragments of the MacDonald Plan Germany might agree to. They proposed that Germany agree not to acquire land armaments in excess of the MacDonald Plan figures if France disarmed down to its MacDonald Plan quota at the end of four years. The four years was insisted upon by France as a probationary period. As one of the more prominent Labour members of Parliament had found while visiting Paris, "the French saw war coming in two or three years' time, and they didn't believe that England or America would help them. The French could deal with this situation themselves, if they kept their armaments."

The offer of basic equality in four years was

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made by Simon at Geneva on October 12. He was offering Hitler a disarmament deal more advantageous to Germany than one Tardieu had turned down from Brüning the previous year. But it was now too late for Britain and France. Hitler sensed that he need no longer accept any limitations on his land armaments of the sort he had said he would welcome the previous May. He therefore assumed the unpleasant side of his Jekyll-and-Hyde personality. The day following the Simon speech, the German delegation walked out of the Disarmament Conference for the second and final time, and quit the League of Nations as well. Arthur Henderson called for an adjournment pending study and hopefully resolution of the new problem created by Germany's action through private diplomatic channels. The Disarmament Conference was now in an obviously moribund condition, but no one proposed it officially disperse—there was always the chance that some unforeseen event would restore its usefulness, and besides no one wanted the onus of declaring it a failure.

During November there were three debates on the state of disarmament in the House of Commons. On November 7 Simon spoke for an hour and twenty-five minutes explaining the vicissitudes of the Disarmament Conference. Simon could say nothing that would shake the
Labour Opposition from their position that the failure of the conference to date was primarily the fault of the National Government. On November 13, Labour moved a vote of censure against the Government on these grounds. Labour demanded the British abandonment of all air bombing, Britain's disarmament down to Germany's Versailles level, international control of civil aviation, suppression of all privately manufactured armaments, and an international police force with full powers of inspection and control of residual armed forces in each country.

The censure motion if carried would have overthrown the National Government, but there was no chance of that. The Conservative Party's "big battalions" defeated the motion by 409 to 54, a typical majority in those times.¹⁷

The whole question was reopened in the debate on the King's Address on November 24. Simon's position in these debates was that lamentable failures had occurred at the Geneva Disarmament Conference and the reasons for them could clearly be seen, although no one was really to blame, especially not Britain. He saw no possibility of any disarmament without Germany's full parti-

¹⁷Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 281 (1933), 579.
icipation, and expressed confidence that Hitler's May speech desiring disarmament was still the policy of the German Government, and that the German proposals could be brought to the action stage through private negotiations.

Besides Simon's critics of the left wing, who wanted unilateral British disarmament as a further example to other nations, there were those criticizing the Government on technical grounds. The most prestigious of these was the wartime Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who decried the four year probationary period demanded by France and Britain as a useless impediment to peace. "I defy anybody to organize the manufacture of big guns without the fact being known throughout the world," he said. "It cannot be done. . . . They might as well, if they were going to invade France, go with their pockets full of pebbles as go with rifles only. They must have big guns, and they cannot manufacture them. And yet we talk about a period of probation."\(^\text{18}\)

From the political right came criticism from those who maintained their faith in secret diplomacy as

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\(^{18}\) *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 281 (1933), 103.
opposed to public forums for the conduct of international affairs. Prominent among critics of the right was Leo Amery, who said of the Geneva Disarmament Conference:

I have no desire to continue this "Who killed Cock Robin" discussion. I would rather ask the House seriously to answer the question whether the time has not come for a reconsideration of the whole of our policy which, so far, however well-intentioned, has failed to lead anywhere and which I cannot see is going to lead anywhere.\textsuperscript{19}

On December 18, Hitler announced a new disarmament proposal, carefully prepared and not lacking in detail. The plan called for an increase in the German Army from the present 100,000 to 300,000 and the acquisition of certain weapons certified "defensive" by the Disarmament Conference but denied under the Treaty of Versailles. Germany wanted all powers to abandon weapons held by the Disarmament Conference to be "offensive" in nature. Inspection procedures were to be set up after the nations holding offensive weapons had abandoned them.\textsuperscript{20}

Immediately after the year-end holidays Simon went to Rome to find out from Mussolini what joint action might be taken to modify the latest German disarmament.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 281, 106.

\textsuperscript{20}Wheeler-Bennett, p. 194.
ment proposal into something France would accept. Mus­solini felt that it was mainly up to France to adapt to Germany's requirements. At the end of January 1934 came British suggestions for a compromise—200,000 men for the German Army, and delayed equality in weapons by stages—followed by generally similar proposals by Italy. Mussolini told Simon he would support the British proposals should they show promise of acceptance by the Germans and French, but he felt that his own would have the better chance of acceptance.

Hitler thanked Britain for the counterproposal in a speech to the Reichstag on January 30. The next day the Italian plan, which Simon had seen during his Rome visit, was published. It contained less material than the British plan and differed from it in granting Germany her 300,000 man army without further negotia­tion, and in containing stipulations on arms spending. 21 In the event, the French rejected the German plan and all compromises to it. This decision brought the European discussions on general disarmament to a final impasse.

The failure of the Geneva Disarmament Confer-

ence did not doom all British hopes for at least a measure of arms control. It resulted in a change of technique—negotiations with one or several of the major powers on a specific facet of armaments. For instance, there was the London Plan, promulgated during the first days of February 1935 by the chiefs of state and foreign ministers of Britain and France (MacDonald, Simon, Flandin, Laval). The London Plan invited Germany into new discussions on what should replace the Versailles Treaty in regard to armaments, in return for Germany's return to the League of Nations. There was a section of the London Plan known as the Air Pact, whereby the Locarno mutual security obligations were reiterated, with a new provision for mass retaliation by air bombing against any member whose transgression of the Locarno Pact included aggressive air bombing.

At length Germany expressed interest in the London Plan and suggested that the responsible British ministers come to Berlin for discussions. The trip was delayed by British anxiety not to become separated from the French in the venture. While the communications and visitations between London and Paris on what to say to the Germans were still in progress, the Germans put off the meeting. Hitler had caught a cold while celebrating the repatriation of the Saar, greatly aggravated by the
celebrated British White Paper on Defence, published on March 4, which seemed to contain offensive references to Germany. New events changed the premises on which the London Plan had been conceived. On March 9 and March 16 Germany announced the official recreation of the Air Force (Luftwaffe) and national conscription for a new thirty-six division Army, henceforth to be known as the Wehrmacht. Under those circumstances Sir John Simon might well have caught a cold himself. But when Hitler re-extended the invitation Simon dutifully arrived at the Berlin Chancellery accompanied by Anthony Eden. The chief development at their meeting with Hitler was not some new hope of disarmament, but Hitler's claim that he already had parity in military aviation with the Royal Air Force. Simon and Eden returned home, and little more was heard about the London Plan.
Simon and Eden, with German Foreign Minister von Neurath at the Berlin Chancellory, March 26, 1935.

The events of March produced considerable diplomatic activity, culminating in a meeting of Britain, France, and Italy, April 12 through 14 at Stresa, on scenic Lake Maggiore in northern Italy. From this meeting it was clear to Mussolini that verbal regret and deprecation was as far as his two partners would go to oppose unilateral German rearmament. He began to chart his Abyssinian policy accordingly. MacDonald had cut a particularly poor figure, being incoherent much of the time, and in fact changed places in the Cabinet
with Stanley Baldwin soon after his return.

French Foreign Minister Laval, Mussolini, MacDonald, and French Premier Flandin. Stresa, April 1935.

Britain, with the largest navy in the world, had no difficulty in promoting conversations on the size of navies. Among those naval ships generally recognized as offensive in role, cruisers and submarines, Britain led the navies of Europe with fifty and fifty-one, respectively. British cruisers patrolled the far-flung sea lanes connecting the distant parts of the Empire, ready on the outbreak of war to defend against enemy surface raiders and to join the sub-
marine force in preying on enemy ships. The aircraft carrier, of which Britain had eight and one building, were recognized as invaluable for fleet reconnaissance, but carrier aviation was as yet unproven as an offensive weapon.  

In 1935, the first consideration in assessing the strength of navies was the capital ship—the battleship and its faster, more lightly armored companion, the battlecruiser. The oldest battleship in the Royal Navy in 1935, was the Queen Elizabeth, laid down in 1913. The Queen Elizabeth carried a battery of eight fifteen-inch rifles which could hit with a three-quarter ton projectile at over thirty miles. No cruiser could mount such armament, no cruiser armor could withstand such a hit. Like the lesser pieces on a chessboard, a squadron of the most modern cruisers would have to scatter at the approach of the Queen. By agreement there were fifteen battleships and battlecruisers in the Royal Navy. France had nine, Italy four, with two additional under construction in both France and Italy. The United States had fifteen and Japan had nine.  

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As the French were not willing to concede equality in land armaments to any potential enemy, neither were the British conceding equality in sea power. The presence of British capital ships in home waters and in the Mediterranean, between which the force was approximately equally divided, freed the bulk of the cruiser force to disperse to the five oceans.

Yet everyone in Britain remembered the expensive naval race with Germany before the First World War which had failed to prevent war, and perhaps had even hastened its coming.

On the German side, Hitler's plans did not include a naval arms race with Britain. On the contrary, a study of Hitler's policies shows that he wanted to avoid unnecessary tensions with both Britain and France while he drove the Slavs out of eastern Europe and secured for Germany the living space and the natural resources that would make the country invulnerable to blockade, or other manifestations of British sea supremacy.

Having caused much excitement by his proclamations of rearmament in March, Hitler moved to restore calm and renewed hopes for disarmament. On May 21 Hitler delivered a thirteen point program to the Reichstag which was to shape Germany's relations with for-
eign powers in the future. This speech, made on the eve of an important defense debate in the British House of Commons, was couched in turgid, redundant phrases typical of Hitler's oratory. But it had its desired effect. William L. Shirer, an American correspondent who was there, wrote:

Hitler was in a relaxed mood and exuded a spirit not only of confidence but—to the surprise of his listeners—of tolerance and conciliation. There was no resentment or defiance toward the nations which had condemned his scrapping of the military clauses of the treaty of Versailles. Instead were assurances that all he wanted was peace and understanding based on justice for all. He rejected the very idea of war; it was senseless, it was useless, as well as a horror.24

Hitler reiterated the obvious fact that Germany would no longer make a pretense of obeying the dictates of the Versailles Treaty in regard to armaments. On the other hand, he said, Germany would adhere to every treaty voluntarily entered into, regardless of date, but in the future would not enter into unrealistic treaties. Germany was ready to negotiate on all arms questions including the proposed air pact contained in the London Plan, and to conclude a naval agreement with Britain. "Germany needs peace and desires peace," he said.25

24 Shirer, p. 393.

Anglo-German naval discussions accordingly got underway with amazing speed, by Geneva standards. The British would have preferred a naval agreement within the framework of the upcoming conference with the United States, Japan, and others. However, getting an arms agreement with Germany was the first consideration, and the Germans seemed amenable to one now. Accordingly, after brief talks between the Admiralty and ranking officers of the Kriegsmarine, the special ambassador plenipotentiary, Joachim von Ribbentrop, arrived in London on June 18 for the signing.

The terms of the treaty were explained by Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, the First Lord of the Admiralty, in a British Broadcasting Corporation broadcast on the night of June 19. Germany had pledged to keep the size of her navy to a third that of Britain's. An exception was the submarine clause which permitted Germany, in an "emergency" to build submarines in numbers equal to Britain's submarine fleet, although Germany promised not to use them against merchant ships.

It is this declaration of the German Government which makes the arrangement so valuable a contribution to the general problem of naval limitations, for it means that Germany will refrain from naval competition not only with this country, but with any other, and we have great hopes that this declaration may remove from the minds of nations any idea of competitive naval building.  

26 "Naval Strength," *Times*, June 20, 1935, p. 16.
In the House of Commons debate on the treaty on July 11, the critics, chief among them Clement Attlee for the Labour Party and Winston Churchill as an independent Conservative, pointed out the disadvantages. The Anglo-German Naval Treaty had further undermined the League of Nations, which was in difficult times, by abetting Germany in the overthrow of the naval provisions in Article V of the Treaty of Versailles, at the same time as British representatives at the League of Nations were complaining about the way Germany had overthrown the provisions of the same treaty in regard to ground and air forces. It also created difficulties with the French, who were always suspicious of Anglo-German collusion, and was in fact a violation of agreements made with the French to maintain "close and cordial collaboration" at
Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell,  
First Lord of the Admiralty

Stresa and again at the time of the London Plan. The agreement with the Germans was similarly inconsiderate of the Scandinavian countries; it virtually signed over the Baltic to German naval domination, should Germany construct the 5 battleships, 2 aircraft carriers, 21 cruisers, 64 destroyers, and undetermined numbers of submarines allowed in the agreement.²⁷

The Anglo-German Naval Treaty of 1935 remained in effect until April 1939, when Hitler abrogated it in retaliation for British encirclement diplomacy. In the event, the German Navy had, on September 3, 1939, 2 battlecruisers, 3 "pocket battleships," armored ships in the 10,000 ton class, bigger than a heavy cruiser, 8 cruisers, 22 destroyers, compared to 184 in the Royal Navy, and 57 submarines.  

At the end of 1935 the major naval powers reconvened in London to renegotiate fleet limitations, and hopefully to bring about a new round of reduction in the building and maintaining of capital ships and cruisers. The Japanese, who had made the conference necessary by declaring their intent to withdraw from the 1922 Washington arrangements, insisted upon the abolition of the 5:5:3 capital ship ratio in favor of a common upper limit of warship tonnage for all powers. The British and Americans could not see their way to agree to any common upper limit, and accordingly, on January 15, 1936, Admiral Nagano announced his withdrawal from the conference on behalf of Japan. The talks proceeded to an agreement on March 25, although by then a second participant, Count Grandi of

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28 Ibid., p. 616.
Italy, refused to sign in protest against the threat of Anglo-French naval intervention in Italy's Abyssinian campaign.

Britain, France, and the United States agreed generally to extend the 1922 limitations, as amended in 1930, another six years, that is until 1942, contingent upon Japan and Italy adhering to the treaty even if they refused to sign it. Specific points of the 1936 agreement in regard to capital ships limited their tonnage to 35,000 tons displacement (the British had wanted to establish a 25,000 ton limit), and their gun caliber to 14 inches. A battleship was considered overdue at 26 years after commissioning, at which time it could be scrapped and replaced.
Aircraft carriers were limited to 23,000 tons and were expected to last 20 years. Similarly, cruiser replacement was likewise set at 20 years. Submarines were limited to a displacement of 5,000 tons and were to be considered overage at 13 years.²⁹

Admiral Chatfield and the Admiralty wanted to know before April 1937 whether Japan and Italy would go along with what had been agreed to at London in order to complete the specifications of two new battleships, King George V and Prince of Wales, to be completed in 1939. The big rifles and their mountings were the most exacting part of the construction, and the Admiralty wanted to know if the 16-inch caliber would be legal.

Italy settled the question in 1937 by announcing that the new Littorio class of battleship would carry 15-inch guns, which released the British from the 14-inch ceiling, although they kept them in the designs anyway. It was for the diminutive Japanese to bury the question forever; by 1937 they were planning to lay down three battleships monsters among their kind, with displacements in excess of 60,000 tons, to be armed with 18-inch guns.

The short-lived Anglo-German Naval Treaty of June 1935 and the abortive five power naval conference of March 1936 marked the practical end of Britain's attempt to promote European disarmament, although the subject continued to be mentioned from time to time.

On October 4, 1938, Neville Chamberlain, having just been saturated with plaudits for his role in avoid-
ing war with Germany through the Munich settlement, told the House of Commons:

While we must renew our determination to fill up the deficiencies that yet remain in our armaments and our defensive precautions so that we may be ready to defend ourselves and make our diplomacy effective (Interruption)—yes I am a realist and I say with an equal sense of reality that I do see fresh opportunities of approaching disarmament opening up before us, and I believe that they are at least as hopeful to-day as they have been at any previous time.30

Chamberlain's vision of disarmament opportunities in the autumn of 1938 must have been one of the most widely unshared visions ever offered up by a British Prime Minister. Chamberlain himself could not have kept it very sincerely for very long. Nevertheless, the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Kingsley Wood, asked his service advisors to come up with some new aerial disarmament proposals. As Chief of Plans for the Royal Air Force, it fell to Air Marshal Sir John Slessor to prepare a paper on the subject. Slessor, who as a planner was preoccupied with great bomber fleets for 1942, "had to waste my Christmas leave writing this bloody nonsense."31

"I still hope we will be able to avoid an arma-

30. Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 339 (1938), 50.

ments race with England," Hitler told the Reichstag on the occasion of his denouncing the Naval Treaty on April 28, 1939. "Should the British Government wish to enter once more into negotiations with Germany on this problem, no one would be happier than I at the prospect of still being able to come to a clear and straightforward understanding." 32

But by this time, Hitler's conduct had disappointed Chamberlain and his friends once too often; his credit in London was exhausted, and his offer elicited no response.

The reasons for the failure of disarmament are as complex as the human personality itself. Basically there was a lack of will on the part of too many influential statesmen in Europe to see disarmament work even before Hitler arrived in their midst. There were too many who would have actively supported disarmament only if it had appeared about to succeed, but were meanwhile content to let the negotiations bog down in endless petty complications.

Which countries seemed most to blame at the time for the failure? Viscount Lothian, a German sympathizer,

32 Baynes, II, 1626.
dealt with this question as lucidly as anyone in a 1935 letter to The Times.

Disarmament crashed on the rock that France could not bring herself to see Germany equal in armaments at any level, high or low, without military guarantees for her own security much more definite than those afforded by the Locarno treaty. No French Government dependent on the uncertain support of a group of parties in the Chamber, could be strong enough to concede voluntarily equality to Germany—any more than any British Government could voluntarily concede naval equality.^^

Lord Lothian might have added that no German government could or did survive in the subservient position dictated by Versailles after the onset of economic hard times.

From a distance of several decades, it is possible to judge that such a conference as assembled at Geneva in 1932 would have had the best chance of success after a long period of peace such as occurred in Europe after the Napoleonic wars. Nations neglect their armed forces in time of peace. They become unable to wage war on a large scale because their armies grow small, and are poorly equipped. Then is the time for a disarmament conference to come together and codify into law the situation which already exists in fact. It is not surprising that the Geneva Disarmament Conference was not

equal to the task of legislating disarmament in the face of unfavorable trends.
CHAPTER II

BRITISH REARMAMENT IN ITS EARLY STAGE—TO MARCH 1935

"The prophet of war is never popular."

-- Duff Cooper, Old Men Forget

Part I

After the victory of 1918, British armament policy was guided by the Ten Year Rule. The chiefs of the respective services were given notice not to expect another major war for ten years. In the early 1920's Britain experienced confrontations with Russia and Turkey, two remote and feeble adversaries, while throughout the decade relations with major military powers remained friendly. Routine garrison life, anti-slavery patrols in the Red Sea, strafing the cattle of tribesmen who had reneged on taxes—such were the typical activities of the British armed forces during the operation of the Ten Year Rule.

From time to time military men asked about their status; "finally, in 1928, the service chiefs were told, on Churchill's prompting, that they need ask no more:

the ten years' freedom from major war began automatically each morning.\textsuperscript{2}

In the 1920's the great battles of the armed forces were fought in the Cabinet and the offices in Whitehall, the arch enemy being the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in various years Winston Churchill, Philip Snowden, and Neville Chamberlain. Even in prosperous times the Exchequer was caught between the simultaneous public demands for expensive government services and for tax relief. With no war in prospect, it was natural for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to turn to the armed forces in search of the necessary economies to meet the demands placed upon him. The Chancellor of the Exchequer kept a staff of civil servants knowledgeable of the inner workings of the Navy, Army, and Air Force, respectively, for the purpose of cutting the service appropriations requests.

By the end of 1930 the squeeze on the armed forces was aggravated by the international economic depression. The vital British export trade was hurt when overseas customers went bankrupt. At the same time it was becoming obvious that Britain would never be able to collect the war debts and reparations owed by other countries. These and other factors combined to shake

\textsuperscript{2}Taylor, p. 365.
international confidence in the pound. In the summer of 1931 there was a run on the pound with individuals cashing them in for gold or foreign currencies. The Labour Government of Ramsay MacDonald strove to save the pound by maintaining a balanced budget at home. To do this the Government made an across-the-board reduction in its payroll, generally of ten per cent. The pay of the military was cut by this figure, which contributed to an actual instance of mutiny at the navy base at Invergordon in October of that year.³

More important nationally was the decision to cut welfare payments ("the dole") by ten per cent. The Labourites split into National and Opposition factions over this question, in an atmosphere of class warfare. The National Government of Labourites, Conservatives, and Liberals went on to weather the financial crisis by taking the pound off the gold standard, and then won the national election of October 1931 to the extent of 521 seats (mostly Conservative) to 52 for the Opposition Labour Party and 33 for the Opposition Liberal Party.

The parliamentary seating, however, was not exactly a true reflection of British public opinion as it was in 1931. The Opposition Labourites, led after the election by the proletarian-pacifist George Lans-
bury, had polled fully a third of the votes cast, but not enough of them in the right districts. A large proportion of the citizenry in Lansbury's camp were unsophisticated folk, totally disaffected with the National Government because of the economic hard times and generally uncritical of socialist polemics, including the one about the military establishment as a conspiracy of warmongers and butchers of the proletariat. The social divisions operating in British society extending to military affairs could be seen in Labour's conduct of the many off-year by-elections to Parliament.

One 1934 leaflet read:

The Unionist Party want war. Your husbands and sons will be cannon fodder. More poison-gas will mean dearer food. Register your disgust of the warmongers now by voting Labour.

The parties in the National Government felt vulnerable to this line of attack as seen by the lengths they went to refute it. A letter released from the office of Stanley Baldwin for use in another 1934 by-election read as follows:

I am told your Socialist opponents, in accordance with their usual practice at by-elections, are trying to drag the question of peace and war into the arena of party policies, and indulging in

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4 Ibid., p. 326.

scare mongering in the hope of catching a few votes. It is very strange that those who profess to be champions of world peace should for the sake of party gain do everything in their power to put difficulties in the way of those, who, being in a position of responsibility . . . have been striving day and night to promote international disarmament and strengthen the cause of world peace. The fact that your opponent resorts to tactics of this kind is perhaps evidence of a desire to distract the attention of the electors from the remarkable recovery both financial and industrial which this country has made since the Socialist Government went out of office.\(^6\)

This militantly anti-military attitude of a significant minority of the voters contributed greatly to the National Government's fear, for all its big majority in the House of Commons, to pursue too forward a policy in response to the challenge thrown down by Germany.

The economic and political events of 1931 resulted in the fall of military appropriations to a new low and a reduction of the armed forces to their smallest size for the 1919-1939 period. About two and a half per cent of the British gross national product was going for defense.\(^7\)

The Royal Navy was at the beginning of 1932 about half the size of the wartime Grand Fleet, which had been demobilized six months after the armistice.


\(^7\) Taylor, p. 229.
The number of men in the Navy stood at some 90,000, the lowest in forty years. Most of the ships in the Navy were veterans of the Grand Fleet, although the ships of other fleets, including the potentially hostile Japanese Fleet, were similarly old. What bothered the British Admiralty was not so much the size and age of the Fleet, but the greatly diminished technical and industrial base by then available for the modernization and expansion it one day expected to carry out. Admiral Sir Ernie Chatfield, from 1933 First Sea Lord, who liked to express himself in horticultural analogies, wrote:

The material on which the Navy depends has to be produced by special firms, by special workers trained to the art. When the money is lacking on which these thrive, they sicken and possibly die like unwatered plants. Some did so, and the roots—the skilled hands and key men withered too, and disappeared. However zealously you may pour money like water over them, they will not recover rapidly.

And later: "Sea power is like an oak, of slow growth."

The effect of the withering and neglect had left the naval security of Britain "at its most dangerous point in one hundred fifty years."

The British Regular Army of 1932 consisted mainly of 148,000 troops in the British Isles. Troops over-

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9 Ibid., pp. 12, 44.
seas were mainly serving with local auxiliaries in India. There were just under 60,000 British soldiers in India and about 20,000 elsewhere in the Empire. The home combat forces were grouped into four infantry divisions, with smaller contingents of cavalry and artillery.10 There was also a Royal Tank Corps which, since it could not get by with war surplus equipment, had fallen into neglect. Likewise an experimental mechanized infantry brigade had reverted to horses and mules.

Another component of the ground forces was the Territorial Army, created by Richard Haldane as Secretary of State for War before the outbreak of the First World War. The Territorial Army was a national guard of part-time soldiers who went to drill meetings once a week and attended a two week training camp in the summer. It comprised 120,000 men organized into thirteen infantry divisions. In 1932 the Territorial Army was poorly trained and equipped for the same reasons as the regular component was, plus the fact that cancelling summer camp was a frequently resorted-to government economy measure.

The Army had second priority under the Navy in the size of its annual appropriation, but it was last behind the Navy and Air Force in appropriations per

capita, and, given Britain's geographical situation, rightly so. Besides, many people of various political orientations—unreconstructed tory through communist—felt that the French, with the connivance of certain British military men, had lured the Army into the four year blood letting on the Western Front after the British pledge to aid the Belgians had been honorably if unsuccessfully fulfilled. Out of the 1914-1918 experience had come the slogan "no more Paschendaeles," and a firm belief on the part of most army officers in the concept of limited liability in the commitment of ground forces.11

The Royal Air Force and reserve Auxiliary Air Force of 1932 consisted of seventy-five squadrons Empire wide, including fifteen of the Fleet Air Arm. Forty-two were based at home, mostly in the London area. In 1923, Sir Samuel Hoare, then Secretary of State for Air, had sponsored a plan for a metropolitan defense force of fifty-two squadrons, which remained the official plan, but in the intervening years it had never been financially expedient to build up to that number.

11 The Battle of Paschendaele, also known as the Third Battle of Ypres, opened on July 31, 1917, with a British attack on fifteen miles of German trench line. The British broke off the attack the following November, having penetrated to a maximum depth of 9,000 yards at a cost of 244,897 killed or seriously wounded—The Editors
With the average squadron able to put up eight or nine planes apiece, plus a percentage of reserve and unattached machines, British military aircraft in 1932 numbered around eight hundred and fifty, and was variously assessed as the fifth or sixth largest in Europe.\(^{12}\)

The qualitative measurement of an air force was in terms of "first line aircraft," at best an imprecise term, subject to various interpretations. For instance, considering that the first duty of the fighter planes of the Royal Air Force was to protect the country from air attack, and that in 1932 there was one outstanding new British fighter plane, the Hawker Fury, that could pursue hostile bombers at two hundred and fifty miles per hour, thirty miles per hour faster than any of the other types on hand, and that the Royal Air Force possessed this new plane in the strength of three squadrons only, one could arrive at the conclusion that the first line fighter strength of the Royal Air Force then numbered under thirty aircraft.

The Air Force's position in the pecking order for funds had advantages and disadvantages. As a young service it lacked the Navy's ingrained influence, the "din-

\(^{12}\)Londonderry, p. 31.
ing-out power" that helped shape budget allocations. On the other hand the limited liability concept that favored a big navy also favored a big air force. The British public did not need to be sold on the idea of the need for an air force if the other two services were also to be needed. Britain was "air minded." The airfield displays on Empire Day and the annual show at Hendon attracted crowds in the hundreds of thousands. Aircraft speed, altitude, and distance records, continually being set in an age of expanding aviation technology, were also items of great public interest as soon by their treatment in the press. The same was true of commercial air travel, then just becoming an established, large scale proposition.

The military experts who thought air attack was the future ultimate weapon were widely read, especially Guilio Douhet's *Command of the Air*, first published in 1921. Britain had suffered sporadic bombing raids in the late war, first by gas-filled Zeppelins and later by large bombers specially constructed for the purpose. Now both experts and public at large more than shared Douhet's view that bombing raids of the past were a poor guide as to what to expect in the future.

In *Command of the Air*, the author, a morbid visionary, asked his readers to:
take the center of a large city and imagine what would happen among the civilian population during a single attack by a single bombing unit. For my part, I have no doubt that its impact upon the people would be terrible. Here is what would be likely to happen to the center of the city within a radius of about 250 meters: Within a few minutes some 20 tons of high-explosive, incendiary, and gas bombs would rain down. First would come explosions, then fires, then deadly gases floating on the surface and preventing any approach to the stricken area. After hours passed and night advanced, the fires would spread while the poison gas paralyzed all life. By the following day the life of the city would be suspended; and if it happened to be a junction on some important artery of communication, traffic would be suspended.

What could happen to a single city in a single day could also happen to ten, twenty, fifty cities.

A complete breakdown of the social structure cannot but take place in a country subjected to this kind of merciless pounding from the air. The time would soon come when, to put an end to horror and suffering, the people themselves, driven by the instinct of self-preservation, would rise up and demand an end to the war--this before their army and navy had time to mobilize at all!13

Another visionary with more active experience in the business of bombing was Billy Mitchell, formerly of the United States Army Air Corps. During the war, Mitchell had been influenced in his ideas by Major General Sir Hugh Trenchard of the Royal Flying Corps, later first chief of the independent Royal Air Force. Mitchell used the press as a forum to sell air power to the public (which eventually lead to his court martial and dismis-

sal from the Army for insubordination), whereas Trenchard had retired, become a viscount, and during the 1930's used the House of Lords as a forum for the doctrine of strategic bombing, both as a deterrent to aggression, and as an agent to halt aggression once under way.

By 1932 one more new and more terrifying concept in the technique of air bombing had been thought of, as mentioned by Stanley Baldwin in his famous "the bomber will always get through" speech in November of that year. Baldwin asked the House of Commons to visualize a new aerial bomb employing some completely new substance of great power. Such a bomb, "no bigger than a walnut," might have the same destructive force as a conventional bomb, only could be carried by the hundreds or thousands aboard a single airplane.\(^1^4\)

In fact, during the 1930's the one point on defense that the British were in unanimous agreement on was that the gravest threat by far came not from land or sea, but from the air. Yet it was not until after Munich that the Air Force budget overtook that of the Navy.

After the London Naval Treaty of 1930 there was

\(^1^4\)\textit{Parliamentary Debates} (Commons), 276 (1932), 634.
a feeling in the Labour Cabinet that British disarmament had gone as far as it could go without some reciprocity by the other powers.\(^{15}\) When the National Government took office in late 1931, a non-partisan committee on disarmament policy was set up, chaired by MacDonald and including the principal cabinet ministers concerned plus David Lloyd George, Viscount Cecil, Sir Austen Chamberlain, Sir Samuel Hoare, Viscount Lothian, Anthony Eden, and Sir Thomas Inskip. The committee found that "any further reduction of British armaments could only be undertaken as part of an international agreement containing comparable reductions by other powers."\(^{16}\)

The organization of a rearment lobby in British politics began in earnest in the course of 1932, as the impracticability of the Geneva Disarmament Conference became more and more evident. Rearmament was broached at the Conservative Party conference of 1932. From there it spread gradually leftward through the Liberal Party, and finally to the right wing of the Labourites. By May 1935 a number of prominent Labour men were for rearment, first among them Hugh Dalton, the party's most


polished, patrician figure. Dalton had been an under-secretary of state for foreign affairs in the Labour Government of 1929-1931. He was the first in his party to give up on disarmament (1933) and was the strongest on rearmament from that time forward. Others included Sir Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the Trade Union Council, and Ernest Bevin of the Transport Workers' Union. In the end, only the extreme left wing of the Labourites opposed rearmament, along with the Communists and apolitical individuals unshaken in their pacifist belief. All of these were characterized by George Lansbury, the most prominent of them, as "a small minority in the Country and a tiny minority in this House." 17

From 1932 on, the most well prepared and persistent advocate of rearmament, in Parliament and out, was the Conservative Member for Epping, Winston Churchill. During the 1930's Churchill was thought of as distinguished and gifted, but not as the greatest Englishman of his time. He was widely thought of among Conservatives as something of a political rascal, not a team player, and for that reason justifiably excluded from the Government inner circle. Churchill was one of the dwindling number of what he called "antediluvians"—those who had been in

17. Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 351 (1939), 29.
public life in the days of the Balfour and Asquith ministries before 1914.

His political career was checkered. He began as a Conservative, switched to the Liberal Party, and then re-switched back to the Conservatives. He had known the chagrin of being dismissed from office during the First World War; he lost the Admiralty for his part in the Gallipoli failure. His tenure at the Exchequer in the late 1920's was considered an undistinguished performance.

Winston Churchill had two things in common with his infamous contemporary, Adolf Hitler. Both men had a romantic belief in the inherent greatness of the nation-state to which they belonged. Churchill looked upon the decline of the British Empire with profound regret, and was always for retarding or reversing the process.

Secondly, both men had the ability to inspire others. Churchill was gifted with an attractive, commanding personality, and in a day when public oratory still counted, he drew from the English language an eloquence, a richness of expression unparalleled in politics and certainly a great asset. Accordingly through long years in public life he had built up contacts throughout Europe that were to prove useful in the 1930's. For instance, he could, and did, obtain secret information on German
aircraft production simply by asking for it in a private letter to the Premier of France.\textsuperscript{18}

Churchill's attitude toward war as an instrument of policy was not as callous as Hitler's, although the epithet "war monger" was sometimes thrown at him from the political left. However in a war once made inevitable, Churchill, like his personal ancestor and hero, the Duke of Marlborough, would not flinch from the smell of gunpowder or the sight of blood. Both Churchill and Hitler were relentless, ruthless men, although they played by different rules.

Shortly before the \textit{de facto} return to power of the Conservatives in MacDonald's National Government, Churchill had resigned from Baldwin's Conservative Shadow Cabinet over the issue of political freedom for India, he was against it. His resignation made logical his exclusion from subsequent cabinets of the National Government under MacDonald, Baldwin, and finally Neville Chamberlain, who was never his friend, and who was glad to be able to do without him. In 1936 Churchill broke his lance a second time against a political issue which, although important at the time, was hardly germane to the great building question of survival or destruction at the hands of the Germans. Churchill

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{18}Churchill, p. 211.
\end{footnote}
fancied himself a "King's man" in the crisis involving Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson. On the other hand, Baldwin's reading of the unwritten constitution was that the King, as in his choice of governments, was to be guided in his choice of a wife by the consensus of the people, as interpreted by the ministers of the Government, who in theory had both the confidence of the people and the confidence of the King. In this, Baldwin was triumphantly upheld from all quarters, while Churchill, advocating the King's right to marry whom he privately chose, was quite literally shouted down. For a time after the abdication of Edward, Churchill's political stock in his own words, "had fallen to zero."  

This was a blow to the cause of rearmament for those who thought the Government pace insufficient.

18Ibid., p. 197.
Another proponent of rearmament was Leo Amery, Churchill's contemporary in age and social background. Amery was one of the few who had no use for collective security, the League of Nations, or any of the idealism of the postwar world. His view of war was somewhat eccentric, in that he found the war of today infinitely more merciful than the war of 100 or 1,000 years ago. . . . It is the long drawn out wars that ruin civilization—the Peloponnesian War in ancient Greece, the Thirty Years' War in Germany. If only the tank and aeroplane had
reached their present stage of development, how much bloodshed, misery and economic disaster would have been spared to the world.

In February 1933 Amery outraged the House of Commons by attacking the League of Nations for egging China on in its dispute with Japan, and then, at the point of hostilities, leaving China in the lurch. "I venture to say that if China is plunged into a disastrous war with

Japan it is largely due to her misplaced reliance upon the League of Nations."

Even Conservative Members were shocked by such frankness, and Bonar Law's son Dick ... afterwards rose to say that he could not have slept peacefully in his bed, if he had not, as a Conservative, dis-associated himself from my views. But such reprobation was exceptional. The really depressing thing was that my views—and for that matter Churchill's—were normally left unanswered and ignored.  

A third statesman, placed in one Labourite's view along with Churchill and Amery as most prominent among the "fire eaters and militarists," was Sir Austen Chamberlain. Austen Chamberlain, half-brother of Neville Chamberlain, had served in Parliament since 1892, and was a past holder of the Exchequer, the Foreign Office, and the Admiralty in various Conservative governments. Chamberlain took a hard line against Germany's rearmament, and most of his political activity was oriented toward rearmament at home until his death in 1937.

There were others among the younger men, Robert Boothby and Harold MacMillan, who were always in advance of the official Government position on rearmament. But in comparison to the total membership of the Conserva-

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20 Ibid., 155.

tive Party, the "fire eaters" were few. Judged by the Conservative abstentions in the foreign policy debates at the time of Munich and after, they never held more than forty votes, roughly ten per cent of the party.

The British financial year began on April 1. The armed service estimates, the financial plan cleared by the Exchequer for each service for the next financial year, were finalized in February and published in March. At the same time they were presented to the House of Commons and the House of Lords by the responsible minister, or his representative if the minister was a member of the other house.

In March 1933 the gross estimate for the Navy (including such nonproductive expenditures as pensions for retired seamen) showed a slight increase for the financial year 1933-1934. The replacement of old cruisers, halted in 1931 by a combination of enthusiasm for disarmament and financial need, was resumed with the programming of three new ones. Cruisers took about three years to complete from date of authorization, and the bulk of the expenditure, some five million pounds, was not required for a year or more after the initial authorization.

Also dear to the heart of the Navy was the re-
habilitation program for capital ships. The chief modification was the installation of new turbines that delivered more power while weighing less. This enabled the yards to install additional armor plate at no sacrifice to speed. The process took a year and a half and cost half a million pounds per ship. The 1933 estimates raised the number of capital ships in for "large repairs" from one to two, and in later years with bigger budgets the number was to increase to as many as five at once.

The Navy budget for 1933-1934 amounted to £53,750,000, which was £3,093,700 more than in the previous financial year.\textsuperscript{22}

The annual reductions in the Army budget were likewise halted. The Army received £37,950,000, up £1,462,000 from the previous year.\textsuperscript{23}

The Air Force gross budget of £19,638,000 of which about eight million was earmarked for nonproductive expenditures and for the Fleet Air Army, showed a small increase over the previous year. Considering that Air Force activities in the Middle East and India were now to be funded out of the Air Ministry rather than the

\textsuperscript{22} "£3,093,700 More for Navy," \textit{Times}, March 10, 1933, p. 8.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}
Colonial Office or Indian Office, the budget showed a real cut of £360,000.24

As it turned out throughout the 1930's, March was the month in which disturbing news from Germany was most frequently received. The burning of the Reichstag building of February 27 led to a suspension of constitutional guarantees the next day. A reign of terror began in Germany as the National Socialist Government dropped the air of good behavior with which it had taken office. In the national election of March 5, the Nazis secured a favorable result by terror methods and by arresting a percentage of the successful rival politicians. On March 23 the compliant Reichstag passed the Enabling Act, which made Hitler legal dictator of Germany for four years.

With these unfolding events in mind Churchill spoke up in the bland debate on the air estimates, saying:

I regretted to hear the Under-Secretary say that we were only the fifth air power and that the ten-year programme [the Hoare program of 1923] was suspended for another year. I was sorry to hear him boast that the Air Ministry had not laid down a single new unit this year. All these ideas are being increasingly stultified by the march of

events, and we should be well advised to concen-
trate upon our air defences with greater vigour.25

The summer of 1933 passed without an incident
which would increase public interest in defense. The
principal public worry was unemployment, which was still
at sixteen per cent of the work force, with some
especially distressed areas over fifty per cent. The
experience of the depression had left the youth of the
country restless and questioning of the establishment.
Peace, like nature and hiking, became a national fad.
Not only did pacifism offer an alternative to the un-
pleasant business of having to serve in the army and
perhaps being sent off to be killed in the trenches to
vindicate some general's reputation, pacifism justified
and lent new dignity to certain forms of boisterous con-
duct among students, which, if committed for its own
sake, would have been considered reprehensible.

In the school year just completed, peace had been
a big issue on campus. Politicians would come to the
major universities to debate the issues in front of stu-
dent audiences, and Amery recalled his role as the vil-
lain in one of them, held in October 1932.

25 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 275 (1934),
1823.
I debated the issue with Robert Cecil Viscount Cecil of Chelwood at the Cambridge Union on the motion that we should disarm down to the German level. What was significant was, not that I was outvoted by nearly four to one (337 to 89) in a crowded house, but that a passionately excited body of undergraduates found it difficult even to give me a hearing. 

In February 1933 the undergraduates at Oxford passed a resolution by the pacifist philosopher, C. E. M. Joad, that "this House will in no circumstances fight for King and Country." Beverley Nichols, a popular writer and lecturer of the time, wrote that the resolution should have been that "this House will not fight for any Ruler or any Country," because "this motion would have been just as effective and would not have so outraged public taste." 

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26 Amery, p. 147.
27 Joad, having made his motion, returned to obscurity. But Harold Nicolson's diary for May 7, 1940, says: "Lunch with Cyril Joad. He is rather pathetic. He minds dreadfully being out of things, and yet, as a pacifist . . . he can scarcely eat his words. But he has written to the Ministry of Information offering his services. I think I cheered him up, since he has no feeling of false pride in admitting to me that he cannot stand pacifism any longer."—Nigel Nicolson (ed.), Harold Nicolson, The War Years, 1939-1945 (New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 76.
Nichols himself was unable to accept the extremely uncritical brand of pacifism fashionable among students. He was a pacifist, but had seen enough of the world to become a doubter. "I am for peace at any price but I am not absolutely certain whether the theory will work."29

Nichols thought that to be fair recruiting posters showing idyllic scenes from military life should be balanced with public illustrations of the battlefield dead and maimed.

Of all the pacifists addressing audiences in Britain, perhaps the most popular was Canon H. R. L. "Dick" Sheppard, the "radio preacher." Sheppard began his career in the Church of England auspiciously as a Cambridge graduate. He had been one of the King's honorary chaplains and Dean of Canterbury. But Sheppard was a practicing Christian in the stricter sense, and since the war had found a calling among the poor and simple people of Britain's grim industrial slums. In October 1934 he broadcast an invitation to listeners to subscribe to a peace pledge, which went as follows:

I renounce war and never again will I support or sanction another, and I will do all in my power

29Ibid.
to persuade others to do the same. 30

From this developed the Peace Pledge Union of over a hundred thousand male activists and uncounted female auxiliaries. Sheppard was also a founder of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, whose members went on pacifist pilgrimages among the peoples of foreign lands. In this capacity Sheppard wrote to Hitler in 1936 that:

the foundation of our Pacifist faith lies in the belief that War is not only futile and bestial but a sin against God and a blasphemy against the future of man. War has now become ineffective as a means of settling international disputes that we suggest that this fact should be recognized everywhere and that a constructive Pacifism is alone capable of saving the future and soul of the world. 31

Unfortunately Sheppard did not succeed in winning the Führer to his views, and his accompanying request to allow peace pledge rallies in Germany was not acted upon.

Sheppard's faith was never shaken, although he died before the severest trials of 1939 and 1940. In October 1937, shortly before a fatal heart attack, he was elected to the honorary post of Lord Rector of Glasgow University, defeating a Scottish nationalist and a united front socialist by 538 votes to 381 and 220 respectively. He said:

30 Blythe, p. 251.

31 "Canon Sheppard and Herr Hitler," Times, July 30, 1936, p. 11.
This definitely puts pacifism on the map. It is overwhelming news. I am almost weeping with happiness. The result will encourage a great many people who believe pacifism is the right course to take but are still deterred by the idea that it is just impractical idealism.\(^2\)

His legacy to the world was a slogan, since fallen into disrepute, "peace at any price."

In addition to Lansbury and the left-Labourites in the House of Commons, Sheppard had two stalwart allies in the House of Lords—Lord Arnold and Lord Ponsonby of the Liberal Party. In September 1936, by which time pacifism had passed its peak of popularity in the face of events, Ponsonby could still declare,

The decision of a majority of the British nation to turn its back on international war because of its futility as well as its barbarity would undoubtedly have tremendous influence on other nations. As every Government invariably gives the pretext of "defence" for waging war, being deprived of that pretext, a nation would become a self-confessed aggressor if it attacked a disarmed nation. It would hesitate to do so.\(^3\)


George Lansbury Departing on European Peace Crusade, 1937.

The foremost champion of disarmament outside the ranks of the pacifists was Viscount Cecil, of ancient and illustrious family. Cecil backed the League of Nations as the sole proper repository of such armaments as might be necessary. He served as head of the League of Nations Union, which sponsored the 1935 "peace ballot." The peace ballot was a questionnaire designed to allow respondents to "vote for peace." Some eleven
million voters did respond, a significant number without doubt, although the wording of some of the resolutions of the ballot left room for controversy over what the voters were actually voting for. For his activities in the League of Nations Union, Cecil won the Nobel Peace Prize for 1937.

On October 6, 1933, Churchill and Amery got their resolution of "grave anxiety" about defense through the House of Commons. The anxiety of the sponsors was made graver by Germany's withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference and the League on October 16. But these developments were lost in the high tide of pacifist sentiment in the country, not only among youth and intellectuals, but among working men, who had more political clout, such as the miners' union at Scarborough who planned a general strike in the event of war.34

On October 24 at a by-election in the East Fulham constituency, John Wilmot, the Labourite peace candidate, defeated the Conservative candidate by 17,970 votes to 12,250, whereas in the 1931 election the Conservative had easily won with a majority of over 14,000. The correspondent for The Times, whose editor was favor-

34 Hoare, p. 121.
ing Conservative candidates, explained the situation on the eve of the balloting:

Political circumstances have been kind to Mr. Wilmot since he has been at East Fulham. Disarmament has been a strong plank in his platform, and he has not been backward in his endeavours to turn the trend of events in Europe to his own advantage. He is receiving much support from the women electors, who outnumber men by some 5,000. On the surface it appears as if appeals to the credulous to support the "peace men"—apparently Mr. Lansbury and his colleagues—may meet with a ready response at the polling booths tomorrow."

Later some informed observers attempted to refute the idea that the East Fulham election had been a simple victory of pacifism over non-pacifism. Hugh Dalton, the Labour non-pacifist, wrote:

On this by-election I can speak with great assurance. Not only did I take part in it, spending several days canvassing as well as speaking, but John Wilmot then was, and afterwards remained, one of my closest political friends. On all large political issues, we were of one mind. Neither he nor I were pacifists nor unilateral disarmers. I had been a soldier in the last war and he a sailor. But we both wanted to see the world now much less heavily armed, with fixed limits for all, including ourselves, and strong sanctions against war-makers or law breakers."

From the opposing side, Harold MacMillan thought Wilmot had run as a pacifist, but that the electorate as a whole was not in favor of pacifist policies. He wrote:

35"By-Elections," Times, October 24, 1933, p. 11.

It fell time to speak at a by-election at Kilmarnock, where the Labour victor of Fulham East, who had accused his Tory opponent of "standing for armaments," was brought up to play, it was hoped, a decisive role. I made a violent attack upon him at the hustings which was not ill received by the audience, more especially as I appealed to the superior sense of logic of the Lowlander over the Cockney. Curiously enough, although the loss at Fulham made a deep impression upon Baldwin as he afterwards revealed in a famous speech, he appears to have disregarded the remarkable success of the Government candidate at Kilmarnock. 37

The big factor in the East Fulham election would seem to be that Wilmot was the younger, more vigorous, and generally more attractive of the candidates, with a much better organization behind his campaign. But as MacMillan indicated, Baldwin's assessment of the election was what counted, and Baldwin read it as a victory for Lansbury, who had spoken in East Fulham the night before the voting, castigating the failure of Britain and France to disarm down to Germany's level, thereby giving Germany an excuse to rearm, and also attacking Lord Londonderry's attitude on air bombing, an exploitable issue in that crowded urban area.

Considering the contribution Baldwin later confessed East Fulham had on his rearmament policy, it was certainly the most influential single parliamentary election of the decade. It also enhanced for a time the prestige of the pacifists and their cause.

37 MacMillan, p. 357.
After East Fulham the Government reacted against the peace movement. If carried too far, foreign powers would draw the conclusion that however the negotiations went, Britain must disarm to meet the demands of domestic public opinion. In such a case, certain foreign powers might be inspired to follow the British example, or then again might take a more crafty approach.

MacDonald, who at one time had been an ardent pacifist, sent a letter to be read at a November peace rally which contained the stock paragraphs in praise of peace, and the stock condemnations of the usurpers of peace, before proceeding to a new point that he wished to make:

On the other hand there are others on the opposite extreme who think that no one is a genuine lover of peace unless he is indifferent to the condition of the world, and would content himself by declarations of exemplary piety, which are in reality no contribution to the influences which compel nations to disarm and resort to a real policy of peace.

And then he restated the point, more forcefully.

There is an activity of special perversity pursued with "Peace!, Peace!" on peoples' lips, the effect of which is to destroy the practical influence which the Government can exert to help other peoples to come to agreements on reduction of armaments and enter into relations of mutual confidence which will result in peaceful policies. 38

In Parliament, Conservative Robert Boothby, who was interested in foreign affairs and enjoyed mixing

with foreigners in their own country warned:

There is a type of professional pacifist in this country who spend their whole time shouting against armaments but who will not shoulder any obligations, or countenance the use of force in international affairs under any circumstances. They are the worst menace to peace, for they deceive other countries as to their intentions, and humbug their own country into a false security. Ultimately they find themselves morally bound to go to war, as in 1914, with inadequate forces. 39

Speakers on both sides of the question often invoked "the lessons of 1914," but drew opposite conclusions from them.

A cabinet committee, consisting of members in defense-related posts, was quietly appointed to study rearmament, even as other committees were still studying disarmament. The committee found that war with France, Italy, and the United States could be safely ruled out, but that war with Germany and Japan could not. To make some basic preparations for rearmament, the committee recommended £78,000,000 in supplementary arms funds. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain, said he could find no more than £50,000,000. 40

Chamberlain was looking forward to an accelerated climb to and beyond the 1929 level of prosperity, aided by more spending on social services coupled with small,

39. Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 281 (1935), 47.

selective tax cuts. These measures were feasible now that the budget was balanced and rising tax receipts were forming a surplus in the treasury. The intrusion of increased arms spending into the picture was hardly welcome, and politically dangerous.
Part II

As the financial year 1933-1934 drew to a close, no one could claim any reversal had been made in the ominous turn of events conveniently marked by the formation of the Hitler Government. On the contrary, both Germany and Japan were now out of the League of Nations, which seemed to signify contempt for the lofty principles on which the League stood. Germany was receiving (and resenting) a bad press in Britain. As early as March 1933 the Berlin correspondent of The Times was forwarding such stories as:

CONCENTRATION CAMPS

In regard to amnesty for "penal offenses committed in the struggle for national resurgence," it does not benefit the many thousands of Communists, Socialists, intellectuals, and pacifists now being gathered in concentration camps—the first, in Bavaria, is to contain 5,000 souls—who have no charge preferred against them and may expect no trial, whose names, numbers, or places of detention are not known and who are apparently to be used as forced labour.¹

In foreign affairs, Germany had established a policy of economic harassment and political subversion against Austria which was well publicised in Britain. German propaganda tried to reverse the trend of British

public opinion, particularly conservative opinion, by stressing those parts of the National Socialist ideology which visualized Germany as the bulwark of Nordic Christendom and the law of property against the encroachment of Slavic-Jewish communist ideology. Also, Britain had the assurances of the deputy-Führer, Rudolf Hess, who said more than once that "no serious minded person in Germany thinks even of laying a finger on the independence of other nations." Germany's public relations campaign in British conservative circles had some effect, but even those who favored a pro-German foreign policy did not favor disarmament at the same time. In fact, the opposite was the case.

The defense estimates for the financial year 1934-1935 were published in late March 1934. The Navy budget was raised almost three million pounds to £86,550,000. The construction program for the year, the first calculated to mature after the lapse of the London Naval Treaty of 1930, contained provision for a big new aircraft carrier (the future Ark Royal), four cruisers, three submarines, and an unusually large number of destroyers and smaller ships.2

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3 "£2,980,000 More for the Navy," Ibid., March 7, 1934, p. 9.
The Army received £39,000,000, an increase of £1,650,000.\textsuperscript{4}

The Air Force received £20,165,000, an increase of slightly over half a million pounds. Two new air defense squadrons were allocated for the London area, and the equivalent of two further squadrons of flying boats and carrier-based planes.\textsuperscript{5}

The defense estimates amounted to about 32 percent of the total Government budget of £461,924,222, which, despite the defense increases, had fallen by some two million pounds under the previous year. Chamberlain was able to restore welfare payments to pre-depression levels and cut the income tax basic rate by 6 pence on the pound.\textsuperscript{6}

It was the air estimates that inspired the first of the great debates on national defense preparedness, in which the various facets of British politics and the personalities of the politicians were to be revealed. As Prime Minister MacDonald was tired and unwell in these days the Government's position was defended on this and subsequent occasions by Stanley Baldwin.

\textsuperscript{4}\textit{Higher Army Estimates,} \textit{Ibid.}, March 9, 1934, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{5}\textit{Air Estimates,} \textit{Ibid.}, March 3, 1934, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{6}\textit{The Budget,} \textit{Ibid.}, April 18, 1934, p. 9.
On the surface Baldwin seemed a simple man, even a dull man, who convincingly said that pig-keeping in the country was the vocation he would like most. His political behavior seemed guided by *ad hoc* intuition rather than preconceived principles, and his political talks were couched in imprecise language larded with platitudes delivered with a finesse above the average. In no field was this more true than in international affairs and its related field of military affairs, which had been successfully left to others in the two governments he had headed in the 1920's. As Lord President of the Council in the National Government Baldwin frequently joined MacDonald and Simon in greeting foreign diplomats, but his chief contact with Europe was his habitual vacation spot at Aix-en-Provence, not far from the French Riviera. Nor was Aix extremely far from Geneva and the League of Nations, which Baldwin supported but never visited.
Baldwin had a technique of evading unpleasant questions, particularly those concerning defense. His private secretary wrote: "It was only with great difficulty that I could keep S. B. on this subject. . . . His powers of resisting the close discussion of a problem are enormous—so much so that one feels inhuman in pressing him."

Baldwin's parliamentary antagonists, the Opposition Labour and Liberal parties, were united in blaming the Government for the failure to date of international disarmament, but divided among themselves on what position to take on rearmament. They were all "to the left" of the Government position, which itself was not totally pledged to rearmament as yet. Sir Stafford Cripps, who had the distinction of being the only patrician-class Marxist theoretician in Parliament ("a lounge lizard Lenin," "a ritzi Robespierre," one member opposite called him), said in a November 1933 speech:

When Mr. Lansbury urges the youth of this country not to join any of the armed forces, he is expressing his personal view. The Labour Party believes in disarmament but does not believe at the present time in the suppression of all the forces. In fact, there are some of us who think they may be useful.

Some Opposition members wrote disarmament off and now concentrated on criticizing the pace and manner of rearmament, such as Labourites Hugh Dalton and Geoffrey Mander, and Liberal Sir Herbert Samuel. Clement Attlee and the dominant group in the Labour Party advocated a policy of non-cooperation on rearmament in retaliation.

for the Government's mishandling of disarmament. This policy was acclaimed at Party meetings, but was not destined to wear well with the public at large, and proved vulnerable to Conservative counterattack.

To this day [wrote Eden] I wonder what the policy of the Labour Party would have been on armaments if it had been in power in 1935. I can hardly believe that it would have left the country defenseless before the growing menace of Hitler. I prefer to think that the Opposition adopted that attitude simply to oppose the Conservatives, as has been done on other occasions. 9

The first major debate on air estimates occupied most of the business of the House of Commons for March 8, 1934. The two most effective critics of Government air policy came from opposite sides of the House—Mander on the left, Churchill on the right. Mander began by saying what the Government had not thought it prudent to officially admit, that Germany was rearming, but conveniently supposed, as others were to do at successive increments of German resurgence, that the time to forcibly stop Germany was already past.

The race in armaments has begun. It began 12 months ago, when the Hitler regime took office in Germany, and it has been proceeding practically unimpeded ever since. It may be that 12 months ago, when we had some grip on the situation, we ought to have taken firm and definite action, for as every month has gone by we have had to give up one point after another until now there is nothing to

9Eden, p. 140.
prevent the complete rearmament of Germany in the air and in other directions, whenever she thinks fit.\textsuperscript{10}

Churchill opened his campaign for the application of new scientific theories to the practical problems of air defense, saying "I dread the day when the means of threatening the heart of the British Empire should pass into the hands of the present rulers of Germany."\textsuperscript{11}

Baldwin followed. He admitted that "we do meet in circumstances of gravity today but though that be true, do not let us at this moment exaggerate them." Every nation in Europe, he went on to say, was afraid of air attack too. As for the disarmament negotiations, "I am not prepared to admit here today that the situation is hopeless, or that within a week or two we may have to come and say: 'All our efforts are futile; we must immediately spend vast sums of money.'"\textsuperscript{12}

Then Baldwin concluded with a pledge that would do him much mischief in future debates:

In conclusion, I say that if all our efforts fail, and if it is not able to obtain this equality in such matters as I have indicated . . .
then this Government will see to it that in air strength and in air power this country shall no longer be in a position inferior to any country within striking distance of our shores. 13

Baldwin's pledge meant equality with the air force of France or Germany, whichever was larger. In the spring of 1934 it meant parity with the French Air Force, as Germany still officially obeyed the Treaty of Versailles prohibitions in regard to military aircraft, and in fact her arrangements to acquire an air force were still in the embryonic stage. France had an air force of some sixteen hundred and fifty aircraft, twice as many as Britain, including an independent bomber force capable of attacking most cities in either Germany or Britain. Baldwin knew there was scant concern in Parliament over the size of the French Air Force, and besides he had left a loophole in his pledge— it was for the Government to say when its efforts in the disarmament field had become hopeless. He did not know that within a few weeks Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, would reject the last serious disarmament proposal, and that within a year a German Air Force would spring up from Germany's fleet of airliners and heavy, overpowered "sport planes" that would enjoy every priority Germany could give it in order to become the first in Europe.

13 Ibíd., 2078.
After the debate of March 8, it was clear that defense questions would not be laid to rest for another year as in the past. The Committee on Imperial Defence, composed of the principal cabinet ministers and the senior officer from each of the three services, supported by a system of civilian and military technical experts arranged in to subcommittees, became more active. On July 19, Baldwin was back to announce that "we have come to the conclusion that we cannot delay any longer measures which will in the course of the next few years bring our air forces to a level more closely approximating that of our nearest neighbors."¹⁴

The expansion of the Air Force would be called off the moment accord on air disarmament was reached at Geneva or elsewhere. Failing that, the Air Force would be increased by forty-one squadrons, including the four already announced in the 1934 estimates. Thirty-three of these new formations would go to home defense, raising the home defense squadrons from forty-two to seventy-five. The expansion would take place over a five year period, the exact pace to be determined by the state of the treasury. The total cost at the end of five years was placed at twenty million pounds. Baldwin

¹⁴ Ibid., 242 (1934), 1275.
called for a debate on the question.\textsuperscript{15}

Baldwin's announcement was actually the unveiling of the Royal Air Force's expansion "Scheme A." Scheme A visualized, by March 1939, a striking force of 500 bombers of much greater range and bomb lift capability than those currently in service, 336 fighters, and a total aircraft inventory including transports, naval aircraft, and overseas squadrons, of some 1,252. Scheme A was judged by one professional as "largely a shop window affair in the pious hope of deterring German ambitions."\textsuperscript{16}

Sir Herbert Samuel, speaking at a Liberal Party Council meeting that evening, was the first to attack the air expansion plan.

Today it is announced that we are to engage in the great process of a further vast expenditure on armaments. We find ourselves again in the full tide of international competition in the race for armaments. We shall soon find ourselves back again in the pre-War world, from which we hoped mankind had emerged, having learned the lessons of wisdom from the results of the last catastrophe.\textsuperscript{17}

The debate on air expansion in the House of Commons, of seven hours' duration, was held July 30 on the occasion of the Labour Party's motion of censure, to wit:

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{16}Slessor, p. 156.

\textsuperscript{17}"Government's Air Policy," \textit{Times}, July 20, 1934, p. 11.
That this House regrets that His Majesty's Government should enter upon a policy of rearmament neither necessitated by any new commitment nor calculated to add to the security of the nation, but certain to jeopardise the prospects of international disarmament and to encourage a revival of dangerous and wasteful competition in preparation for war.18

The debate went well enough for the Government side. Baldwin again spoke for the Government, reiterating his position of July 19.19

Attlee followed with a forceful Labour rebuttal which left no doubt on the Party view as of the summer of 1934. Attlee never mentioned or quoted from this speech in later years, although Churchill did with some relish. Attlee's central theme was:

We deny the proposition that in increased British air force will make for the peace of the world and we reject altogether the claim to parity. We think that parity is an out of date, pre-war conception of the balance of power.20

The next speaker was Samuel for the Liberals. His weak argument demonstrated the disadvantageous position of the Liberal Party. Caught in the middle ground between Conservative and Labour, the Liberals could only carp at whichever of the larger parties was in power. Samuel regretted the great cost of arms, and pointed out

18Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 292 (1934), 2325.

19Ibid., 2329-2331.

20Ibid., 2350; see also Churchill, p. 104.
how ironic it was that the League of Nations, supposedly a substitute for armies, now seemed to require them to perpetuate its existence. The conduct of Germany at Geneva and elsewhere had been upsetting, but Britain should not overreact.21

Churchill was scheduled to speak at nine o'clock in the evening, in the fifth hour of speeches. The seats on the floor of the Parliament and the visitors' galleries, partially empty during the dinner hour, filled as nine o'clock approached.

Churchill began by pointing out that the Government plan would result in an actual increase of only about fifty aircraft before the close of the financial year 1935-1936, by which time a new national election was due. Therefore the popularity of the measure would be tested with the voters before it matured. Then came a passage which must rank with Mark Antony's praise of Brutus as an example of the left-handed compliment in English literature:

One would have thought that the character of his Majesty's Government and the record of its principal ministers would have induced the Opposition to view the request for an increase in the national defence with some confidence and some consideration. I do not suppose there has ever been such a pacifist-minded Government. There is my right hon. friend the Prime Minister, unhappily not with us, who in

21 Ibid., 2355.
the War proved in the most extreme manner and with very great courage his convictions and the sacrifices he would make for what believed was the cause of pacifism. My right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council is chiefly associated in the public mind with the repetition of the prayer, "Give peace in our time."

One would have supposed that when Ministers like them come forward and say that they feel it their duty to ask for some small increase in the means they have of guaranteeing public safety, the mere fact that Ministers of this character do come forward would weigh with the Opposition and would be considered as a proof of the reality of the dangers from which they seek to protect us. Then look at the apologies which the Government have made. No one could have put forward a proposal in such extremely inoffensive terms. Meekness has characterized every word which they have spoken since this subject was first mooted. We are assured that we can see for ourselves how small is the proposal. We are assured that it can be stopped at any minute if Geneva succeeds, on which we all have expectations. I beg pardon, official expectations. And we are also assured that the steps we are taking, although they may to some lower minds have associated with them some idea of national self defence, are really only associated with the great principle of collective security, which, I understand, is the only principle that will induce the hon. Gentlemen opposite to make any defence of this Island.

But all these apologies and soothing procedures are most curtly repulsed by the Opposition. Their only answer to all these efforts to conciliate them is a vote of censure, which is to be decided tonight. It seems to me that we have got very nearly to the end of the period when it is worth while to conciliate some classes of opinion on this subject. We are in the presence of an attempt to establish a kind of tyranny of opinion, and if its reign could be perpetuated, the effect might be profoundly injurious to the stability and security of this country.

Churchill went on to characterize the City of London as "a kind of tremendous, fat, vulnerable cow tied up to attract the beast of prey." He asserted that Ger-
many already had a secret air force a third the size of Britain's (which would mean over five hundred planes)
and that by the end of 1935 Germany would have an air
force "nearly equal" to the home defense portion of the
Royal Air Force, even as augmented by the plan then under
censure. "If the Government," he said, "have to admit
at any time in the next few years that the German air
forces are stronger than our own, then they will be
held ... to have failed in their prime duty to the
country." In further eloquent sentences, he concluded
by saying that the narrow nationalism of Germany, like
it or not, was the force behind events shaping up in
Europe. Finally:

The position to which they [Labour] seek to re-
duce us by the course they have pursued and by the
vote with which they ask us to take is one of ter-
rible jeopardy, and in voting against them to-night
we shall hope that a better path for national
safety will be found than that along which they
would conduct us.22

Churchill was followed by Sir Stafford Cripps,
another orator of note, with a message of hope for the
League, collective security, and disarmament.

As the right hon. Gentleman the Member for
Epping stood in his place declaiming, one could
picture him as some old baron in the Middle Ages
who is laughing at the idea of the possibility of
disarmament in the baronies of this country and
pointing out that the only way in which he and his

22 Ibid., 2367-2369.
feudal followers could maintain their safety and their cows was by having as strong an armament as possible; and that it was quite futile for those well-intentioned people to talk about the rule of law running throughout the country.

Cripps wanted to see military aviation out of the Royal Air Force and subordinated to the League of Nations. 23

After the Opposition had presented its arguments, mostly drawn up along the same lines as Attlee and Cripps, the motion of censure was put to a vote and defeated, 404 to 60. 24

Labour was neither surprised nor discouraged by the vote, and their agitation against expansion of the Air Force continued unabated. Labour decried a bigger air force as wicked and unprincipled, and, in a concession to those who responded to practical arguments, it was also said to be futile. Baldwin's 1932 speech about the bomber always getting through was the favorite authority for those arguing the futility of air defense. "It is a hoax to presume any defence against air bombing is practicable," Lord Ponsonby told his fellow lordships. He attacked the Government policy of "faith, hope, and parity":

23 Ibid., 2424-2425.
24 Ibid., 2470.
faith in the efficacy of the new and diabolical weapon of aerial bombardment, hope that threatened retaliation would prevent an attack, and parity, the fruitless pursuit of which is the surest way to encourage competition and endanger world peace. 24

Besides the inconsistency of deriding the Government for putting its faith in the deterrent effect of air bombing when at the same time there was no defense against it, there was the hasty assumption that if "the bomber would always get through," all bombers would always get through. More knowledgeable people visualized a potent air defense dissuading an enemy from employing a bomber fleet against British cities, or failing that, inflicting enough casualties among the bombers to force the campaign to a premature conclusion.

The two unanswered questions facing the air defense establishment were how to go about insuring a maximum casualty rate in the hypothetical enemy bomber force, and further, what casualties would be required to stop an enemy bombing campaign? Therefore there was increased interest in the 1934 Royal Air Force air defense exercise, flown under conditions believed to be the most realistic possible. The exercise lasted for the week beginning July 21 and employed the following rules:

25 Ibid., (Lords), 93 (1934), 229, 893.
no bombers allowed below five thousand feet over metropolitan areas (for the good of public relations), no following of bombers into clouds (for safety), no reporting of incoming bombers allowed until they have actually crossed the coast.  

One hundred eighty fighters and 196 bombers participated. The first day the defense was confused by static from a thunderstorm which interfered with high frequency radio communications. Four out of seven targets were ruled to have been successfully bombed by the invaders. Later on a night raid on London was successfully carried out by a mass formation of thirty bombers none of which were picked up by the hundred fifty searchlights set up for the purpose. Observers were forced to conclude that if Britain was ever attacked from the air, many bombers would indeed get through, and the number brought down by the defense would depend a great deal on luck.  

Besides better interceptors, anti-aircraft artillery, and searchlights, scientists were looking for some fundamentally new breakthrough in the field of air defense. The press was discussing three possibilities—an electric ray that would interfere with the operation of high frequency radio communications and would thus render bombers ineffective.

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of the aircraft engine when played upon it, some new acoustical device to pick up distant aircraft sounds, and the one ultimately successful, the aiming of radio signals into the sky in such a way as to bounce off foreign bodies and return to the transmitter for analysis.

In September, following the adjournment of Parliament, Churchill vacationed at Cannes. He and his scientific advisor and personal friend, Professor Frederick Lindemann, visited Baldwin at Aix to secure the latter's support for an independent, highest level inquiry into the air defense situation. Baldwin could never agree to this without compromising the prestige of Londonderry and his principal advisors at the Air Ministry, but not wishing to seem disagreeable to his old colleague, he pronounced himself interested in the idea.

On November 28, Churchill reopened the air debate of March and July by means of an amendment to the Speech from the Throne deprecating the state of the air defenses. In the November debate the Government stepped into a delayed action trap that was to contribute decisively to the removal of the Secretary of State for Air. In the November debate Churchill stated that Germany had in being a secret, illegal air force that would, if British and German expansion programs remained con-
stant, surpass Britain's air force about a year hence, in November 1935. By November 1936, Churchill said, the German would be half again the size of the British, and in 1937, nearly double, a situation which Baldwin had the previous March pledged to prevent.²⁸

Churchill had informed Baldwin in advance of the essentials of his speech in accordance with gentlemanly procedure, and now Baldwin spoke for the Government with the official air defense figures in hand. Twenty-two new home squadrons and 3 Fleet Air Arm squadrons of the 42 new squadrons authorized by 1937 were to be formed during the calendar years 1935 and 1936. Since July 11 new airfield sites had been selected out of some 90 inspected in 11 different counties. Forty existing flying fields were being expanded and a new flying school had been opened.

More important, while admitting that Germany was building military aircraft, he was able to deny the validity of Churchill's estimate of the relative size and growth rate of the Royal Air Force and the clandestine German air force. According to Air Ministry estimates Germany had less than half the military air strength of Britain. Based on production plans then in

²⁸Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 295 (1934), 866-871.
effect "we estimate that we shall have a margin in Europe alone of nearly fifty per cent" for the next two years. "Mr. Churchill speaks of what may happen in 1937. Such investigations as I have been able to make lead me to believe that his figures are considerably exaggerated." Finally, Baldwin assured the House of Commons that "His Majesty's Government are determined in no conditions to accept any position of inferiority in regard to what air force may be raised in Germany in the future."29

This sweeping assurance from the virtual Prime Minister soothed most of the alarmed and silenced many of the critics. Everyone was glad to learn that my precise statements had been denied upon unimpeachable authority. I was not at all convinced. I believed that Mr. Baldwin was not being told the truth by his advisors, and anyhow that he did not know the facts.30

In February Churchill and Austen Chamberlain went over Baldwin's head to the Prime Minister to recommend that an investigation into the problems of air defense be taken out of the Air Ministry and assigned to the Committee of Imperial Defence, "where the heads of Government, the most powerful politicians in the country, would be able to supervise and superintend its actions and also to make sure that the necessary funds are not denied."


We were received by Mr. MacDonald personally, and we laid our case before him. No difference of principal at all existed between us. The Prime Minister was most sympathetic when I pointed out the peace aspect of the argument. Nothing, I said, could lessen the terrors and anxieties which overclouded the world so much as the removal of the idea of surprise attacks upon the civil populations. Mr. MacDonald seemed at this time greatly troubled with his eyesight. He gazed blankly out of the windows onto the Palace Yard and assured us he was hardening his heart to overcome departmental resistance.

MacDonald, tired and befuddled, was not in a position to overcome departmental resistance on any policy question. Baldwin had succeeded in laying the issue of armaments to rest until its inevitable revival with the March 1935 service estimates. His cautious rearmament policy remained opposed by the tenacious but rather lonely figure of Churchill on the one hand and the philosophers of the left on the other—neither a threat to his position.

The air question had dominated the debates, but there was one aspect of naval expansion particularly galling to Labour. The expansion of the Navy was putting Labour politicians in the position of choosing between rearmament and unemployment.

The fact that in 1933 Lloyd's Register showed the lowest shipyard activity since its first issue in

\[31\text{Ibid., p. 133.}\]
1888 was due to the depressed economy in general, but particularly to the lack of naval spending. Naval ships, with their armor and armaments employed three times as many people on their construction as merchant ships. That was the background of the exchange between Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, head of the Navy League, and John Wilmot, the victor of East Fulham, in the 1934 debate on the Navy estimates.

Keyes: The Naval expansion program would also employ a vast number of workmen. That is why they ought to be supporting this. Employment would be found for an immense number of workmen for whom no other employment can possibly be found—people who have been idle while we have been making these peace gestures.

And Keyes went on to say that eighty-five per cent of construction funds were paid out as workmen's wages.

Wilmot: Have we not got other work we can find for people to do? Would it not be more to our advantage to pull down the slums and rehouse our people, to feed our unemployed, and to do the thousand and one necessary works waiting to be done rather than to turn these people on to the building of engines of destruction? It is a most fallacious argument that we should waste our money on these engines of destruction because they do incidentally provide employment.

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33 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 295 (1934), 636-638.
CHAPTER III

BRITISH REARMAMENT DURING THE RAPID EROSION OF SECURITY—
MARCH 1935 - MARCH 1936

It is not possible to tell this story without recording the milestones which we passed on our long journey from security to the jaws of Death.

--Winston Churchill, The Gathering Storm

Part I

The international situation at the beginning of March 1935 had registered a year of deterioration. The assumptions under which the Geneva Disarmament Conference of 1932 had been convened were now completely destroyed.

By February 1935 the most that the British Government could hope for in the way of arms control was the London Plan, which called for mere negotiation of a settlement with Germany to replace the Versailles Treaty, which Germany was so effectively tearing up.

Events in Germany had taken no reassuring turn. At the end of June 1934 Hitler had liquidated Ernst Rohm, head of the S. A., in a bloody purge that also eliminated several once-influential men from the pre-Nazi era. Of the former chancellors, Schleicher was shot; Bruning

1Churchill, p. 106.
escaped the country with his life; Papen survived, in servile dedication to the regime henceforth. In August, Hindenburg expired from old age, whereupon the offices of President and Chancellor were united in the person of Hitler.

In the Mediterranean, the apparent divergence of British and Italian interests was a new cause for worry. There was a series of clashes and incidents on the border between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland which presaged a new Italian program of expansion in Africa. In Italy Mussolini became more and more committed to old-style power politics. In August 1934 he said in a speech

> We are becoming—and shall become so increasingly because this is our desire—a military nation. A militaristic nation, I will add, since we are not afraid of words. To complete the picture, warlike. . . .

All things considered, the trend of the international situation up to March 1935 justified a further increase in British military spending. The events of March itself were a shock that forever parted Britain from the quiet times of the 1920's.

On March 4 the MacDonald Government issued the first and most famous of several white papers on defense. The paper, initialed "J.R.M.," opened with a recapitula--

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tion of British disarmament policy from the Locarno Conference through the Geneva Disarmament Conference. Then, in the fourth paragraph, appeared a statement which had been made before, but never with such emphasis:

Hitherto, in spite of many setbacks, public opinion in this country has tended to assume that nothing is required for the maintenance of peace except the existing international political machinery, and that the older methods of defense, navies, armies, and air forces—on which we have hitherto depended for our security in the last resort—are no longer required. The force of world events, however, has shown that this assumption is premature, and that we have far to go before we can find complete security without having in the background the means of defending ourselves against attack.

An observation on the nature of international relations followed, which was nothing so much as an observation on Germany:

Nations differ in their temperaments, needs, and state of civilization. Discontent may rise out of various causes, from the recollection of past misfortunes, from a desire to recover past losses, or from a pressure occasioned by the increase of population.

Then came an outline of measures to be taken. The Navy was to have a larger cruiser force, the Army was to modernize its defenses at ports and harbors. New inventories of mechanized vehicles were to be procured, as well as greater stocks of ammunition. The number of Army anti-aircraft gun batteries were to be increased, and new civilian air raid precautions to be initiated. The Air Force expansion plans were as already announced
the previous July, but now increased government support of aircraft research and development was forthcoming.  

The defense estimates, which were issued the same week, showed increases of about four million pounds each for the Army and Air Force, and three million six hundred fifty thousand for the Navy over the 1934 figures. The total estimates were for the Navy £60,050,000, plus a £150,000 supplement to restore the wage cuts of 1931, for the Army, £43,550,000, and for the Air Force £23,851,000, plus a supplementary £200,000 authorized the same week for air base expansion.

Between the debate on the white paper and the debates on each of the service estimates, defense preoccupied Parliament in the second week of March. On March 11, Attlee moved a resolution of censure on the white paper, drafted in the polemical language of previous Labour censure motions. He regretted that MacDonald was ill with a cold and was not present in person to defend his "remarkable, deplorable and certainly very unusual document." Attlee aimed his attack at the Government's tactic, traditional among proponents of armaments, to cite


would-be aggressors as the reason for rearmament without being so undiplomatic as to name them.

What are the potential dangers? . . . There is a reference to increased armaments in Germany, Russia, Japan, and the United States of America. Are the United States one of the potential menaces? Why is there no reference to France? Is France a potential menace? The armaments of those countries may be a protection or may be a menace; it depends on what system you are trying to work. Are we to measure our Navy in rivalry with France and the United States? Are the replacement programme and the new construction because of the menace of the United States of America or France? They are certainly not because of the menace of Germany on the seas.

Baldwin's reply chastised the Opposition for mean and petty suspicion of Government motives.

One so often notices that those who talk most . . . about a new order ensuring peace are always those who exaggerate the virtues of those who do not happen to be our countrymen and find fault with everything our own countrymen do. . . . While listening [to Attlee] I could not help thinking of some words of John Morley which always appealed to me, that the most ostentatious faith in humanity in general seems always to beget the sharpest mistrust of all human beings in particular.

Baldwin went on to give his own philosophy of politics: "It is not a question in international politics of doing what is best—ideally best—but a question of doing what is best in the circumstances in which you work." Baldwin quoted some more figures to show how other countries were building up armaments—the American naval

5Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 299 (1935), 35-41.
budget had climbed from $350 million in 1933 to $580 million in 1935. He was forced to conclude, he said, that the world in 1935 was not safe for democracy.  

Sir Herbert Samuel spoke for the Liberals in a vein similar to his speeches on past occasions. More armaments would not buy peace; the money would be better spent on the betterment of the poor.

Sir Austen Chamberlain followed with a vigorous speech in support of both the Government and the League.

I desire . . . to challenge the whole basis of policy which has proposed from the opposite side of the House and was supported, as so far as he can support anything, by the right hon. Member for Darwen [Samuel]. The clear contention of the hon. Member who made the motion [Attlee] is that we have no need of effective forces of our own because we can rest our safety on a system of collective security. The right hon. Member for Darwen is never as precise as that, but he seemed to imply that any weakness or deficiency in our own forces at the present time was amply made up by the system of collectivity which was imperilled by any attempt to make our own forces more efficient or to increase any one of them [Opposition cheers]. I have succeeded in stating his position correctly, and, as the House bears witness by its cheers, that is no mean achievement.

Chamberlain wanted to know how Attlee and Samuel would react if war came. They would drop their odd policy then. If they didn't, they "would be strung up by a justifiably angry populace to the nearest lamp post."  

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6Ibid., 46-48.
7Ibid., 71-72.
Talk of lamp posts and stringing up excited Anauren Bevan, a militant proletarian pacifist, who said it was the Conservatives who would be strung up if they got the country into another war.

Admiral Sir Roger Keyes followed with some remarks on the folly of unilateral disarmament, during which:

two women at the front of the Strangers' Gallery rose, and shouting "Women want peace," flung to the floor of the Chamber a quantity of green and blue leaflets. The women were seized by a number of detectives in plain clothes, and shouting such slogans as "Not a penny for war," and "Scrap the White-Paper," were hurried from the Gallery. Many hon. Members rose from their seats and picked up and read the leaflets.

Later, during the remarks of Sir John Simon on the diplomatic situation, there were more leaflets and shouting.

After eight hours of discussion the Labour vote of censure on the defense white paper was voted down, 424 to 79.9

The defense white paper had been published for domestic political reasons, to help justify the March defense estimates. It also gave Hitler an occasion to

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9*Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 299 (1935), 162.
announce new rearmament measures which reversed the hopeful trend in German relations with Britain and France established by the clearing up of the Saar question and Germany's renunciation of Alsace and Lorraine. By the time Simon and Eden finally arrived in Berlin to be told that Germany had achieved air parity with Britain, the British public was stirred up and apprehensive over German rearmament. No one found Hitler's statement more disturbing than Lord Londonderry, who, as Secretary of State for Air, had advised Baldwin to say that Germany's air force was only half the size of Britain's.

The Air Ministry asked the German military attache in London for an amplification of what Hitler had said.

He stated quite simply that all he could tell us on the subject was that he had recently been present at a luncheon of the Luftwaffe at which Hitler was present, and he had heard him say, "Sir John Simon asked what was the strength of the German Air Force." Hitler told them that he had replied, "about the same as yours." He had added, "I do not know how many aeroplanes Goering has got, but he ought to have about that number."10

This answer, as recounted by Londonderry, implied that the German claim to air parity was imprecise and not to be trusted, even if Hitler was not deliberately lying.

But on April 10 Simon wrote to MacDonald that:

10 Londonderry, p. 127.
A high official of the German Air Ministry yesterday informed our Air Attache in Berlin that the precise meaning of the Chancellor's statement to me in Berlin that Germany had "attained air parity with Great Britain" was that Germany's first-line strength had now reached that of the British front-line strength including machines stationed abroad and in the naval air arm (some 900 machines in all). The regular Royal Air Force squadrons stationed in this country amount to only one half of this figure (453 machines) and even though we have in addition a further force of some 130 machines in the auxiliary squadrons . . . the German superiority over all first-line machines stationed in United Kingdom aerodromes under Air Ministry control now seems to be some 30 per cent. I can see no likely motive for the German Air Ministry deliberately to exaggerate to our Air Attache the figure of their present air armaments. 11

From information obtained years later it appeared that Londonderry and the Air Ministry had not been far wrong in their assessment and that Hitler was exaggerating. 12 What counted at the time, however, was that Hitler's figures were to all segments of British opinion very believable, and that, inflated or not, they provided a reliable guide as to Germany's future arms policy.

With the Government preoccupied with the approaching Stresa Conference, it was May 22 before the air question in the light of Hitler's statement was brought up in Parliament. May 22 had been picked because it would permit time for analysis of a speech Hitler was to make several days earlier. Because of the funeral of Marshal

11 Eden, p. 205.

12 Taylor, p. 387, note A.
Pilsudski of Poland the speech was delayed until the night before. It was Hitler's thirteen point "Germany needs peace" speech, very possibly made with the next day's British debate in mind.

Baldwin's opening remarks indicated that the Government was retreating from the position taken in the debates of March, July, and November 1934, and in the recent air estimates debate that had taken place before the Simon trip. Baldwin struck the pose that had become his trademark, halting, disingenuous, avuncular, almost cajoling the audience to share his amazement at the complete frankness with which he was addressing them.

I should like, in a few words, to contrast the position of a democracy such as ours and the authoritarian State in regard to their security. If an authoritarian State—I think there are three of them in Europe—wishes swiftly and in large measure to increase its national defences it can do it in absolute secrecy. It can draw a curtain round all that is happening in the country; nothing appears in the Press, no word is said in Parliament, and the world is with a fait accompli. . . . The veil has been partly lifted in Germany. I hope and believe it will be fully lifted soon, that we may be perfectly frank with each other as to all we have in the way of armaments, because, until that has been done there can be no real confidence.

At length Baldwin proceeded to the meat of the matter, Germany's suspected air strength.

First of all, with regard to the figure I then gave of German aeroplanes, nothing has come to my knowledge since, that makes me think that that figure was wrong. I believed at that time it was right. Where I was wrong was in my estimate of the future. There I was completely wrong.
Germany, he said, had from 800 to 850 first line aircraft, about the same as Britain, and was aiming for 1,500, the number held by the French. "That is the figure at which we are aiming and to which we intend to proceed with all the speed that we can." He then broached the fundamental problem of rearmament—the acquisition of a technical base of production.

In modern warfare there is nothing, as everybody knows, more important than the organization of the industry behind the machines. We should now direct our minds most seriously to remedying that weakness in our defense that should, which God forbid, the occasion arise for the rapid production of these machines, this country, with her technical skill and her knowledge, shall be in no way behind as compared with any other country in the world.

Then Baldwin directed some remarks toward anticipated Opposition criticism.

I have been occupied myself in studying questions of air raid precautions, and I tell the House that I have been made almost physically sick to think that I and my friends, and the people in every country in Europe, 2,000 years after our Lord was crucified, should be spending our time thinking how we can keep the poison gas from going down the throats of the people. It is time that all Europe recognised this. I look for light whenever I can find it. I believe there was some light that was made [by Hitler] last night... We must make a fresh resolve, and I believe that an opportunity may be open even now at the eleventh hour, knowing that the night is ever darkest before the dawn, when a time measurable in our lives may see banished from the world the most fearful terror and prostitution of man's knowledge that was ever known to the world.  

13Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 302 (1935), 366-368.
Attlee again was the first Opposition speaker. He did not say anything about Hitler's claim or Baldwin's confession about being wrong on the size of the Luftwaffe, as if those subjects were inconvenient and best ignored. He did re-define the Labour position on armaments, with a shade more emphasis on where it differed from the pacifist position.

In our view foreign affairs have been badly mishandled during the past four years and opportunities have been lost, but I am not discussing them to-day. We are not responsible, but we have to face the situation as it is. I want to recall to the House what our position is as a Party on the question of defence. As a Party, we do not stand for unilateral disarmament. There are members of our Party for whom we have the greatest respect and whose entire sincerity we recognise who do take that line, but as a Party we do not stand for unilateral disarmament. We stand for collective security through the League of Nations. ... We stand for the reduction of armaments and pooled security.¹⁴

Among those who were pacifist or closer to pacifism than the official party line were both religious objectors and those who objected on practical grounds. Some speakers in the debate stressed war's wickedness, others its futility. The most eloquent declamation on its futility came from John Wilmot. Speaking of a preceding speech advocating an emergency defense program, Wilmot said:

It was like a number of speeches which have been delivered during the afternoon, which, it seems to

¹⁴Ibid., 374-375.
me, assumed that war is inevitable, and that the subject for discussion now is what we should do to prepare as best we can for the war which cannot be averted. I refuse to accept that situation, and I cannot believe that hon. Members who think like that have really realized what it means. I have been through one war. Fortunately I have not lived long enough to have been through more, but one is enough, and I am sure the right hon. and gallant Gentleman (speaking previously) will agree with me that the character of a new war will be as different from that of the last, and as different from anything that we can envisage, as the last War was different from 1066. It seems to me to be leaving reality aside to go on blandly talking about the sort of arrangements that we will make for recruiting when the next war comes. It seems to me, if I may say so with great respect, that the awful sense of impending doom which is the reality if the situation of war is inevitable has eluded the attention of the House today. I think the Lord President of the Council (Baldwin) realises it, but seemed to be the only man in the House, except the speakers from this side, who really showed an inner grasp of the horror and futility of modern war. And yet, though I am convinced that he realises it, and hates and detests it all, what does he propose we should do in this extremity to avoid ... a catastrophe which will probably mean the end for ever of all that we love and hold dear? He proposes—let us look at it for what it is—to increase our 800 aeroplanes by adding to them another 600 or 700. Are we really asked to believe that 700 aeroplanes in the modern conditions of ... warfare will make the difference between peril and security?  

The Government's air policy was again sustained by the usual lopsided margin, with no real damage done to Baldwin's political standing. Yet the debate of May 22 had a distinctive character: it was the first time the Government used the word "emergency" to describe the situation.  

15 Ibid., 456-457.  
16 Ibid., 369.
On June 7, 1935, Ramsay MacDonald switched places with Stanley Baldwin in the cabinet, making Baldwin Prime Minister in name as well as fact. Baldwin's task was to lead the National Government into a general election which had to come before the end of 1936, and which, in the event, he called for October 1935.

There were other cabinet changes. Sir John Simon

Sir Samuel Hoare and
Sir John Simon—1936.
gave up the Foreign Office to become Home Secretary. According to Eden, who coveted his job, Simon had never had a firm grip on foreign affairs, and the events of March in particular had left him "clearly confused as to what to do next."\textsuperscript{17} His successor was not Eden, who at age thirty-eight could be kept waiting a while longer, but Sir Samuel Hoare, the former Secretary of State for India. As it turned out, Eden had scarcely more than six months to wait before Hoare, who described himself as "physically weak and mentally tired," was forced to hand over the office to him.\textsuperscript{18}

Two service secretaries were moved to less well defined positions in the cabinet. Viscount Hailsham went from the War Office to become the Lord Chancellor, and Lord Londonderry to become Lord Privy Seal. They were replaced, respectively, by Viscount Halifax and Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister. For Londonderry this was the political consequence of the wrangles over bombing at the Disarmament Conference and the March embarrassment over air parity. He had not been astute enough to follow Baldwin's line admitting error and resolving to do better in the future. Instead he haggled with the press over

\textsuperscript{17}Eden, p. 209.

\textsuperscript{18}Hoare, p. 109.
definitions of "parity" and "first line aircraft."
With some justice, Londonderry pointed out that "whereas few are prepared to rely on the veracity of any statement made by Hitler, this palable exaggeration had been accepted generally as the actual truth."\footnote{Londonderry, p. 126.}

Londonderry did not understand as well as Baldwin that in the art of elective politics being right is not all that counts, nor is it always the first consideration. As it was, "month after month, in leading articles, in special contributions, in cartoon and characture, the Rothermere newspapers had pursued the Air Ministry with something approaching vindictiveness."\footnote{Ibid., p. 128. Lord Rothermere was proprietor of the London Daily Mail.}

At a state dinner at Buckingham Palace held on May 9, Londonderry received a word of warning from his cousin, Winston Churchill.

We talked for some minutes and he said, in his emphatic and decisive manner, that he heard there was very strong opposition to my continuing as Secretary of State for Air.

I told him I was aware of this, but that, at long last, I had succeeded in establishing a policy of expansion. Winston did not shift his ground and added, "Look out, they are going to kick you out. I should resign if I were you."\footnote{Ibid., p. 134.}
Londonderry had very much wanted to remain Secretary of State for Air. An important cabinet post complemented the high and very active social position he and his wife held in London. He enjoyed working with the military—the senior officers of the Royal Air Force were men with the qualities he admired—and had thrown himself into his work, even learning to fly at the advanced age of fifty-five. He had always represented the Air Ministry case for more
funds to the best of his ability against impossible odds.

Now, with a measure of rearmament at last being undertaken, there were many projects that Londonderry wanted to see through. His staff were working on a number of further expansion plans, some of which saw the light of day and some of which did not. Baldwin's May speech introduced expansion Scheme C, replacing Scheme A of July 1934. As seen by the comparison below, the new plan, the British answer to the German air parity claim, provided for a larger air force sooner.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Striking Force (bombers stationed in Britain)</th>
<th>Fighter Command (in Britain)</th>
<th>Total Air-craft (all types, home and overseas)</th>
<th>Date Maturing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCHEME A</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>1,252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHEME C</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>1,804</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were also breakthroughs in aviation technology that promised great advances in aircraft performance. New engine designs were delivering as much as 32 horsepower per liter of cylinder displacement versus 13.8 horsepower per liter typical in the mid-1920's. With bigger engines producing more power, the horse-

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22 Slessor, p. 235.
power ratings on military aircraft engines were climbing to 840, in comparison to the 150 horsepower of the most powerful engines of 1918. Supported by Air Force grants, several companies were at work on new generations of "sleeve valve" aero engines designed to further increase the ratio of power to weight.23

In airframe construction a new technique of internal stressing enabled the wings of an aircraft to withstand a far greater amount of the twisting and turning required of military aircraft in high speed flight. Therefore the aerodynamically superior monoplane configuration was about to replace the externally wired and strutted biplane. Several new bombers capable of reaching Berlin from British airfields, and carrying ten times the usual bomb load, were on the drawing boards. A breakthrough in fighter design had occurred. Working in secrecy, the engineers at Hawker Aircraft Limited had in January completed a wooden mock-up of a "high-speed monoplane" that was to take a new Rolls Royce engine delivering over 1,000 horsepower. In the thick leading edges of the wing was provision for eight thirty caliber guns, instead of the two usually carried. The new monoplane also incorporated the radical new design features of

an enclosed cockpit for the pilot and retractable landing gear for greater streamlining. The new engine and the streamlined airframe promised a top speed in excess of 300 miles per hour.

In March the Supermarine Aviation Works, a division of Vickers Armstrongs Limited unveiled another secret mock-up of another monoplane fighter based on their Schneider Cup seaplane racers, one of which had exceeded 400 miles per hour in level flight. It was to use the same engine and carry the same armament as the Hawker design, but being more streamlined and some 400 pounds lighter, it promised to be the fastest military aircraft in the world. And it already had a name—the "Spitfire."

With all this activity afoot, Baldwin called Londonderry into his office, and in a friendly way, fired him.

Baldwin took the view, now that the Air Ministry had become a big spending department, that it was no longer desirable to have the Secretary of State in the House of Lords where he could not answer vital questions as readily as an Air Minister in the House of Commons.24

Unknown to him at the time, this was but the first stage in his separation from public responsibility. In the cabinet reorganization after the fall election,

24 Londonderry, p. 144.
Londonderry was removed from his post as Lord Privy Seal and dropped from the cabinet. "On November 7, 1935, I went to Buckingham Palace to deliver up the Seals of Office. The next day it was announced that the Air Minister in the new Cabinet, Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, had been made a Viscount!"\(^{25}\)

Londonderry saw himself betrayed, and later told Baldwin so.

I think, looking back, that you, Neville Chamberlain and Ramsay MacDonald, lost confidence in me because you were frightened by the propaganda of Winston and Rothermere which asserted that the Germans were overwhelmingly strong. You had refused to listen to our advice on rearmament and I am sure you became anxious lest the propaganda might be correct, and that then you would be confronted with the charge of having failed in your duty of establishing the security of this country. I think that is why you threw me to the wolves.\(^{26}\)

Three years later, amid another debate on the condition of the Air Force, Londonderry's successor, by then known as Viscount Swinton, was similarly removed from his post by Neville Chamberlain. The reason given was that, with the great controversy over air preparedness building up in the land, it would be better to have the Secretary of State for Air in the House of Commons.

\(^{25}\)Ibid., p. 153.

\(^{26}\)Young, pp. 183-184.
Part II

With the approach of the national elections came Britain's greatest foreign policy crisis since the war. Heretofore the principle of world collective security, the League of Nations ideal, and the friendship of Italy had all been compatible and complementary. But by the summer of 1935 Mussolini had drawn certain negative conclusions about Britain and France. They were weak, irresolute, and divided. By the Anglo-German Naval Treaty of 1935, Britain had shown willingness to sacrifice the interests of the League of Nations and Germany's neighbors in order to improve relations with Hitler. Under these circumstances, the friendship of Britain and France was worth having if it could be had on Italian terms, otherwise it could be dispensed with.

The Italians thought the time ripe to add to their small inventory of colonial possessions, starting for reasons of history and geography with the African Kingdom that called itself Ethiopia, but was better known as Abyssinia. The Italian invasion of Abyssinia began on October 3, after a year of trouble along the Abyssinian border with Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. Britain would now have to choose between Italy and
League.

For Germany the invasion was a diplomatic wind-fall, as American correspondent William L. Shirer wrote at the time in his *Berlin Diary*:

The Wilhelmstrasse is delighted. Either Mussolini will stumble and get himself so heavily involved in Africa that he will be greatly weakened in Europe, whereupon Hitler can seize Austria, hitherto protected by the Duce; or he will win, defying France and Britain, and thereupon be ripe for a tie-up with Hitler against the Western democracies.

A section of British Government opinion lead by Anthony Eden favored application of economic sanctions to stop the Italians, and failing that, using military force. Eden, as Sir Samuel Hoare's Minister for League of Nations Affairs, was thus advocating the interests of the League in a manner more vigorous than perhaps his chief would wish. However, Eden could point to proof that the public would support a strong line on Abyssinia. The fifth question on Lord Cecil's League of Nations Union peace ballot had read:

Do you consider that if a nation insists on attacking another, the other nations should compel it to stop by

(a) economic and non-military measures?
(b) if necessary, military measures?

The answer, even among the peace-oriented clientele who

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1Shirer, pp. 398-399.
filled out the ballot, was a firm "yes," even in regard to military measures. Only one ballot in five was against the use of military force.  

On September 11 Hoare addressed the League of Nations on the subject of collective security. It was a stirring speech, the best of Hoare's forensic career, and it seemed to put Britain on a collision course with Italy.

In conformity with its precise and explicit obligations, the League stands, and my country stands with it, for the collective method of the Covenant in its entirety, and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression.

On this occasion Hoare would have been effective even if he had left his speech to a clerk to deliver, for his words were backed up by a fleet of warships, led by the battlecruisers Hood and Renown, now approaching Gibraltar from Home Fleet waters. They ultimately joined the Mediterranean Fleet, which had evacuated the unprotected anchorage at Malta for Alexandria, not far from the mouth of the Suez Canal. The Italians were at this time shipping the invasion army, bit by bit, through the Canal in anticipation of invasion day. What would they do if the Royal Navy, acting in behalf of and with

the indorsement of the League of Nations, sealed off the Canal?

The necessity to choose between Italy and the League was also painful for the Labour politicians, particularly at election time. Hugh Dalton and Ernest Bevin backed the line taken by Hoare at his Geneva speech. Attlee remained with the progressively more awkward program of strong support for the League, which now meant aggressive sanctions against Italy, and simultaneous disarmament. George Lansbury, still the official head of the Labour Party, could offer no advice on sanctions policy; the problem was beyond his limited horizons. He could only describe his feeling that:

If collective security means that every nation . . . is to put its scientists to work on the foulest poison gasses, the swiftest machines in the air, the most terrible submarines, and the most horrible guns, then I am not for collective security of that kind.4

On September 30 the annual conference of the Labour Party opened at the Dome in Brighton. The chairman's opening remarks were made by W. A. Robinson, presenting an interventionist resolution drawn up at an earlier trade union conference at Margate. Robinson said that the National Government, after letting collective security opportunities slip by in the Far East, had

been tardily spurred to action by the peace ballot. In advocating collective security and even approving the Government's stand on Abyssinia, did the Labour Party stand for war with Italy? The chairman's speech begged the question, saying that Italy would not dare provoke war with a resolute League of Nations.

The League has a long way to travel before there need be resort to arms. In the event of hostilities, the withholding of supplies, would, I believe, bring war to a speedy end. In any event the almost unanimous view of mankind must prevail. No State can continue to flout world opinion, freely expressed. Should, however, Italy persist in ignoring the view of mankind . . . there can be no alternative but for the League to attempt to restrain Italy by the threat of force, which only utter madness of the part of Mussolini would bring into play. So, far from organized labour desiring war, it fervently prays for the keeping of peace.5

Dalton followed, putting more emphasis on the obligation of Britain and the League to intervene and less on the consequences.

Are we going to play the part of a great comrade among the nations, or are we going to slink impotently into the shadows impotently by our own choice; unfaithful to our solemn pledges; not a comrade but a Judas among the nations, deservedly left, as we should be, without a friend in the world, preparing through our own dishonour our own sure downfall at no distant date?6

Sir Stafford Cripps followed with his unusual view that the League of Nations was not worth supporting.


6Dalton, p. 68.
Herbert Morrison, W. A. Robinson, and George Lansbury at the Brighton Conference, 1935

wont to use in trade union wars against company men and scabs, said that he was tired of Lansbury and his conscience. "It is placing the Executive of the Movement in an absolutely wrong position to be taking for "hawk­ing" as some transcripts have it your conscience round from body to body asking to be told what to do with it."8

The official resolution supporting sanctions and in the last resort, force, was carried by 2,168,000 votes

to 102,000 according to the Labour Party's proxy system. Lansbury shortly after resigned as party leader in favor of Attlee.

The two major British political parties customarily had their yearly conferences one after the other, in the fall, at a seaside resort. Accordingly, the Conference of Conservatives and Unionist Associations met at Bournemouth on October 3, the day of Italy's long anticipated attack on Abyssinia. The Conservative meeting was the more noteworthy in these years because the Conservative officials were also ministers of the Government. "We cannot refuse to play our part," said Stanley Baldwin as news of the first Italian bombings was received, but he did not say what Britain's part was to be.

As in the opposing party, there was a division on opinion on policy in regard to Abyssinia. Those following a hard line towards Germany took a soft line on Italy. Leo Amery was flatly against any interference with Italy. In a House of Commons speech, he condemned Hoare's policy. Britain and France, he said, should have gone directly to Italy, offered some concession at Abyssinia's

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9"Mr. Baldwin's Speech," Ibid., October 6, 1935, p. 17.
expense and threatened war if Italy was not satisfied, and after the issue was settled, announce the result to the League. Amery's approach did not capture the imagination of the House. "So hostile indeed was the general feeling that one old friend of mine on the Conservative benches, Sir John Withers, rose to move that 'the Right Honourable Member be no longer heard,' a form of motion obsolete in the House of Commons since the seventeenth century.. . ."10

To his constituents at Sparkbrook, Amery struck a more responsive note when he said he was "not prepared to send a single Birmingham lad to his death for Abyssinia, or for Article 16 of the Covenant."11

Churchill was glad to see the Government at least had come out with a policy on Abyssinia as laid down by Hoare at Geneva, although he doubted its wisdom. He was for the soft line on Italy, and he wanted Britain to limit itself to support of any action France might take, without pressuring France to take any.

Generally I strongly advised the Ministers /Hoare and Eden, who had invited Churchill to the Foreign Office for a talk/ not to try to take a leading part or to put themselves forward too prominently. In this I was, of course, oppressed

10Amery, III, 178.
11Amery, III, p. 177.
by my German fears and the condition to which our defences had been reduced.\textsuperscript{12}

The British fleet in the Mediterranean would need to be heavily reinforced in order to out-gun the Italian Fleet, and the French would have to be relied upon to offset the Italian Air Force. From Cannes Churchill wrote back to Hoare, "I am sure you will be on your guard against the capital fault of letting diplomacy get ahead of naval preparedness."\textsuperscript{13}

This was the first occasion, and a comparatively minor one, where the British felt the limitations imposed by the smallness of their armed forces on their foreign policy options.

Baldwin was the man who had to make the final decision about Abyssinia. He saw the situation in terms of the election. His instinct told him that the voters wanted what Attlee was calling for—a diplomatic victory over Italy that the whole League of Nations could take credit for, without any fighting. The fine speech by Hoare and the arrival of the warships had gone over quite well with the broad center of public opinion. The one obstacle to a successful conclusion to the affair was the attitude of Mussolini, who continued to send his troop

\textsuperscript{12}Churchill, p. 151.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 153.
transports through Suez regardless of British public opinion or the symbolic presence of the British Mediterranean Fleet.

The public hoped for good news from the Mediterranean and Baldwin indulged them by downgrading the chances of war. On October 1 he gave a long, philosophic, "nonpolitical" talk to the Peace Society containing one very quotable statement, "I give you my word there will be no great armaments." Even though the invasion started two days later, the initial protesting and speechmaking at the League of Nations would buy enough time to see the election through. Mussolini did not do the Conservatives any harm in the polling. Neville Chamberlain wrote just before the election that:

The issue has been diverted from our weakest point, unemployment and distressed areas. . . . I intend to stress support of the League as an instrument of peace, a new defence programme to enable us to perform our task of peace preserver, the benefit of this programme to unemployment. . . ."  

In order not to seem to be following Conservative leadership on the issues of Abyssinia, security, and rearmament, Labour and the Liberals were forced to revert to their earlier position in favor of unilateral

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15 Feiling, p. 269.
disarmament. 16

Churchill stood for and easily won reelection at Epping on a platform of what labour called "scare mongering." In a typical speech, delivered at Camberwell on November 1, Churchill paraphrased various warnings from past parliamentary speeches, including the image of London as a great fat cow attracting aerial beasts of prey.

Meanwhile, across the North Sea, the whole of this mighty German nation is arming night and day. All their ammunition factories are working three shifts. The whole population is being prepared for war. Many of their submarines are already exercising in the Baltic. Their aircraft industry has a production many times as great as ours. Even the children in the schools are taught from earliest youth to think of the glories of war, the joy of conquest, and the duty of dying for the fatherland. I have made the statement repeatedly, and will continue to do so, that Germany is spending eight hundred millions sterling on warlike preparations. How mad we should be to leave our defences in their present neglected condition.

Then he made a sincere declaration of his own political philosophy, which more than made up for any of his errors of judgment or tactics, and marked him as a man a cut above the routine politicians to be found in any democratic government.

16 "The General Election," Ibid., November 1, 1935, p. 10. On March 11, 1935, Baldwin said in the House of Commons, "A country which shows itself unwilling to make what necessary preparations are required for its own defence will never have force, moral or material, in this world." This was quoted by Hitler in a speech at Nuremburg in July—Baynes, II, 1106.
I am told this is not popular. It is not good
electioneering. The British people do not want to
hear the truth. They want to be told by their pub-
lic men that everything is all right; that there is
no need to worry. I do not believe it. I believe
the nation expects public men and candidates to say
what they really believe, and they respect the men
who do. But, anyhow, nothing shall silence me.

The Times correspondent reported that:

Mr. Churchill's speech was subjected to many in-
terruptions, and a number of youths had to be eject-
ed by the police. At one point interruption seemed
to be particularly violent and Mr. Churchill said,
"That's just a handful of boys and girls who bring
the good name of London into disrepute and have the
effrontery to disturb a large public gathering.
They don't harm the Conservative Government. They
cannot hurt the Conservative Party. They only show
the confusion, bedlam, and chaos to which this
country would be reduced if people they profess to
represent got into power. They can shout and squeal
as much as they like, but it is lucky for them that
there is still a British Navy or they would get a
dose of Mussolini's castor oil or a taste of Hitler's
rubber truncheons." 17

Stanley Baldwin's good electioneering paid off
handsomely in the voting the week of November 19.

Distribution of Seats in Parliament, November 1935 18

For the Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conservative/Unionist-----</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Liberal----------</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Labour------------</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National------------------</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>428</td>
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17"Britain's Defences," Times, November 2,
1935, p. 7.

18"Government Majority over 240," Ibid., Novem-
ber 16, 1935, p. 12. One of the Conservative victories
was at East Fulham, where John Wilmot was defeated.
For the Opposition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Liberal</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Labour</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>184</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results left the Conservative Party with a majority of 158 votes over any possible combination of opposition parties, and left the National Government coalition with a majority of 244. This was the last general election before the Second World War, and this was the Parliament that would run the country during the critical years of the late 1930's.

Baldwin's victory gave him a free hand in reshaping the cabinet, but changes were few. Halifax replaced Londonderry as Lord Privy Seal and the vacant War Office was taken over by Alfred Duff Cooper, a Conservative advocate of rearmament.

The election victory gave the National Government the opportunity to deal with the Abyssinian crisis without much regard for Labour opinion. On December 7 Sir Samuel Hoare attempted to arrive at compromise solution in cooperation with the French. While on his way to a holiday in Switzerland, Hoare met with the French Foreign Minister, Pierre Laval, in Paris where the two
sketched some proposed new boundaries for Emperor Haile Selassie's Abyssinian domain. Italy would receive about twenty per cent of the country including that part bordering Italian Somaliland and populated by natives ethnically different from the Emperor, and also economic monopolies in the rest of Abyssinia. In partial compensation, the new Abyssinia would receive an outlet on the Red Sea—a port in Italian Eritrea, or if the Italians could not be persuaded in this, a port in British Somaliland.

The Hoare-Laval proposals, brought forward at the right place and time, might have been acceptable to all parties, particularly as the invasion of Abyssinia was proving slower and costlier than its planners had hoped. As it happened, the proposals were leaked to the French newspapers, and it was in the newspapers that members of Parliament read of what appeared to be a back room deal to reward the aggressor behind the back of the League of Nations, the brave Abyssinians, and the British public. Hoare, who had made the uncompromising speech on collective security at Geneva, was utterly discredited, and after an unsuccessful attempt by Baldwin to smooth things over, Hoare resigned. "It was military weakness rather than the faults of this or that Foreign Secretary that was predominately responsible for the dismal failure
of much that happened between the two wars," was Hoare's own post mortem on his career in the Foreign Office.19

In explaining what had happened in Paris, Baldwin resorted to obscure oratory, as was his habit when under pressure.

I have seldom spoken with greater regret, for my lips are not yet unsealed. Were these troubles over I would make a case and I guarantee that not a man would go into the lobby against us.20

What did Baldwin mean by that? His secretary asked him.

T.J. What did you mean by the sentence in your speech when you said, if only you could tell all you knew no vote would be cast against him?

S.B. That was not a very wise sentence; it shows the danger of rhetoric. I had in mind the menace of war; our fleet would be in real danger from the small craft of the Italians operating in a small sea. Italian bombers could get to London. I also had Germany in mind. Had we gone on to war our anti-aircraft munitions would have been exhausted in a week. We have hardly any armaments firms left.

Robert Boothby, who did not have access to Baldwin's confidential thoughts, guessed as much from his seat on the back benches.

It is perhaps well that Mr. Baldwin never attempted to make his case. For the chief trouble was that the Mediterranean Fleet was not in a condi-

19 Hoare, p. 110.
20 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 307 (1935), 356.
21 Jones, p. 160.
tion to fight even the Italian Navy. If he had let this one out of the bag, there might have been a sizeable lobby in favour of the impeachment of the Ministers responsible.\textsuperscript{22}

Churchill, whose career was characterized by a scrupulous avoidance of petty cliques and cabals, considered returning from his vacation in Spain to drive Baldwin out of office.

Looking back, I think I ought to have come home. I might have brought an element of decision and combination to the anti-Government gatherings which would have ended the Baldwin regime. Perhaps a Government under Sir Austen Chamberlain might have been established at this moment.\textsuperscript{23}


\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Churchill}, p. 166.
No one tried to drive Baldwin out of office, although his political prestige was not restored until the climax of the royal abdication crisis almost a year later. With efforts for a discreet deal with Mussolini compromised, the British policy was to support the League of Nations and Abyssinia by any measures not seriously risking war with Italy. The salvation of Abyssinia was
secondary to keeping out of war. The practical way to oppose the invasion short of war was by economic sanctions. Britain dragged out the discussions of what sanctions to apply, eagerly accepting French suggestions for delay. Finally some sanctions were adopted, sufficient to irreparably harm Anglo-Italian relations, but insufficient to save Abyssinia. On various pretexts and rationalizations, Britain shrank from the militarily effective sanctions—cutting off of oil imports to Italy, closing the Suez Canal to Italian shipping, sending military aid to the Abyssinians. Even so, at the League of Nations no other country did even as much as Britain to help Abyssinia. At length Italy defeated the Abyssinian Army and in May 1936 proclaimed a new colonial regime in that country.

The National Government's abandonment of Abyssinia, the result of the lack of confidence of Baldwin and his ministers in the capacity of the British armed forces versus those of Italy, destroyed the remaining authority of the League of Nations and thus closed an avenue of diplomacy which Britain could well have made use of to thwart Germany without war.

The defense estimates for the financial year 1936-1937 were drawn up as the Abyssinian crisis passed
into its most embarrassing and inglorious phase. The Italian Army in Abyssinia advanced while aircraft dropped mustard gas over the ground held by the barefoot Abyssinian infantry. It was said that Italy had only a three month reserve of the petroleum products required for the prosecution of the war, while Anthony Eden, now Foreign Secretary, was forced to construct elaborate sophistries before Parliament and before the League of Nations to explain why Britain was selling these same products to Italy.

As in the previous year the publishing of the defense estimates was prefaced by a Government white paper. This and subsequent white papers did not have the impact of the first one, of 1935, as the shock over the idea of rearmament had worn off. The 1936 paper summarized further increases in defense expenditure over the 1935 level. The Admiralty was planning to build the King George V, the Prince of Wales, a new aircraft carrier, and five new cruisers, with the aim of upgrading the 1933 cruiser force of fifty ships to seventy by 1939. (In the course of the financial year the building program was amended to show seven cruisers and two aircraft carriers.)

The white paper noted that the Regular Army was still smaller than in 1914 by some twenty-one battalions.
of infantry (185,000 men in 1914, 152,000 in 1935), and proposed to add four more to the existing force in the coming twelve months.

After the national election the Government had quietly implemented Air Force expansion Scheme F. Scheme F acknowledged that the 1937 completion date for Scheme C was impractical. It was reset to March 1939 with some 180 bombers added to the Striking Force. In the white paper a further 250 aircraft were added to meet contingencies in Abyssinia and Palestine.

The paper discussed a plan to channel new defense spending into the economically blighted areas of the country—chiefly Tyneside, West Cumberland, and South Wales, plus the city slums. One of the plans for these areas was the setting up of a series of "handy man" centers to produce 7,000 semi-skilled men for military-related occupations.  

The Navy budget was released on March 4, the day after the white paper. It totaled £69,930,000, almost ten million more than in 1935. This was followed by the Army budget of March 5, which called for £49,281,000, up almost six million. The Army increase continued to be aimed at qualitative improvements rather than large

troop increases.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{Expenditures for "Warlike Stores" (in thousands of pounds)}\textsuperscript{26}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Financial year 1935</th>
<th>1936</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guns (artillery)</td>
<td>363</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shells</td>
<td>1,757</td>
<td>2,235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Rifles &amp;c.&quot;</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartridges</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Transport</td>
<td>1,179</td>
<td>1,826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The biggest budget increase went to the Air Force, whose new allowance of £43,490,600 was up by some £14,300,000 from the previous year. This included an allotment of twelve million for new aircraft, eight million for the airframes and four million for the engines. Although most Royal Air Force officers thought in terms of the bomber force, the service secretary, Lord Swinton, had a particular interest in the defensive end of the business. The Hawker and Supermarine monoplane fighters were ready for production. Of the two, the Hawker design, by now publicly known as the Hurricane, promised to be the quicker and easier to produce. (In June, the first orders were placed— for six hundred Hurricanes and three hundred of the Spitfires.) The Air Force sought a reserve aircraft strength of two hundred

\textsuperscript{25}"69,930,000 for the Navy," \textit{Ibid.}, March 5, 1936, p. 8; "Higher Army Estimates," \textit{Ibid.}, March 6, 1936.

\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Ibid.}, March 6, 1936, p. 8.
twenty per cent of line strength to compensate for combat wastage—the air marshals estimated that if committed to battle, the entire first-line inventory of planes would be destroyed in a month. 27

The white paper and the separately issued service estimates appeared one after another on Monday through Thursday of the work week of March 2. On Saturday, March 7, against the advice of his Army leaders, Hitler performed the daring act of sending thirty thousand troops into the demilitarized Rhineland. In London there was consternation and indignation mixed with appeals for calm. Diplomats exchanged visits between London and Paris. The embarrassing element was that the demilitarized zone, extending fifty kilometers east of the Rhine, while created by Versailles, had been rewritten into the Locarno Treaty, freely entered into by Germany. In the past three years the British Foreign Office had found it convenient to rationalize that Germany should not be forced to obey the provisions of the dictated treaty, but only the terms of those treaties freely entered into. Hitler had encouraged this sort of attitude.

tude by pledging to keep the Treaty of Locarno on a num-
ber of occasions. Now, with the Wehrmacht crossing the
Rhine with impunity and taking up positions on the fron-
tiers of France and the Low Countries, the Treaty of
Locarno, like the Treaty of Versailles, lay in ruins.
The German Ministry of Foreign Affairs came to the res-
cue with enough diversionary issues—the offering of a
twenty-five year nonaggression pact with the western
democracies, the protest of the recent ratification of a
French-Soviet pact of friendship, the allegation that the
Rhineland occupation was only "symbolic"—for those who
wished to rationalize inaction. Inaction was in fact the
policy settled on by Britain, in consultation with
France. Lord Lothian found the right phrase—the Ger-
mans were "only going into their own back garden." Eden
heard this from a cab driver on the way to work the Mon-
day morning after the occupation.28

In the Rhineland Hitler brazenly gambled that no
one would interfere, knowing that failure might well
bring the downfall of his regime. The spectacle of
Abyssinia no doubt helped goad him into it. The affair
went off with brilliant success. The legend that "the
Führer is always right" spread far beyond the ranks of

28Eden, p. 389.
the National Socialist Party, to be added to in future exploits.

On the British side, the Rhineland incident heightened the resolve to rearm on a large scale in preparation for some unknown future confrontation with Germany, in preference to confronting Germany at that moment, even though it was militarily feasible, diplomatically possible, and legally proper to do so.
CHAPTER IV

BRITISH REARMAMENT DURING TWO YEARS OF GRACE—
MARCH 1936—MARCH 1938

Rats, when they find a carcass, take watchful bites at its extremities; then prudently withdraw to see whether any ill consequences follow before attacking the main portions.

— Malcolm Muggeridge, The Sun Never Sets

Part I

With the great armaments that Baldwin had given his word against before the general election of 1935 now clearly in the offing, there was much public discussion on how to administrate the rearmament program. Some people, including the former adherents of collective security through pacifism, advocated the recreation of the Ministry of Munitions created during the First World War. They wanted to see the various arms industries nationalized under the supervision of such a ministry, assuring that the bulk of the effusion of tax money would go to the workers and not the entrepreneurs. Private companies fought the very idea that exorbitant profits from military contracts were possible. As Major General Sir Herbert Lawrence, Chairman of Vickers Limited told his stockholders:

1Muggeridge, pp. 168-169.
I am pleased to state that our relations with the three Defence Services continue to be satisfactory, and although as an armament firm we are the subject of approbrium in certain quarters, we claim that so long as our products are necessary for the defence of the Empire, we are rendering a national service—and, as our trading results show—without any large reward to our shareholders. So far as Vickers Limited is concerned, the inflated profits of private armament firms exist only in the imagination of ill-informed critics. (Hear, hear.)

There was, of course, a tendency for arms merchants, as any merchants, to promote their products. Certain individuals had grown rich in the arms traffic, and these were especially resented by Labour politicians. To Labour, the arch type of arms merchant was the shadowy villain Sir Basil Zaharoff, a man of cosmopolitan connections, who moved in a plush world of yachts and private trains while working class youth rotted in their war graves. The attitude attributed to Zaharoff was recorded by Beverley Nichols in an interview with a foreman in a British arms factory—"We don't care who's having a whack at whom, providing we get the order."

Leo Amery remembered an incident involving the German arms industry trying to penetrate the British market.

On 26th September 1937 Dr. Lauber of the Hirsch Copper Company came to see me, ostensibly on

3 Nichols, p. 29.
the business of the Company, and presently unfolded
the real purpose of his coming. The German Higher
Joint Staff was convinced that the danger of war
with Italy was much greater than we thought. Musso-
lini was confident that his Air Force could sink our
Navy and might easily make sanctions a pretext for
a sudden attack. The German Staff thought Mussolini
might very well be right, as his Air Force was, in
their opinion, the best in the world. On the other
hand, they, the Germans, were about two years ahead
of us in anti-aircraft equipment and protective ar-
rangements for their warships, as well as in modern
aircraft. Accordingly he had come, at the request
of General Blomberg and with the approval of Hitler
and Schacht, to offer us as a purely business propo-
sition any material and equipment we wished from
their stocks, including even warships!  

In November 1934 the Labourites had first intro-
duced a motion in the House of Commons to nationalize
arms firms, and to forbid the export of arms. "We say
about the arms trade," said Attlee on that occasion,
"you must abolish it because it is wrong."

Some people say, . . . "If nations will fight,
if they will have these terrible weapons—and they
are certainly going to get them—we may as well pro-
vide them as anyone else." I think that is a pro-
foundly immoral position. Suppose we cultivated
opium and heroin in this country and said, "Unfor-
tunately there are people on the Continent who will
take these drugs. . . ."  

Sir John Simon's rebuttal was to paint a picture
of the graft, indolence, and featherbedding which tradi-
tionally attended state-run enterprises, as everyone

\[4\] Amery, III, p. 173. General Blomberg was chief
of the German General Staff, and Schacht was the Finance
Minister.

\[5\] Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 293 (1934),
1301.
well knew, and to reassure the members that each case of arms export was carefully weighed on its own merits. In fact, when the Labourites later demanded arms for Abyssinia and arms for the Spanish Republic, the Government declined to send them, citing in part moral reasons for its decision.

In February 1935 a seven member Royal Commission on the Private Manufacture and Trade in Arms (initially known as the Bankes Commission) was established, to examine both the practical and the moral sides of the question. Testimony was obtained from scores of witnesses, ranging from David Lloyd George, the nation's best qualified witness as former Munitions Minister and Prime Minister, to retired military procurement officers and obscure factory managers. The commission functioned until October 1936 when the findings were published in a hundred page report. The commission found that:

1) An international monopoly on arms was not practical, due to the failure of the Geneva Disarmament Conference and general lack of interest among the major powers.

2) A state monopoly in Britain was practical but not desirable, although certain factories might best be run by the state.

3) The practice of retired generals and admirals serving as officers of arms firms doing business with the Government should be discouraged (although the commission did not say how).

4) Special restrictions should be made on excess profits stemming from arms contracts.
5) Additional controls on arms exports should be put into effect.\(^6\)

The Commission felt that the immoral nature of private persons making arms for reasonable profit was not proved; the impetus to acquire and use weapons came from outside the arms industry.

The testimony heard by the Royal Commission on the Private Manufacture and Trade in Arms pointed out a practical dilemma to be faced when choosing between a private or a nationalized arms industry. If the Government got involved in making armaments, how could it help getting involved in other businesses as well? How was it possible to take over a shipyard building naval ships without taking over the merchant ship construction in the same yard? Furthermore if the arms-making portions of each company could somehow be separated and taken over by the Government, what was the Government to do with them in slack periods?

On the other hand, as Lloyd George testified, it was hard for private companies to make the heavy initial capital investment needed to get production of a particular weapon started. "A few hundred thousand worth of jigs and tools save immense sums on the battlefield," he said. But to amass the trained people, the

\(^6\)Paraphrased from "Arms Industry," Times, November 2, 1936, p. 9.
machinery and the plant space "would land them in expenditure on a great scale with only problematical commercial results." Under the private venture system the investment could only be recovered when the Government began to buy the weapon at a favorable price. A few large companies, such as Hawker Aircraft, who at one time was supplying six out of every seven airplanes procured by the Royal Air Force, were more justified in venturing money for arms development than others.

Along with the question of who was to manufacture armaments, there was the question of whether to establish a Ministry of Defence as a superagency over the existing service ministries. Attlee had proposed this in March 1934, at the behest of Hugh Dalton and the new military affairs study group in the Labour party. Churchill remarked at the time that "this is an attractive proposal, but it must be remembered that it has been rejected again and again when it has been closely examined in its workings." An even more ambitious unification idea was the Empire Air Force, which was proposed in the House of Lords by Viscount Elibank. The discussion was dropped


8*Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 287 (1934), 1235.
when Londonderry pointed out that with the divergent foreign policies not possible among the countries of the Empire, a unified military establishment was impractical.  

Under the existing system, which the Government wished to continue, the overall guidance of military matters was charged to the Committee of Imperial Defence. Constitutionally only the Prime Minister was a member of the committee, although all the logical cabinet members, the senior representatives of the three services, and whomever else the Prime Minister wanted were also members. Additional politicians, civil servants, military officers, and experts from private industry served on the many subcommittees concerned with the various specific defense problems. The Government consensus was that appointing a single person in charge of the entire apparatus would be unwise because no single person would be equal to such a complicated task, but would merely hinder the work of the existing service secretaries.

In February 1936 Baldwin decided to create the post of Minister for Coordination of Defence, with powers more advisory than regulatory. As Lord Swinton explained to the House of Lords, the new minister was not to dictate policy but to

\[9\text{Ibid.}, \text{(Lords), 93 (1934), 203.}\]
ensure that every problem and every aspect is fully considered and that difficulties and differences are frankly faced. He should evoke the best that each Chief of Staff can give, secure agreement if it be genuine agreement, and where there is genuine difference of opinion which cannot be reconciled, then he should present the whole case fairly to the Committee of Imperial Defence and to the Cabinet.

Churchill wanted the job in order to inject his own leadership into the rearmament situation. Another candidate was Sir Samuel Hoare, unemployed since the Hoare-Laval incident of the previous December. Also Neville Chamberlain might have had the job for the asking. Chamberlain preferred to remain Chancellor of the Exchequer, the best position from which to assure his succession to the Prime Ministership when Baldwin finally departed. Hoare's disaster at the Foreign Office was judged too fresh in the public mind for him to receive another appointment at this time. Neither did Baldwin and his closest advisors think Churchill the man for the job. They were looking for someone who would work quietly and harmoniously, i.e., subordinately, with the old established ministries. "Thinking in majorities and aiming at a quiet life between elections, he did not wish to have my disturbing aid."11

The choice was announced on March 9, the Monday


after the Rhineland occupation. The appointee was Sir Thomas Inskip, an amenable lawyer and former Attorney General, whose mind was unclouded by any preconceptions or prejudices when it came to military affairs. To Churchill this was "a heavy blow." But,

Mr. Baldwin knew no more than I how great was the service he was doing me in preventing me from being involved in all the Cabinet compromises and shortcomings of the next three years, and from having, if I had remained a Minister, to enter upon a war bearing direct responsibility for conditions of national defence bound to prove fearfully inadequate.\(^1\)

Churchill's only official connection with defense policy remained his membership, procured by Lord Swinton, on an air defense subcommittee of the Committee of Imperial Defence. Generally he refrained from venting his disappointment on Inskip beyond his widely repeated remark that the appointment was the most unusual since Caligula made his horse a consul, and several allusions to the small size of the Ministry itself—one office and two secretaries.\(^2\)

\(^{1}\)Ibid., p. 181.

\(^{2}\)Taylor, p. 390. The reference to Caligula's horse was borrowed from Gladstone, who was surprised that Disraeli's private secretary was being nominated for a peerage.
Sir Thomas Inskip.

As a critic of Government defense policy as a whole, Churchill by the spring of 1936 was just beginning to hit his stride. "Why still," he cried out in the House of Commons,

now at the eleventh hour, are we unable to decide on measures equal to the emergency? Is there no grip, no driving force, no mental energy, no power of decision or design? We are told that we must not interfere with the normal course of trade, we must not alarm the easy-going voter and the public. How thin and paltry these arguments will sound if we are
caught in a year or two hence, fat, opulent, freely-spoken and defenceless. I do not ask that war conditions be established in order to execute these programmes. All I ask is that these programmes to which the Government have attached their confidence shall be punctually executed, whatever may be the disturbance of our daily life.14

Besides attacking the policy of not interfering in the production of consumer goods "by which we prosper" as a Times editorial put it, Churchill joined Lloyd George and certain Labourites in agitating for a Ministry of Supply. During the debates on whether to establish such a ministry for the procurement of arms, the House of Commons listened to stories of assembly lines motionless because of tools and gauges not being ordered the year before, of a British firm that received an order for special bearings from Woolwich Arsenal via a French arms concern, but declined the order in favor of a similar one from Germany because the German price was better, and, in October 1936, to Lord Nuffield's complaint. Nuffield, one of the richest men in the country, and head of Wolsley Motors, was by hobby a philanthropist, and in this spirit had spent half a million pounds of his own money to set up and staff an aircraft engine plant. For Bureaucratic reasons Nuffield's plant had stood idle for over two years for want of a contract, even though engines were in short supply.  

14Churchill,
Another problem argued between Inskip and his critics was the proper mix of weapons. Churchill and another former First Lord of the Admiralty, A. V. Alexander, argued against a group of admirals and shipbuilders known as "the battleship lobby," headed by Admiral Sir Ernie Chatfield, the First Sea Lord. Chatfield pointed out that a battleship, once constructed, lasted five or six times as long as a fleet of airplanes, that it was comparatively cheap to maintain, and, unlike aircraft, the cost of ammunition and stores were included in the price, which was upwards of twenty million pounds. Enemies of the battleship pointed out that the two two hundred thirty pound bombs carried by the light bombers commonly in use in the Royal Air Force generated as much explosive force as a shot from a fifteen inch gun. They were not convinced that the arrays of anti-aircraft guns and the watertight compartmentalization designed for the new generation of battleships would suffice to protect the ship from a concentrated attack from the air.

Inskip launched a special committee to evaluate the role of the capital ship in modern war, composed of Lord Halifax, Lord Runciman, the President of the Board of Trade, and Malcolm MacDonald, the Colonial Secretary. The committee found that the primary weapon of defense
was still the fleet, and that the battleship was indispensible to the integrity of the fleet. As to the idea that the airplane would replace it, "our conclusion . . . is that the time has not yet come for such a revolution in strategy."\(^\text{15}\)

Inskip did recommend the transfer of the Fleet Air Arm from the administration of the Air Force to the administration of the Navy, which was complete by June 1937.

Churchill and Alexander saw the German naval threat as primarily coming from fast surface raiders and submarines. Fast cruisers and destroyers were what the British would need to meet such a threat, rather than capital ships. They helped Sir Samuel Hoare, who replaced Eyres-Monsell as First Lord, save five old cruisers scheduled to be scrapped as "over age."

For Churchill the air problem was most important. "We must concentrate on what is vital and take our punishment elsewhere," he said.\(^\text{16}\) He organized a deputation of eighteen men, Conservatives from both houses of Parliament, who thought as he did on defense, to call on Baldwin to present their case. The meeting took place

\(^\text{15}\) *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 317 (1936), 730.

\(^\text{16}\) Churchill, p. 205.
on July 28 with the eighteen on one side and Baldwin and Inskip on the other. The main point made was that as Germany was spending an estimated billion pounds a year on arms while Britain was spending some one hundred sixty-five million, Britain was falling steadily behind Germany in both air attack and air defense capability; there was no longer any chance of catching up with Germany; it only remained for Britain to put aside all pretense of normal times and hope that the combined weight of British and French armaments would be sufficient to deter Germany. Churchill felt that the Germans were going to ruin their economy by too much arms spending and compromise their international credit. The logical way to escape the consequences of improvident spending and at the same time recover their heavy investment in arms was to embark on a war of conquest fairly soon.\textsuperscript{17}

Only once in all of Sir Thomas Inskip's several uncomfortable appearances before the House of Commons to face the criticism of Labour, dissatisfied Conservatives, and private members advancing their pet ideas did he hint that Churchill was inspired by jealous motives, and in return received an epic Churchillian tongue lashing, one of the very finest in the history of parlia-

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
mentary debate, to which he made no reply. Following this a Labour speaker observed that:

The Government might well have appointed the right hon. Gentleman the Member for Epping to the position of Minister for Coordination, because they would have saved themselves a good deal of trouble. Whether he would have made any better job of it than the present Minister is very doubtful.

For Inskip, the criticism of the Labour and Liberal opposition was less of a challenge than that of knowledgeable Conservatives. The official Labour policy under the leadership of Lansbury and later Attlee was to vote against all defense appropriations by moving a token hundred pound reduction in the sum asked for. This tradition even applied to a supplementary appropriation of February 1936 to cover the expenses of increased naval deployment to the Mediterranean approved of and urged on the Government by the Labour Party Conference of the previous fall.

Looking back on these times Attlee wrote,

It had always been the custom in the House of Commons for the Liberal and Labour parties to vote against the service estimates. This had always been understood to be a vote against the level of armaments or against the policy of the government.

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18 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 312 (1936), 2455-2470.

of the day, but not against all armaments. It was left to the coalition governments to make this a cause of attack on the Labour Party. The Party, in view of this misrepresentation was perhaps unwise and pedantic in continuing this established practice.  

Clement Attlee, with a copy of Parliamentary Debates.

Besides the majority of Labourites who were for rearmament but saw fit to vote against the appropria-

tions anyway, there were still isolated members from the political left who for moral reasons continued to deny the need for rearmament, and others who judged the issue from a very narrow trade union viewpoint. In January 1937 in a discussion of how to recruit labor for defense industries, Frederick Montague told the House of Commons:

The skilled trades are not going to allow dilution from raw labour quite in the same way as was done between 1914 and 1918. We want more guarantees. We are not going to have trained men in huge quantities, after the emergency is over, thrown upon the streets in order to compete with normal industry and lower the standard of life. That happened twenty years ago. It is not likely to be allowed to happen again.

In the following transcript, of July 20, 1936, is demonstrated the low quality of much of the Labour side of the debate. Here Inskip gained a draw in an exchange of invective between himself and two Labour members and then carried the day by raising a point of potential embarrassment to the Labour Party.

Sir Thomas Inskip: The right hon. Gentleman [Attlee] served in the Great War with distinction. He must be aware that some forces are inevitable, that even under a Labour Government there will have to be some microcosm of a Navy or Army or Air Force.

Mr. Montague: Who said otherwise?

Sir Thomas Inskip: Let the hon. Gentleman listen

21 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 319 (1937), 995-996.
and follow what I am saying. I quite agree "who said otherwise?" The Leader of the Opposition has said that:

The Government "would appeal to him in vain to support recruiting," because he mistrusts the foreign policy and the armaments policy of the Government.

What does that mean? In as much as it is admitted that there must be some Forces of the Crown, does the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition mean to punish the Government by sacrificing the men who have joined? Do hon. Members mean to leave the crowded cities and the centers of employment and their own homes undefended and at the mercy of an invader because the right hon. Gentleman distrusts our foreign policy?

Mr. Thorne: Who is the invader?

Sir Thomas Inskip: The hon. Gentleman will know who the invader is when his house is bombed.

Mr. Thorne: No one is going to attack this country; we may attack someone else.22

Sir Thomas Inskip: Hon. Gentlemen Opposite laugh at me for some of these statements /to the effect that industrialists holding defense contracts were more motivated by patriotism than by profit/. I would like to know why some of them have been so insistant both by speech and by letter addressed to me, on securing orders for their constituencies. I have a list of them in my box; it is not confined to the back benches, but contains one or two on the Front Bench who have besought me to place orders for munitions of war in their constituencies. Why have they done that?23

The Labour position was further complicated by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936. In Spain a left-liberal regime with broad public support

22 Ibid., 315 (1936), 63-64.
23 Ibid.
and substantial forces at its disposal was challenged by an insurrection of Army and Church, led by General Franco. With infusions of illegal German and Italian military aid, the Franco Nationalists eventually ground down the Republic, which was sustained by Soviet aid, inferior to what Franco was getting. The process took almost three years, and caused agonies of conscience in the Labour Party the whole time.

An international agreement was made between the major powers not to interfere in Spain, which was generally kept by the democracies, who had no taste for military adventures, and broken by the dictatorships, who did. At the annual Trade Union Council meeting in September, A. H. Findlay, head of the Patternmakers' Association, led a motion rejecting pacifism, citing developments in Spain as the reason. Calls for military intervention on the side of the Republic were heard. But at the main Party convention at Edinburgh the following month, Attlee, knowing the majority of the British public were against British involvement in Spain and finding it awkward to condemn the Government for the weak state of its armaments, merely called attention to the nonintervention agreement, saying those who had subscribed to it, including Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin, "should see that
it was carried out."^24

A further complication in the Labour position was created when Isabel de Palencia, a Spanish communist orator also known as "La Passionaria," addressed the convention on behalf of the Republic. By birth half Scot, La Passionaria had an electric effect on the delegates, who were used to the most pedestrian styles of oratory. As she finished her plea, which ended in a few words in the Scottish dialect, there was pandemonium on the floor of the convention. Hugh Dalton wrote:

A large number of the delegates were now wildly excited. They were wallowing in sheer emotion, in vicarious valour. They had no clue in their minds as to the risks and the realities for Britain in a general war. Nor did they, even dimly, comprehend how unrepresentative they were on this issue, of the great mass of their fellow countrymen.^25

The delegates resolved to investigate breeches in the international arms embargo immediately, beginning with an interview between Attlee and Neville Chamberlain that very night. Should the investigation prove that breeches had occurred, Labour would call for the shipment of arms to the Spanish Republic.

At the end of the convention Attlee presented a redrafted Labour position on armaments, which was backed

^24"Labour Attitude to Spain," Times, October 6, 1936, p. 7.
^25Dalton, p. 100.
by all well-known Party names except Lansbury, and which passed by a card proxy vote of 1,738,000 to 657,000.

Under the terms of the new Labour position, the Government was to be "permitted" by the Labour minority to rearm, although the Government foreign policy requiring rearmament, and the nature and extent of the rearmament were still subject to criticism. The Labour resolution read in part:

That in view of the threatening attitude of the dictatorships which are increasing their armaments at an unprecedented rate, flouting international law and refusing to cooperate in the work of organizing peace, the Conference declare that the armed strength of the countries loyal to the League of Nations must be conditioned by the armed strength of the potential aggressors. The Conference therefore reaffirms the policy of the Labour Party to maintain such defence forces as are consistent with our country's responsibility as a member of the League of Nations, the preservation of the peoples' rights and liberties, the continuance of democratic institutions, and the observance of International Law.

But:

Realising the relationship between foreign policy and armaments, and having regard to the deplorable record of the Government, the Labour Party declines to accept responsibility for a purely competitive policy. It reserves full liberty to criticise the rearmament programme of the present Government, and declares the continuance of vested interests in the private manufacture of arms to be a grave contributory danger to the peace of the World. The Conference accordingly pledges the Labour Party to increasing efforts, both by exposing the present Government's record of incompetence and betrayal of its peace pledges, and by expounding our own positive international policy to secure the return of a
Labour Government to power. 26

In spite of the resolution on defense, which seemed to pull most segments of Labour opinion into coherent order, Neville Chamberlain's mockery of Labour on defense still accurately described the true state of affairs on the defense problem.

Nothing in the recent history of the Socialist Opposition has been more disastrous to its reputation than its equivocal attitude on the vital subject of defence. They seem to be divided between anxiety to vote against the Government and a sort of shamed face recognition that a disarmed nation can neither restrain an armed nation from war nor defend its own freedom and territories.

Harrassed by this dilemma, their leaders continually give us new versions of their policy. In a statement which seems to me discreditable to the leader of a great party, Mr. Attlee declares that he will not support a recruiting campaign because he does not agree with the Government's foreign policy. Yet he and Mr. Greenwood say they are in favour of sufficient armaments to fulfill our international obligations, although those armaments would be useless without recruits to fight them; while Mr. Morrison goes further and insists our forces must be sufficient to fulfill our obligations at home and abroad. On the other hand, Sir Stafford Cripps says the opposition will become a farce if the Labour Party agrees to the Government's proposals for re-armament, and "Uncle" George Lansbury goes the whole hog and wishes us to scrap armaments and trust to luck. No wonder Mr. Bevin says there is a lot of confused thought in the movement on the whole subject. 27

26 "Decision on Defence," Times, October 7, 1936, p. 7.

On November 12, 1936, another memorable defense debate came to a climax in the House of Commons. This debate had no impact on rearmament trends already in motion but was universally quoted by commentators on the personal part played in rearmament by Stanley Baldwin. The diary of Harold Nicolson, the one MacDonaldite National Labour candidate newly elected in the general election of 1935, set the scene.

We have to abandon our Foreign Affairs Committee as Winston is to make a great speech. He does. His style is more considered and slower than usual, but he drives his points home like a sledgehammer. We adjourn rather shaken to Ramsay's room expecting to hear the bombs dropping at any moment. The usual dull drab discussion of Party affairs. Then into the House to hear the Baldwin reply. He speaks slowly and with evident physical effort. At one moment he loses his notes. It is all very well done, but he has a poor case. One of the whips whispers to me, "This will take three months' energy out of him," and by the end of his speech his voice and thought limp as if he were a tired walker on a long road. The House realises that the dear old man has come to the end of his vitality.

The whispered remark of the party whip might have been inspired by a desire to explain in advance what Baldwin seemed to be saying in his speech. It was the worst example of Baldwin musing aloud in wandering syntax of the kind that gave the editors responsible for making a coherent official copy out of the stenogra-

pher's notes particular trouble. But he did say, whatever he meant, that he realized the danger of Germany all along, that he realized the need for rearmament all along, but that, "with an appalling frankness" he admitted taking no action for fear of losing the general election. He said:

The right hon. Gentleman [Churchill] has spoken more than once about the anxieties which were caused after the events in Germany in 1933, and the neglect of the Government to do anything or make any preparations in 1933-1934. . . . I have stated that a democracy is always two years behind the dictator. I believe that to be true. It has been true in this case. I put before the whole house my own views with an appalling frankness. From 1933, I and my friends were all very worried about what was happening in Europe. You will remember at that time there was probably a stronger pacifist feeling running through this country than at any time since the War. . . . You will remember the election at Fulham in the autumn of 1933, when a seat which the National Government held was lost by about 7,000 votes on no issue but the pacifist. You will remember perhaps that the National Government candidate who made a guarded reference to the question of defence was mobbed for it.

That was the feeling in the country in 1933. My position as the leader of a great party was not altogether a comfortable one. . . . Supposing I had gone to the country and said that Germany was rearming and that we must rearm; does anybody think that this pacifist democracy would have rallied to that cry at that moment? I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point of view more certain. . . . We won the election with a large majority; but frankly I could conceive that, by advocating certain causes, have been a great deal less successful. 29

29 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 318 (1936), 1144-1145.
Baldwin's most distinguished critic, his friend the member for Epping, did not lack for words to describe his own reaction to Baldwin's confession.

This was indeed appalling frankness. It carried naked truth about his motives to the point of indecency. That a Prime Minister should avow that he had not done his duty in regard to national safety because he was afraid of losing the election was an incident without parallel in our parliamentary history.  

Neville Chamberlain wrote that Baldwin's confession was frank, or had a good deal of truth in it, though not all the truth. S. B. had forgotten, or did not choose to mention, the long period occupied in examining the deficiency and drawing up a new programme, which in turn had to be reviewed and revised (mostly by me!) So far as I can remember without having looked it up, that took nearly the whole of 1934, and it was not until 1935 that we knew what we wanted to do.  

Baldwin's defenders state that what the Prime Minister really meant to say was that "he could not have campaigned for rearmament at the time of the East Fulham by-election; he had to wait until 1935 when the public had woken up."  

By November 1936, with the election a year past and the people having changed their mind, rearmament was now proceeding at full speed. The 1935 victory was Baldwin's initial mandate for rearmament.

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30 Churchill, p. 194.
31 Feiling, pp. 312-313.
32 Taylor, p. 387.
Baldwin's biographer attacked Churchill.

He had never won that reputation for good judgment in civil affairs which makes eloquence of his kind effectual . . . and, after all, everybody knew that he was exceedingly angry. He had expected to be Minister of Defence. 33

It is hard to construct from the written record of Baldwin's speeches any hint that he was seeking a mandate for rearmament in the campaign of 1935. On the contrary, "no great armaments" was his best known line. As a master of the art of the possible, Baldwin probably saw that for one reason or another massive rearmament was not possible in Britain before 1937 or 1938, that it was a net liability to talk of it in the meantime, and having experienced reasonable success and good fortune in his political lifetime he was content to wait, like Dickens' Mr. Micawber, for something to turn up that would put his silence and inaction in a good light. It was the disappointment of his old age that nothing did.

33 Young, p. 228.
Part II

After the Rhineland occupation the British Foreign Office expected Germany to proceed on a new adventure, perhaps against Austria, perhaps against the Czech Sudetenland, the Polish Corridor, or the free city of Memel. Eden submitted a questionnaire to Berlin asking what future policy might be, but received no answer. As it turned out, aside from pursuing a massive arms program, Germany did nothing more to excite Britain for the rest of 1936 and 1937 as well. No immediate construction of fortifications was undertaken in the Rhineland, and Germany made a fresh promise, in the form of a friendship pact, not to subvert Austria. Hitler continued to hope for some kind of arrangement with the British, and to this end sent Joachim von Ribbentrop, who had signed the Anglo-German Naval Treaty in 1935, back to London as Ambassador in October 1936.

Ribbentrop's predecessor, Leopold von Hoesch, who had died of a heart attack, had always kept a certain rapport with British diplomats. They thought him civil and decent, a relic of the Stresemann era. Not so Ribbentrop himself, who got relations off to a poor start by greeting King Edward VIII with a Nazi salute.
While Ribbentrop served in London, tension between the two countries continued to build month by month. On the other hand Germany's relations with Italy and Japan prospered as new prospects for mutually advantageous collaboration opened up.

After the Rhineland incident, Eden authorized military staff talks between the wartime allied powers, the French and the Belgians. But in October Belgium withdrew from the compromised Locarno Treaty in favor of the strict neutrality practiced by the Dutch—an indication of the state of Anglo-French prestige at the time. Belgian territory would henceforth be denied to the British and French for war planning purposes, although for some reason the British and French governments felt obligated to rescue Belgium anyway in case of attack by Germany.

Germany was now in its third year of a war economy. The new army and air force establishments announced in March 1935, though still short on training and equipment, were in place. The German plan of 1935 provided for an army of thirty-six field divisions; by October 1936, thirty-nine were known to exist and more were forming. ¹

Lord Londonderry, who was recognized in Berlin as being pro-German, was invited to see the new Luftwaffe. I went over to Germany by air to stay with Goering on September 21. The pilot of the machine had been given instructions to fly very high because large-scale manoeuvres were going on in the west. Here indeed was a new Germany. I felt it was more imperative than ever that we should reach an understanding before it was too late and go in for a scale of armament which would counter Hitler and his developing ambitions.  

Indeed it was the plain truth that Hitler spoke in the Munich beer hall where he had attempted a coup against the Weimar Republic exactly thirteen years before, when he said, "the world now knows that it cannot treat us like a State of Zulu Kaffirs." A week later Germany announced that it had reimposed its national sovereignty over the Elbe, Oder, Niemen, and Danube waterways, thus throwing off "the last shackles" of the Treaty of Versailles.  

While Germany's strength and prestige burgeoned, that of the League of Nations sank toward oblivion. Churchill attempted to revive interest in the League by tying it in with British rearmament, under the slogan, "Arms and the Covenant." He expected to attract support from the Liberal Party and the right wing of Labour in 

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2 Londonderry, p. 181.  
addition to his own Conservative faction, and a successful non-party rally for Arms and the Covenant was in fact held in the Albert Hall in early November. Unfortunately Churchill was undone by his part in the abdication crisis, which burst upon the scene that same month.

All the forces I had gathered together ... of which I conceived myself to be the mainspring, were estranged and dissolved, and I was myself so smitten in public opinion that it was the almost universal view that my political life was at last ended.

With the approach of the financial year 1937-1938, the British Government had to come to a decision about how to finance the rearmament program. The bills for arms ordered in prior years were coming due, and no prospect existed for a reversal of the rearmament process. Rather, acceleration of arms spending on a huge scale was to be expected. To Chamberlain, the able Chancellor of the Exchequer, sound finance was "the fourth arm of defence."

If we were now to follow Winston's advice and sacrifice our commerce to the manufacture of arms, we would inflict certain injury to our trade from which it would take generations to recover; we should destroy the confidence which now happily exists, and we should cripple the revenue.

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4 Churchill, p. 196.
5 Feiling, p. 314.
On February 11, 1957, Chamberlain presented to the House of Commons the first Defence Loans Act, the inauguration of deficit arms spending. Chamberlain proposed to borrow, over a span of five years, the sum £400,000,000. The overall defense expenditure in the same five years, from April 1, 1937, to March 31, 1942, was estimated at at least £1.5 billion, or £300,000,000 per year. The Exchequer planned to raise this annual sum by allocating £220,000,000 in current tax revenues and borrowing £80,000,000 from the fund of borrowed money. The overall five year defense budget of £1.5 billion, four times the cost of the Boer War and equal to British war expenditures for 1918, was to be subject to continuous review, with upward revisions likely.6

The Defence Loans Bill passed without difficulty on March. The Opposition, now forbearing to claim that great outlays of defense money were unwise, was left to criticize the details of the bill.

Attlee complained of

the trouble that will arise by superimposing upon a market approaching the condition of boom, a heavy demand for unproductive goods, such as armaments, which is bound to cause a reduction in the standard of living of the people who are not employed in

6Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 320 (1937), 594.
armament industries. 7

The Liberal Opposition agonized over the thought of profiteering by private manufacturers. Wilfred Roberts, speaking for the Liberals, announced that

we oppose this bill on general grounds, not because we oppose rearmament as a whole. We recognize some necessity for rearmament, given the foreign policy of this country and others, but we oppose the bill because we believe it will tend to diminish the care under which this expenditure is scrutinized.

Churchill spoke in favor of the bill, and with a little calculated exaggeration and dramatization captured the essence of the situation while others haggled over details.

Wars do not wait until everyone is ready. Usually they come when one Power thinks itself less unready than another, and sometimes they come when one Power, under great strain, feels that it has nothing to gain by delay and that the future holds for them no relative improvement.

When a whole continent is arming feverishly, when mighty nations are laying aside every form of ease and comfort, when scores of millions of men and weapons are being prepared for war, when whole populations are being led forward or driven forward under conditions of exceptional overstrain, when the finances of the proudest dictators are in the most desperate condition, can you be sure that all your programmes, so tardily adopted, will, in fact, be executed in time? 8

7Ibid., 321 (1937), 561.
8Ibid., 588.
Following the February 11 announcement of the Defence Loans Act, the Government issued its annual white paper, recapitulating progress in defense to date, stressing the need for deficit financing in future programs.

The true British reaction to the recent triumphs of Hitler and Mussolini could be read in the 1937 service estimates. In the financial year 1937-1938 the Navy was to spend £105,065,000, an increase of £23,776,000 over the 1936 budget as supplemented over the course of the year. The number of men in the Navy now stood at 112,895, an increase of 11,000 in a year. The Navy's 1937 construction program showed the following major items:

- 3 battleships (King George V class),
- 2 aircraft carriers,
- 5 heavy cruisers (8,000 tons displacement),
- 2 light cruisers (5,300 tons displacement),
- 16 destroyers and flotilla leaders,
- 7 submarines.¹⁰

This program contrasted greatly with the typical building schedule of three cruisers and a half-dozen destroyers in the first years of the decade.

¹⁰"Money for the Navy," *Times*, March 4, 1937, p. 14. Of the new generation of capital ships contemplated in the late 1930's, only the two ordered in 1936 were ever built.
Launching the Ark Royal, Birkenhead, April 1937.

The Army got an allowance of £82,124,000, an increase of almost £40 million. The cost of the Army had doubled in two years as it began to prepare for an uncertain role as defender of the Empire and possibly western Europe in a new technological age.\footnote{"Army Estimates," \textit{Ibid.}, March 5, 1937, p. 9.}

The Air Force budget practically doubled in a single year to £88,588,600. For the first time the Air Force was placed second rather than third among the
services in the amount of the appropriation. The
largest single item, £12 million, was for aircraft fac-
tory construction.12

Nineteen thirty-seven was the first year that de-
fense spending clearly reversed the favorable trend of
slightly lower taxes as the economy climbed out of its
depression slump. In 1937 Chamberlain increased the in-
come tax by 3d to a basic rate of 5 shillings to the
pound, and proposed a new excess profits tax on com-
panies awarded large defense contracts. The tax propo-
sal, called the National Defense Contribution, or N.D.C.
for short, required a sliding scale of remittances based
on the 1937 profits of the company compared to the pro-
fits of the years 1933 through 1936. Each company liable
to the tax could choose an average of any two or more of
those years to come up with a pre-1937 profit standard.
Small or unprosperous companies with annual profits of
less than two thousand pounds were exempt from N.D.C.,
although like the others they were still liable for cor-
porate income tax. The Government proposed to confis-
cate profits that remained after the corporate income
tax on the following scale:

profit growth (1937 over previous average)  NDC rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>NDC Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-6%</td>
<td>no tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15% and over</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

On April 29 the Treasury issued the first hundred million worth of defense bonds through local savings banks. The bonds paid 2\% per annum and were to be redeemed in stages between 1944 and 1948.

There was a postscript to the debate on the 1937 defense estimates and the defense bond issue. The defense bond issue, for instance, passed by a vote of 241 to 117, with the minority of dissenters mainly representing the Labour opposition. However, at a meeting of the Labour members of Parliament on July 21 and 22, Hugh Dalton persuaded the conferees to end the practice of voting against rearmament, in the face of a contrary recommendation by the Executive Committee of Attlee supporters. Dalton explained his position as follows:

I was satisfied that one reason for our poor polls in the by-elections was that people were bewildered by our attitude on foreign policy and defence. They simply did not accept the professional Parliamentarian's argument, on which Attlee and

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13 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 322 (1937), 1614.
others relied, that a vote against the Defence Estimates did not mean a vote against defence. Not one person in ten thousand either understood or respected such an argument. It seemed to them to be dodging the issue and playing the fool. \(^{16}\)

The September Labour conference resolved that:

The present international situation is very ugly and dangerous. There is a grave risk of a general war in the near future. During the past two years there is good reason to believe that Europe has more than once been on the very brink of the precipice. The position was very critical when Germany reoccupied the Rhineland. It has more than once been very critical in Central Europe, when Germany was thought to be on the verge of an attack upon Czechoslovakia, or of instigating a Nazi rising in Austria. It was publicaly declared by Leon Blum to have been very critical in the first weeks of the Spanish Civil War, and, as the war had continued the danger of its spreading into a European conflagration has never been absent. \(^{17}\)

The resolution went on to describe the vulnerability of Britain to air attack, and the vulnerability of the life lines of the Empire to interdiction by sea, and concluded:

These considerations alone are sufficient to demonstrate the insanity of a foreign policy of isolation, and, if the British Commonwealth is to survive, the absolute necessity of some form of collective security. \(^{17}\)

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\(^{16}\) Dalton, p. 135.

Disarmament and the League of Nations, hitherto cornerstones of the Labour view of collective security were not even mentioned in the resolution.

The decision of the Labour members of Parliament not to oppose defense appropriations wrought a great change in the voting pattern. The first test was on July 27 when supplementary estimates for all three services were voted upon.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>service</th>
<th>vote (for-against)</th>
<th>time of vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>325-8</td>
<td>10:36 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>325-7</td>
<td>10:46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>327-7</td>
<td>10:58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dissenting block of votes decreased by one when "Willy" Gallacher, Parliament's sole Communist member, who took pride in keeping neither limousine nor chauffeur, had to depart after the Navy vote to catch the last subway home. The vote of July 27 was an early indication of the future solidarity of the British Government and people, at times so unrealistic and divided, once the national consensus had been reached that Germany was pushing them into a corner.

The signal event of spring 1937 in British national life was the coronation of the Duke of York as King George VI. It was the last major public diversion from the cares of the building European crisis. The coronation was also the happy climax of Baldwin's public career, in which the traditional values he championed won out over the challenge posed by Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson. Baldwin had announced his retirement plans before Coronation Week, and on May 28 he handed the Government over to Neville Chamberlain, accepted

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18. Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 326 (1937), 3011, 3015, 3018.
from the King the Earldom of Bewdley, and disappeared from politics. He would have done well by his country to have gone sooner.

Neville Chamberlain, September 1938.

Whereas Baldwin had always been affable and inarticulate, Chamberlain was by nature prim, precise, meticulous. He had served in appointments where these qualities were most in demand. In 1925 he had been Minister of Health under Baldwin—a diary entry from that time showed the difference between the two men.
I had noticed once or twice that S. B. didn't seem to be attending to me, and presently he passed an open note across the table to Winston, who was sitting beside me. On the note was written:

MATCHES
Lent at 10.30 AM
Returned?

This triviality made the most deplorable impression on me. 19

Of those he chose as his cabinet ministers, Chamberlain was closest to Halifax, Simon, and Hoare. Halifax replaced the moribund Ramsay MacDonald as Lord President of the Council, Simon became Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Hoare moved from the Admiralty to become Home Secretary. Duff Cooper shifted from the War Office to the Admiralty, and the former Minister of Transport, Leslie Hore-Belisha, became Secretary of State for War.

As the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon's immediate problem was getting the National Defense Contribution Bill through Parliament. The text of the proposed law was condemned by such bodies as the Associated Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of British Industries, who thought it was capricious in its definition of defense-related industry and ignored the risks, the capital wastage, and the deferment of yield encountered in free enterprise. Simon reintroduced a modified N.D.C. plan to the House of Commons, but had

19 Feiling, p. 164.
some difficulty in explaining how it all worked. Therefore the National Defense Contribution plan was dropped and a new profits tax proposed in its place. The new tax, also called the National Defence Contribution, introduced on June 21, taxed the profits of all trade and business regardless of its applicability to defense. The tax rate was 5% of the profits of corporations and 4% on unincorporated business. This levy was to be deducted from profits before the application of the regular income tax. Small or unprofitable businesses and businesses in economically depressed areas could qualify from various exemptions from the tax. Simon expected to get £25,000,000 a year compared to £15,000,000 a year from the old N.D.C. plan, in revenue from the new tax, which was to last for the duration of the defense loan—until the end of the financial year 1941-1942.20

As Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare inherited the awkward problem of civil defense. With both Germany and Italy equipping their air forces with large numbers of aircraft capable of attacking British cities with a sizable bomb load, it was unthinkable that the Government should not make some gesture toward sheltering the public during air raids, as well as providing fire

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20 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 325 (1937), 857.
fighting and gas protection capability, evacuation of nonessential persons from dangerous areas, and emergency medical care. At the same time it was obvious that the Government could not guarantee the safety of the entire population under conditions which no one could precisely foresee. In the First World War the Germans had dropped on Britain 74 tons of bombs, which killed 851 people, wounded 2,058 and caused property damage to the extent of a million and a half pounds. To what extent had the threat multiplied itself in the intervening twenty years? Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for Coordination of Defence, was now tasked with coordinating the outlays for civil defense popularly known as air raid precautions, or "ARP." Naturally, he was reluctant to see large sums taken from the service budgets to meet the ill-defined and practically limitless requirements of ARP.

Two years before, when Simon was the Home Secretary, the Government had offered to municipalities free air raid shelter building materials. The labor costs of shelter construction were to be borne by the cities themselves. The Association of Municipal Corporations and the London County Council asked the Government to pay the labor costs as well, expenses not sufficiently popu-

\[21\text{Ibid.}, 329 (1937), 147.\]
lar for them to undertake. As the Government could not find the money either, the shelter construction program went nowhere for the rest of Simon's tenure. The same was true when the Home Office sent its Fire Brigade Emergency Organization directive to the urban governments, outlining what equipment they should have on hand at the time of an air raid, but leaving it to them to purchase the equipment required.

Hoare reopened the question of air raid precautions funding in July 1937 with a delegation of municipal authorities led by Herbert Morrison, the prominent Labourite. Hoare offered to provide shelter material, extra firefighting apparatus, stretchers, blankets, decontamination and rescue equipment and the like, on a cost sharing plan whereby the Government would pay 70% of the cost. Morrison's position was, since the Government was responsible for the state of affairs that made such precautions necessary, the Government should pay every penny of the expense. Hoare pointed out that if the Government paid everything, extravagance and waste would result. He wanted the local governments to levy a "penny rate" on real estate to raise the money for their share.  

22Ibid., 41-55.
In November 1937 Hoare submitted an Air Raid Precautions Bill to the House of Commons. The bill called for the Government to assume from 65% to 75% of the cost of air raid protection measures, depending on the financial condition of the municipality, as determined by taxable land values per head of population, the unemployment rate, and the number of children under five years of age. This measure, which passed after heated debate by a vote of 305 to 149, marked the beginning of civil defense in Britain.23

Leslie Hore-Belisha was a plump, talkative man, forty-three years of age when he took over the War Office in May 1937. He had been President of the Oxford Union as a student before the war, and in 1922 represented the Liberal Party in the contest for the Devonport constituency. There he lost to an entrenched Conservative incumbent, although by the end of the campaign his style of traveling about in an antique stage coach and summoning audiences with a coaching horn had made him as well known as his opponent. The next year he had the opportunity to recontest and win the seat, which he held ever after.

23Ibid., 311.
As Minister of Transport under Baldwin, Hore-Belisha's main task had been to reduce traffic fatalities, which at some seven thousand per year were a national scandal. He built a system of trunk roads and by-pass roads that reduced traffic congestion, he recodified the rules of the road, and set up pedestrian crossings guarded by "Belisha beacons." Hore-Belisha kept on his person miniature replicas of Belisha beacons fashioned into fountain pens, flashlights, and cigarette lighters, which he handed out to friends and constituents at the least provocation.

The War Office was foreordained to be a difficult and challenging post, especially for Hore-Belisha. There was a lack of social rapport with the mass of military men placed under his control. His ancestors were Jewish emigres from Spain, and living as a bachelor in a garish London town house, Hore-Belisha projected just the sort of personal image an English conservative rural aristocrat would have of a Jewish emigre. To this aristocracy, who still furnished most of the senior officers in the British Army, Hore-Belisha's aggressiveness was pushiness, and they would have preferred it if Hore-Belisha had channeled his abilities into some mercantile business as befitted someone of his ethnic background. However, Neville Chamberlain, not always the servant of
the rural aristocracy, perceived that the Army needed reform, and Hore-Belisha, who was due a promotion for his past performance in other posts, was just the man.

Leslie Hore-Belisha.

There was another unusual man about to exert influence on the organization of the Army out of all proportion to one with his station in life. He was B. H. Liddell Hart, once a captain in the Army, which title he retained, and now military correspondent for The Times. As an armchair general, Liddell Hart propounded the theory that in modern war the defensive action of an army was more potent than the offensive. One machine
gun correctly placed could hold up a regiment. Therefore, he believed, the British Army should concentrate on defensive tactics, particularly in the tactics required to get the right weapons at the right place to foil the advance of an enemy superior in numbers. Fortresses and trenches still had their place in certain cases, but the main reliance should be placed in rapid-firing guns of various calibers capable of concentration and dispersal at the speed of an automobile.

"Fire power and mobility,"—Liddell Hart's doctrine was popular with persons in both major parties; it offered an alternative to the experience of the late war. He briefed the military affairs study group in the Labour Party, and, as a journalist not out of his thirties, was invited by the Conservatives to "review" promotion lists of colonels and generals and to suggest changes before they were published. In 1937 Liddell Hart was dissatisfied with the Army's adjustment to post-1914 technological developments. "There is a palatable groping in the haze of novelty, and, perhaps naturally, a tendency to begin by trying how far a small adjustment of old ways will serve to make the new ways work."24

The decision in principle to mechanize the Army

had been made in 1934. The first and easiest step on the way to mechanization was to get rid of the horses. This had already been started for reasons of economy. In March 1935 Lord Halisham, then Secretary of War, could report that the number of Army horses had declined from the 1914 level of some 28,000 down to 14,474, with 1,820 more scheduled to go in the financial year 1935-1936. In 1936 the next Secretary of War, Duff Cooper, announced that eight of the fifteen cavalry regiments were to lose their horses in favor of motor vehicles. "It is a great sacrifice for the cavalry men," said Duff Cooper, "but it has been accepted in the very best spirit, practically without protest by all the regiments concerned." But the Army was in a quandry about exactly what to replace the horses with; funds were limited; those with the most knowledge about the design of engines and vehicles were not necessarily those in a position to influence the decisions made, and the manufacturers themselves were bombarding the procurement officers with new ideas at increased prices.

The equipment of the infantry was likewise behind schedule. Toward the end of 1935 Liddell Hart

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26 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 309 (1936), 2352.
wrote that:

the bulk of our forces still consists of infantry, but the infantry are still armed with the war-time Lewis gun. At last this year we have reached a decision on the new type of light machine-gun to be adopted; but arrangements have to be made for the manufacture of the Bren gun in this country, and a considerable time is likely to elapse before it is in the hands of our infantry. For defence against tanks, which are multiplying fast in the Continental armies, the bulk of our infantry have nothing better than the convenient green and white flags which they have been waving for years to represent the anti-tank guns they await.27

Several different ideas on new organization of troops employing motor vehicles instead of horses or movement on foot were tried out during the annual summer maneuvers in the middle thirties. From the experience gained on maneuvers, Duff Cooper announced the formation of a new mobile division to be added to the five infantry divisions of the Regular Army in Britain. The mobile division was to consist of two mechanized cavalry brigades, a total of six unhorsed regiments riding in light tanks, a tank brigade, the only one in Britain, with about 200 light and medium tanks as compared to the 6,000 tanks said to be in the Soviet Union and the 2,000 each owned by Germany and France, an armored car regiment, two motorized rifle battalions, and two brigades of the Royal Horse Artillery, remounted on caterpillar

tractors. The mobile division as a whole was to contain 1,300 vehicles, of which 620 were to be armored, and 6,500 men.  

The cost of the tank brigade fully equipped, in addition to equipment on hand was put at 4.5 million pounds. The cost of equipping one of the five established infantry divisions with the mechanized inventory required by the proposed modern standard was estimated at between six and eight million.

Aside from the shortage of modern equipment the most serious barrier to Army expansion plans was the lack of volunteers for its lower enlisted ranks. In 1937 the Regular Army below its authorized troop strength by ten thousand men, simply because in the absence of compulsory service, the men could not be found. Likewise, the national guard, the Territorial Army, was short by almost a third of its authorized 182,000. The gaps were increasing with periodic increases in the authorized troop ceilings.


Those coming forward for induction into the Army were not exactly the flower of British manhood. "In general terms," said the 1936 General Annual Report for the British Army, "is that if three men come forward to enlist, one is rejected at sight, the second is rejected for physical, medical, or educational reasons, and the third is finally approved." 30

Why the difficulty in recruiting? In 1936 Duff Cooper mentioned three factors—fuller employment in industry, the national standard of housing, which had

30 "Men for the Army," Ibid., March 9, 1936.
risen above the kind the Army provided, and pacifist agitation, "which has a great deal to do with the badness of recruiting at the present time."31

To the young man committed to a civilian job, membership in the Territorial Army was apt to be a thankless burden on top of his regular employment. Most employers did not go out of their way to encourage their employees to get involved in such distractions. Duff Cooper mentioned Lord Rothermere as an exception.

I would make an appeal, . . . to the employers in this country, who can do more than anybody else in recruiting for the Territorials. We have recently been set a very fine example. Lord Rothermere, a gentleman with whom I havenot always seen eye to eye, has made the announcement that he will give to every young man in his employment who joins the Territorial Army two weeks' full holiday in order to attend his camps, and full pay, without allowing it in any way to interfere with such a holiday as that employee would otherwise enjoy.32

But gestures such as Lord Rothermere's did not deal with the heart of the problem—traditional Army life brought with it too much personal inconvenience and grief to be popular with the new generation of young men. In an article reprinted from the March 1937 Royal Engineers' Journal, a Major F. E. Fowle wrote:

Because they hate the idea of having to live in barracks, and give up the free evening and night to

31 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 308 (1936), 2355.

32 Ibid., 2360.
which they are accustomed; there is no privacy in a barracks, none of the "Englishman's home is his castle" by which they and all of us set such store. It is not the thought of being under discipline and having to do what you're told, but the knowledge that when you've done your day's work you are still not your own master, and that you've got to spend the rest of the day and all the night herded up with a whole lot of other men. Why does the "general labourer" work longer hours than the soldier in whose barracks he is working, and for less pay? Because when he's finished he goes back to his own home and is master of his fate until seven O'clock the next morning. If he feels like going to bed at six he can without eleven other men to keep him awake. If he has a wife he can spend the evening with her; if he has not he can spend it with a substitute without the thought of a pass always at the back of his mind interrupting his night just at the wrong moment.  

J. R. J. MacNamara, a member of Parliament, itemized some other irritants part of Army routine.

(1) Dress: Men on joining and on transfer abroad are often forced to buy fancy uniforms or bits of uniform because of some regimental custom, thus mortgaging pay for weeks, sometimes months in advance. Other stoppages of pay are excessive. Instead of puttees and boots for walking out, why not trousers (as in India) and possibly white spats? Suggest smarter greatcoat.

(2) Food: Soldiers' last meal usually about 4.30 PM. At present not enough money for supper. If officers need an evening meal so do soldiers, who are also human animals.

(3) Discipline: Complete modernization necessary; above all, the rooting out of pettifogging restrictions and nursery punishments. Desirable to allow men to get on with the job without being constantly supervised and inspected.

(4) Cleanliness: Rationalisation required. Finger nails and teeth can at present be filthy provided buttons sparkling.

(5) Training: Could be made a thousand times more interesting for individual. Much could be simplified, while the drill book should be gone through with a blue pencil. If men felt they were learning something useful and not wasting their time it would do much to popularize both Armies [Regular and Territorial].

(6) Organization: Extra year in India most unpopular. A short service army at home would attract large number of recruits and build up strong reserve, while a long service army, liable to foreign service, would be a real career for those who joined it.34

Duff Cooper began a trend toward humanizing Army life by hiring civilians to perform some of the menial kitchen and barracks duties formerly required of the men. He also secured funds to raise the married man's food allowance, and began a program to rehabilitate the living quarters.

Hore-Belisha took over the War Office, as Chamberlain intended, with a burst of vigor. First there was a well publicized series of orientation visits, which in fact never ceased while he held the office. Hore-Belisha appeared in press photographs drinking beer in a sergeants' mess, putting a stethoscope to a recruit's chest at an enlistment center, inspecting the workings of an anti-aircraft gun, which he certainly was

34 "Popularizing the Army," Ibid., May 9, 1936, p. 10.
incapable of understanding, and, according to the car-
toonist David Low of the *Evening Standard*, posing before
the camera with each recruit personally, his arm draped
around the man's shoulders in a comradely grip. He be-
gan with a series of small and generally popular changes,
made possible through the more generous budget appro-
piated that financial year. The barracks rehabilita-
tion was expanded to include the unheard-of luxury of
central heating and plumbing, and recreation rooms. In
order to cut down some of the complaints about the food,
he established a new school of cookery for mess sergeants.
He modified the standing Army rule that all men under age
twenty-five, married or not, must sleep in the barracks
to men under twenty-one without parents or guardians
nearby.

Needless barriers to recruitment were abolished,
the most widely publicized being "the Eleven Tooth Rule,"
which require the minimum number of teeth in apposition
believed by dentists to be necessary for the chewing of
bully beef. False teeth had heretofore been disallowed,
because the men might throw them away on reaching the
battle area to avoid combat.

A more fundamental reform undertaken in August
affected the career prospects for every enlistee.
Soldiers with good records were traditionally permitted
to reenlist only up to the twelve year mark. Less than three per cent of enlisted men were allowed to remain for the twenty-one years required for a pension, in the manner routine for sailors. The rest found themselves unemployed, over thirty, usually with no marketable skill with which to seek civilian employment. Hore-Belisha now opened a twenty-one year career to those with a total of twelve years service including up to five years in the reserves. The new policy attracted three thousand eligible applicants in the first two weeks. By letting itself in for greatly increased pension liabilities, "nonproductive expenditure," in the future, the British Army obtained a greatly enlarged cadre of experienced "other ranks," the backbone of any army.

For young men who did not plan to stay for more than one enlistment, Hore-Belisha offered the inducement of six months' free on-the-job training in some skill or trade useful in civilian life, to be conducted on Government time, at full pay.

A new deal for the officer's career took effect a year later, the most extensive reform of its kind since the purchase of commissions was abolished in 1871. At the beginning of 1938 there was a log jam of officers of average ability and no special connections in the Brit-
ish Army. These officers had entered the Army during the First World War as subalterns and now, at the approximate age of forty, were captains with a fifty per cent selection opportunity to the limited vacancies in the rank of major. Many able but less than brilliant officers had left the service rather than spend their careers in the low rank of captain. In exchange for a ten per cent pay cut, Hore-Belisha offered the promotion to major to all qualified officers with a certain amount of time in grade as captains, with promotion by vacancy applied to the ranks of lieutenant colonel and above. In addition to the prestige factor, the reform left the retired officer in his middle forties with a lifetime pension of four hundred pounds a year instead of the three hundred he would have gotten as a retired captain.\(^{35}\)

Had Hore-Belisha contented himself with these reforms, he might have taken his place in the rather frequent turnover of Secretaries of State for War as one of the more energetic ones, who had capitalized on the availability of new money to make some badly needed changes, and altogether had proved a pleasant surprise to those who had thought his appointment to be especially unsuitable. But Hore-Belisha was resolved to probe

deeper, and review the whole question of the role of the British Army and how it should be organized to fulfill that role in the 1940's.

The first decision Hore-Belisha made was that too much was lavished on the Regular Army and too little on the Territorial Army. The Territorial Army was, for the money needed to maintain it, by far the cheaper form of national defense. The higher ranks of the Territorial Army were the exclusive preserve of officers of the regular component, a fact which Hore-Belisha felt acted against the interests of national defense as a whole. The directorship of the Territorial Army remained with a regular officer, but the second highest post, the deputy directorship, went to a territorial colonel, promoted to major general for the occasion, who was an architect by profession, but had done much for territorial recruiting on a part time basis. Similarly, command of the most prestigious of the thirteen Territorial Army divisions, the London Division, went to a Lloyd's insurance broker. Although both of these men had distinguished war records, had demonstrated executive ability in the pursuit of their civilian careers, and knew the Territorial Army through long experience, their appointments were resented by the regulars, who saw it as an infraction of union rules.
Less welcome still was the attention Hore-Belisha directed toward the seniority system as it affected the upper ranks of the Army. Traditionally, and especially since 1918, the Army had promoted colonels and generals as a reward for performance in war time, and for general social suitability. This system has gone by different names in different places, but in Britain in the 1930's it was known at "it's Buggins' turn next." Under the system the British Army had acquired a corps of general officers, well decorated, well mannered, and well groomed, but with little, as generals, to offer the Army. They could scarcely appreciate the David Low caricatures of themselves as Colonel Blimps, being swept out of the Army by a fat, semetic-featured little man with a twig broom.

Hore-Belisha noted that in a study of the major wars of the last century, beginning with the American Civil War, the old made way for the young once the opening campaigns had developed, particularly in a war of rapid movement. As a case in point, the Union or Confederate division of 1861 was apt to be commanded by a venerable parade ground figure or a politician-turned-general. By 1865 the average age of a division commander was just about thirty. The same had been true to a lesser extent in the trench warfare of 1914-1918. In
his first senior appointments Hore-Belisha favored men in their early fifties at the expense of candidates eight or ten years older. The first two, to the prestigious home commands of the Regular Army, were Lieutenant General Sir John Dill and Lieutenant General Sir Archibald Wavell, both of whom were to go on to productive careers in positions of great responsibility.

There was still another grievous difference between Hore-Belisha and the Army establishment. The senior officers of the Army were satisfied that the standing organization and distribution of British troops throughout the Empire was the best possible arrangement; Hore-Belisha, with prompting from Liddell Hart and certain unnamed Army officers, was not.

Over this issue materialized a clash of wills between the Secretary of State and the senior officer of the Army, a man not without friends and sympathizers in Parliament. By the time the argument was over, Hore-Belisha had emerged as a definite political heavyweight in the Chamberlain cabinet in that he remained in office while the principal generals opposing him resigned.

The high governing body of the British Army was called the Army Council, chaired by Hore-Belisha as the Secretary of State for War. Also members were three civil servants, the Parliamentary Undersecretary of
State for War (Lord Strathcona), the Financial Secretary to the War Office (Sir Victor Warrender) and the Permanent Undersecretary for War (Sir Herbert Creedy).

The military membership on the Army Council was headed by the senior officer on active duty, Field Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell, with the title Chief of the Imperial General Staff (C.I.G.S.). Three other officers were members, holding the offices of Adjutant General (administration), Quartermaster General (supply), and Master General of the Ordinance (research and development). To these Hore-Belisha added a fourth, the Director of the Territorial Army.

In past years the Army Council had not met regularly, but Hore-Belisha instituted weekly meetings. He had toyed with the idea of setting up an unofficial group of advisors, but could not get the men he wanted. He resolved to work through the Army Council and to do this he resolved to make some changes in the membership of the Council that attracted wide criticism and comment.

On November 23, 1937, Hore-Belisha wrote to Chamberlain as follows:

My view, after the fullest survey, including a visit to France, is that our Army should be organized to defend this country and the Empire, that to organize it with a military prepossession in favour of a Continental commitment is wrong. The C.I.G.S., although he may overtly accept this view, does not accept it in fact or in practice, and he has told me
that he is unable to advise any modification in our organization.

Further, I have no doubt whatever that he has not the mental or personal equipment to keep pace with, still less to stimulate modern developments. A cardinal feature of any re-adaptation of the Army is an impartial examination of whether India's share of our personnel is not disproportionate. Such an examination he is unwilling to undertake, having an *ex cathedra* view that what was good enough at the time of the Indian Mutiny is not suitable for reinvestigation to-day.

He has opposed every one of my major appointments, having more regard for sentimentality than efficiency. For such reasons as these and because the mental attitude which he represents and encourages has placed the War Office well behind the other Service Departments in purpose and in practice. I am prepared to take the consequences of inviting the C.I.G.S. and subsequently the Adjutant-General to make room for more alert, adaptable, and resolute successors.36

Hore-Belisha proposed as the new Chief of the Imperial General Staff John Standish Vereker, General Lord Gort, "the most dynamic I have met in the Army, and who is bred in an independent school."37 Hore-Belisha also had in mind the replacement of General Sir Harry Knox, the Adjutant General, with a younger man of more flexible views, the Commandant of the Staff College, General Sir Ronald Adam.

Chamberlain took the matter to the King, who regretted to hear of the situation, but would make no difficulties for his ministers. These preparations having

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been made, Hore-Belisha now moved to sack the Field Marshal and his Adjutant General, men with impeccable careers predating the Boer War, who had indeed served in the Army almost as long as their new political chief had been alive. He decided to do it by letter rather than face to face, and with the help of Creedy the Permanent Undersecretary drafted a text, the operative paragraphs of which were as follows:

My Dear Field-Marshal—You will not have been unaware that in various quarters doubts have been expressed whether the War Office was making as rapid progress in rearmament as the other Defence Departments, and this has been a source of concern to the Government in these anxious times when action brooks no delay.

There may be faults in our organisation and some of these are in the process of readjustment; it may also be the case that there is a certain lack of harmonious co-operation on the part of those responsible for giving effect to declared policy.

The Government have regretfully come to the conclusion that it would be in the national interest that the important office of C.I.G.S., now held by you, should be placed in the hands of a younger man, who would be more in accord with recent developments.

Should you prefer to tender your resignation in order to facilitate the promotion of younger men, as often done in the Navy, I should be pleased to cause an announcement to be made in these terms.38

Deverell's answer was satisfactory although not as graceful as Hore-Belisha might have hoped.

Dear Secretary of State—I have received your letter of December 1st and I note the decision contained therein. My conscience is clear as to my duty to the Army, and to its rearmament. Time will show

38 Ibid., p. 72.
that your criticisms as far as I am concerned are as unjust as they are cruel.

I am in agreement as to the desirability of younger men, and had you asked me to make way as a gesture of policy, I should have done so without demur. . . .

My only anxiety regarding the method of announcement is that a course be taken in the best interests of the Army. Believing that it is in the best interests, I therefore tender my resignation of my appointment as C.I.G.S. to make way for a younger man."

Hore-Belisha received no further communication from the retiring Field Marshal, oral or written. General Sir Harry Knox also accepted the invitation to resign, without the painful allusions to injustice and cruelty. But Sir Harry had an older brother, Major General Sir Alfred Knox, who was not on active duty, but rather held a seat in the House of Commons. It was not surprising that the latter raised a question about the affair at the first opportunity, the session of December 6. The exchange between Knox and Hore-Belisha was a good example of a politician refusing, with good reason, to admit the obvious.

Sir A. Knox. Is it not true that these two distinguished officers were, in effect, dismissed at a few hours' notice; and does not the right hon. Gentleman consider that their forty years' experience might have continued to be of value to the country in supplementing the knowledge which he has been able to obtain in six months' acquaintance with the War Office?

39 Ibid., pp. 72-73.
Mr. Hore-Belisha. The hon. and gallant Gentle­
man perhaps has some acquaintance with the facts
which I do not possess. All that I know is that
these officers—and I have paid them due tribute for
what they did—retired to facilitate the promotion
of younger officers.

Sir A. Knox. Is it not true that these officers
were asked to retire, the right hon. Gentleman hav­
ing previously obtained the consent of the Cabinet?

Mr. Hore-Belisha. I would refer my hon. and
gallant Friend to the public statement which was
made and which was authorized by them. If they wish
to make any change in that statement, it will be for
them and not for me.  

Hore-Belisha subsequently fired the incumbent
Master General of the Ordinance and brought in a retired
Engineer Admiral to fill that specialized office, the
seventeenth century title being changed to Director Gen­
eral of Munitions Production. In a cabinet meeting
shortly afterward he received a penciled note asking,
"Dear Stalin, Have you shot any more generals this
morning?" He replied, "To shoot any more would exhaust
the depleted stocks of ammunition." Indeed, Hore­
Belisha's coup against Deverell could not be repeated
against Gort, who turned out to be something of a dis­
appointment.

Hore-Belisha had told Chamberlain he was "pre­
pared to take the consequences" of dismissing Deverell

40 *Parliamentary Debates* (Commons), 330 (1937),
339.

41 Minney, p. 75.
and the others. A week after the departure of the C.I.G.S. he heard an accurate prediction of what the consequences would be. It came from another retired General, Sir Fabian Ware, who had come to see him in his connection as Vice-chairman of the Imperial War Graves Commission.

Fabian Ware said he could speak from his own first-hand knowledge. 'Nothing will happen at once,' he said, 'but you will find in the months ahead attacks on you from various quarters. There will be whispering in drawing-rooms and words will be dropped in influential ears. They will get you out.'

'How long will it be before they do get me out?' I asked him.

'Eighteen months to two years,' was the reply.

'Well,' I said, 'I hope I shall be able to do a hell of a lot for the Army before they do get me out.'

Hore-Belisha did indeed make basic reforms in the Army in the last eighteen months of peace leading up to September 1939. Had it not been for the Second World War, the reforms he made, like those of Cardwell in the late 1860's and Haldane in the first years of the twentieth century, might well have affected generations of British soldiers. As it was, by forming definite opinions on the role of the Army which made sense to most of his parliamentary colleagues, by asserting his authority and punishing those soldiers who would defy him, Hore-

\[42\textit{Ibid.}, \text{p. 79.}\]
Belisha instilled into one ministry of the Government, at least, the theme, grip, and mental vigor Churchill had found lacking in the others.
CHAPTER V

BRITISH REARMAMENT UNDER THREAT OF WAR--
MARCH 1938-SEPTEMBER 1939

The British need for tranquility is great. It would be profitable to find out what England would be willing to pay for such tranquility.

---Ernst von Weizaecker,
Chief, Political Section,
German Foreign Ministry

Part I

A study called Germany's Economic Preparations for War determined that:

The second phase of German rearmament began in the summer of 1936 when Hitler decided to start rearming on an intensive scale. Undoubtedly this decision was influenced by German intelligence reports which placed the strength of the Russian army at nearly one million. Such "Bolshevist" superiority was greatly feared, and preparations were begun under the Second Four Year Plan to assure German dominance of Europe.

At the same time, the British reached the decision for massive rearmament against Germany. The same study concluded from economic evidence that Germany did not plot the Second World War as such, but rather a series of small, short wars in Eastern Europe.

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1Shirer, p. 415.
Secret documents containing the gist of Hitler's intimate talks to the select circle at the head of the state suggest that he envisioned eventual war with everybody, in a divide-and-conquer sequence, and that his time table was upset when the British and French forced the issue some years before he would have chosen to do battle with them.

In any case, tension continued to build in Europe throughout the two-year hiatus in German acquisitions of territory that followed the Rhineland incident, as the democracies and the small, weak states in effect waited for another shoe to drop.

In late September 1937 Italy firmly went over to the German camp, although Neville Chamberlain and his colleagues maintained illusions to the contrary. Mussolini made a triumphant visit to the National Socialist Reich, where no effort was spared to impress him with Germany's national strength, built on fascist principles. He returned to Italy feeling "spiritual solidarity sealed" between the two countries.  

On November 5, Hitler lectured his diplomatic and military chiefs on Germany's future course. The central problem facing Germany—on which the very survi-

3"Duce to Führer," Times, October 1, 1937, p. 16. Quoted Mussolini.
val of the state hinged—remained living space. The solution of the problem of living space "could only be solved by means of force," which would have to be applied soon because "the world was expecting our attack and was increasing its countermeasures from year to year." Hitler therefore resolved "to solve Germany's problem of space at the latest by 1943-1945," but earlier if conditions looked favorable. 4

Within three months Hitler had arrived at the conclusion that the freshly sealed spiritual solidarity between Germany and Italy would allow him to solve the Austrian portion of Germany's problem without further delay. Accordingly on February 12, 1938, the Austrian Chancellor, Kurt von Schuschnigg, was summoned to Berchtesgaden and presented with a list of demands, which would have resulted in the handing of his key ministries over to Austrian Nazis. On March 11, Schuschnigg was forced to resign and Artur Seyss-Inquart, head of the Austrian National Socialist Party and newly appointed Minister of Security, gave after-the-fact approval to the entry of German troops into the country, which had begun earlier in the evening. Two hours after the invasion

4Shirer, pp. 419, 420. A paraphrasing of Hitler's remarks by a reliable witness, Colonel Hossbach, his adjutant.
began, Hitler was glad to hear that "the Duce accepted the whole thing in a very friendly manner."\(^5\)

The complicity of Seyss-Inquart and the Austrian Nazis provided the veneer of legality that those favoring non-intervention with Germany's plans always looked for and always found. Lord Lothian, who believed himself to be "one of only a few voices crying in the wilderness of apathy or prejudice," had said almost a year before that "We cannot and certainly will not go to war to perpetuate a system in which Austria is governed by a combination of Mussolini and the Pope."\(^6\)

Regardless of what Chamberlain, Simon, and Hoare thought about the influence of Mussolini and the Pope, they would do nothing more than back the action of France, and then only in a very secondary role. France, in the process of changing governments, took no action.

Even though there was no shooting, the Anschluss was for Germany a military victory. "Troops, tanks, and bombers everywhere," wrote The Times correspondent on the day of Hitler's entry into Vienna.\(^7\)

A conversation recorded by Harold Nicolson with

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\(^5\)Ibid., p. 477. Quoted Prince Phillip of Hesse, the German envoy.

\(^6\)Lothian, pp. 214, 220.

Malcolm MacDonald, Dominions Secretary and son of the late Prime Minister, revealed the extent to which British options in the international arena were now limited by the size and strength of the armed forces.

Diary, 29 March 1938

I have a talk with Malcolm MacDonald about the crisis. . . . I say that I am convinced that Germany and Italy are trying to chloroform us while they occupy strategic points to our disadvantage; that I consider Eastern Europe is now lost with the seizure of Austria; and that we should make our naval strength felt in Spain. We should occupy Minorca. It is madness to suppose that Italy and Germany will not obtain some sort of secret arrangement similar to that which the Germans got out of the Turks in 1913. When war comes we shall be unable to defend Malta, Cyprus, Egypt, or Palestine.

Malcolm says that although he agrees with this, we are really not strong enough to risk a war. It would mean the massacre of women and children in the streets of London. No Government could possibly risk a war when our anti-aircraft defences are in so farcical a condition. Even if the Germans exploit our present weakness in order to achieve an even stronger position against us, we must take that risk. No Cabinet, knowing as they do how pitiable our defences are, could take any risk. All we can do is by wise retreat and good diplomacy to diminish the dangers being arrayed against us. The Cabinet know full well that we are shirking great responsibility. But they cannot undertake such responsibility.

On taking office as Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain resolved to play a more active role in foreign affairs than Baldwin had. His approach was to support the dictatorships in the redress of certain of their com-

Nicolson, pp. 332-333.
plaints, obligating them in return to limit their demands, and so forstall what Britain feared most—the hegemony of one or two powers over all Europe. The catchword to describe this policy dated from Disraeli's time, "appeasement." Having named appeasement as the official policy, Chamberlain set out to implement it in the same brisk, businesslike manner that he had once addressed himself to the problems of the Health Ministry and the Exchequer.

Chamberlain's view, supported in the cabinet by Simon, Hoare, Halifax, the Minister of Health Sir Kingsley Wood, and others, clashed with the view of Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary. Eden and the civil servants closest in his confidence were thought to represent the "pro-French" lobby at the Foreign Office. At least Eden would not counsel any attempt to ingratiate Hitler. He said, "We must keep Germany guessing as to our attitude. It is all we can do until we are strong enough to talk to Germany." ⁹

Chamberlain rightly supposed that Eden's heart was not in the appeasement policy and that consequently the Foreign Office could not be relied on to show the desired zest and zeal in concocting proposals for Hitler's and Mussolini's consideration. Therefore Eden, a

⁹Eden, p. 512.
man of independent mind who had master of his own min-
istry for seventeen months under Baldwin, now found the
older man fussing about him, reading his mail and talking
to foreigners behind his back. "Anthony, you have
missed chance after chance," Chamberlain exclaimed in a
moment of exasperation, "you simply cannot go on like
this."10

In January 1938, while Eden had briefly gone to
the Riviera for a vacation, Chamberlain on his own re-
sponsibility turned down President Roosevelt's offer to
sponsor a conference of European powers to deal with the
problems causing tension. Chamberlain did not want to
follow MacDonald's 1933 example of endorsing others'
plans at the expense of his own. Eden returned, more
than displeased to see an opportunity to involve the
United States in European politics thrown away, not to
mention the gross usurpation of his constitutional place
as the Foreign Secretary.

Then, on February 18, came the final breach, over
the question of a diplomatic visit to Rome. Count Grandi,
the Italian Ambassador, reflecting the militant mood
generated by Germany's success to date on the Austrian
question, said that Italy would not negotiate the with-
drawal of the five divisions of "volunteers" from Spain,

10 Ibid., p. 662.
nor would Italy promise to act as the protector of Austria in the unfolding crisis there. For the rest, Chamberlain and Eden were free to visit Rome if they wanted to, and use the occasion to formally ratify the Italian conquest of Abyssinia. On the 20th Eden resigned rather than go to Rome and was replaced by Lord Halifax. Halifax was believed to be a member of the pro-German, isolationist "Cliveden Set," named for the estate of the pro-German, isolationist Lord and Lady Astor. Other members of the Cliveden Set were said to include the more influential cabinet members, together with Lord Londonderry, Lord Lothian, and Geoffrey Dawson, Editor of The Times. Halifax remembered that:

We used to join a party from time to time, though not perhaps regularly enough to qualify for inclusion in the so-called 'Cliveden Set.' Who or what this legendary body was no one ever knew, and I believe that both it and its alleged corporate feeling of tenderness toward Nazi Germany were a pure invention of some journalistic brain.\(^{11}\)

Eden spoke before Parliament as a back bencher the next day. In a twenty-eight minute explanation of his decision to resign he warned Parliament that arbitrarily proclaiming camaraderie with the dictators would not have the desired effect. "If peace is to be enduring it must rest on foundations of frank reciprocity and mutual

respect." After describing the deteriorating situation in Europe as he saw it, Eden concluded, "Of late the conviction has steadily grown upon me that there has been too keen a desire on our part to make terms with others than others should make terms with us."\(^{12}\)

For his part, Halifax was content to let Chamberlain lead the foreign policy. He had met Hitler in November 1937 and had spoken afterward of "the necessity of this country going as far as we possibly can to secure a general all-around settlement."\(^{13}\) By the end of 1938 Halifax was to arrive at the conclusion that the country had gone as far as it could possibly go in this direction, some months ahead of Chamberlain himself.

\(^{12}\)Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 332 (1938), 45-49.  
\(^{13}\)Birkenhead, pp. 373-374.
The defense estimates for the financial year 1938-1939 were presented and debated upon in an atmosphere of foreign crisis and domestic dissention created by Austria and the Eden resignation. Orthodox finances, including borrowing, would be equal to the rearmament task for yet another year, but in discussions of future requirements the Minister for Coordination of Defence
indicated that a drastic change in either the financing or the requirements would have to take place soon. The nature of the gap between the services and the treasury showed up in the following excerpt from the diary of Duff Cooper, First Lord of the Admiralty, written in February 1938.

At the Cabinet... the main subject of discussion was a report which Inskip has produced on the future of rearmament. The demands of the three services over the next four years amount to something in the nature of £2,000,000,000 and the Treasury say that £1,650,000,000 is all the money that can be made available. Inskip's simple solution is to divide that sum in certain proportions to be decided upon by the three services. My advisors tell me that according to their calculations the Admiralty would be reduced to construction programmes, the annual cost of each of which would be about £2,000,000. The one we had already put forward for this year was £70,000,000 and last year's was very little less. It would mean that we could not possibly complete even the modest plan to which we are committed, let alone the New Standard, which has not yet been approved, but which all the experts consider is the minimum consistent with security.

I told the Cabinet this, and pointed out that if we were at war, which I thought we soon might be, we shouldn't dream of accepting an arbitrary figure given us by the Treasury, and I reminded them that at the beginning of the last war the Treasury view was that it must end in 1916 owing to lack of money.14

The fourth annual white paper on defense was released on March 2. The paper forecast an expenditure of £343,250,000 for the year, with £90,000,000 borrowed under the Defence Loans Act. The paper reviewed the progress of rearmament to date and warned of the possibility

14Duff Cooper, p. 216.
of heavier spending to come. "The continuous development of modern armaments has given rise in the past twelve months to a number of new needs, and the growing power and complexity of new weapons tends to increase their cost." But, the overriding factor would be "the degree of success which attends the effort of His Majesty's Government to achieve some appeasement in international affairs." The paper looked to the following financial year, 1939-1940, as the peak spending year of the overall 1937-1942 five year plan, which now was officially forecast to exceed the cost of a billion and a half pounds estimated at the beginning.15

The Air Estimates amounted to £103,500,000, a raise of fifteen million. Since 1935 the Air Force had, on paper at least, increased from 52 to 123 squadrons of aircraft. The emphasis of the offensive or deterrent role of the Air Force could be seen from the functional distribution of the squadrons—68 bomber, 30 fighter, 15 reconnaissance/torpedo bomber, and 10 Army cooperation.16

The Army estimates showed a gross of £114,419,000, some twenty-three million over the previous year. Hore-

16"£102,720,000 for RAF," Ibid., March 3, 1938, p. 19.
Belisha impressed the House of Commons with his proposals for the new Army. The organization of the Army as it stood was not flexible enough for the situation of 1938. Through ingrained custom some 70,000 troops were maintained in India; one or more battalions from each Regular Army regiment at home were deployed there on a rotational basis. This left insufficient forces for contingencies elsewhere, at the moment mainly Palestine, where the British-sponsored influx of Jews into Arab lands was causing widespread unrest. Hore-Belisha proposed to decrease the garrisons at various foreign posts, mainly India, in favor of a larger "floating strategic reserve" at home capable of deploying rapidly to the parts of the Empire where the need might arise. No mention was made of the possibility of organizing an expeditionary force to the Continent, although the presence of more troops in Britain was hopefully noted by the French.

In line with the concept of strategic mobility, formations of troops were to be made smaller. In the First World War the infantry division contained twelve battalions of over 800 men each; the infantry division of 1938 would consist of nine battalions of 22 officers and 646 men each. The infantry would to into battle in armored vehicles known as Bren carriers after the new
type of gun mounted on them. New mortars and anti-tank
guns, some capable of being handled by a single man,
were going into production. Artillery units were to re­
ceive more and heavier caliber weapons. "Fire power and
mobility," not the mere counting of heads, was hence­
forth to be the yardstick for gauging the effectiveness
of the Army, just as ships and aircraft and their per­
formance characteristics, not the mere counting of
sailors and airmen, gauged the effectiveness of the other
two services.17

The Navy continued to maintain the largest bud­
get, £123,707,000, including provision for up to three
new capital ships.18

To meet the increased defense budget Sir John
Simon increased the income tax rates by six pence on the
pound, so that a family of four who earned £1,000 a year
would now pay £111/12s/6d instead of £102/10s the pre­
vious year. He also increased taxes on the items tradi­
tionally most readily expedient, motor oil, tea, and the
like. From the increases he hoped to realize an extra
thirty million pounds, hardly a significant figure com­

17Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 332 (1938),
2133-2161.

18"Cost of the Navy," Times, March 5, 1938, p.
7.
pared with the size of the national budget.19

In June the Government floated a second defense loan as authorized by the Act of 1937, for some £80,000,000. Three per cent interest was the best rate the Government could get, compared to 2½ per cent on the first loan. The bonds were to be redeemed between 1954 and 1958.20

The Austrian Anschluss brought about the completion of the transition by Labourites and Liberals from backers of disarmament to critics of rearmament as it was being managed by the Government. There was no shortage of shortcomings at which legitimate criticism could be directed. In deciding whether to act upon Labour suggestions the Government was sometimes, as Churchill said, placed in the dilemma of St. Anthony the Hermit.

St. Anthony the Hermit was much condemned by the Fathers of the Church because he refused to do right when the Devil told him to.21

Besides the greater issues of the efficiency of

19Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 333 (1938), 43-70.
21Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 336 (1938), 1288.
the services and the armaments industry, the work of civil defense, and the management of finance, the Government was vulnerable to peripheral complaints, such as bad food and living conditions in training camps. Austen Hopkinson, an independent member of Parliament, made living conditions his pet issue. He reported that whereas conditions in private schools training young men on a contract basis were well run, conditions on the military installations themselves were bad. For instance:

\[\text{Newly acquired Air Force personnel were in some instances crowded together in perfectly filthy surroundings with food fit for swine and general conditions to which they never ought in any circumstances to be subjected. Why? 'Because,' says the Air Ministry, 'the Treasury is digging its toes in, and will kick up all sorts of rows if we ask for a quarter of a million or something of that sort to give our boys decent food and conditions all the time.'}\]

At the same time we who are interested in sailing are anticipating that at the end of a couple of years or so the Solent, Southampton Water and Spithead will be absolutely unnavigable owing to the steam yachts of the aircraft contractors.

In May 1938 the hottest lines of fire crossed at the Air Ministry, and Lord Swinton, the vulnerable minister, like his predecessor, was fired. Air power was never far from the center of any study of the military strength, and hence political leverage, of Britain or any of its neighbors. In 1937 there were two especially infamous instances of attack on civil populations from

\[\text{Ibid., 333 (1938), 275.}\]
the air, at Shanghai, and the Spanish Republican town of Guernica. Instances of aircraft attacking British merchantmen trading with the Spanish Republic were common, and naval ships were attacked as well. The sinking of the American gunboat Panay in the Yangtze River by Japanese aircraft was well covered in the British press. The fatal bomb was said to have been aimed right down the smokestack. These incidents sharpened the anxiety of all responsible leaders of Government and Opposition in Britain to accelerate the expansion of the Royal Air Force.

When Lord Swinton, then Sir Philip Cunliffe-Lister, took over the Air Ministry in June 1935 the Air Force was embarked on expansion Scheme C, aiming for a total of 1,804 first line machines by March 1937. In November 1935 he secured the approval of Scheme F, which aimed for 2,270 by 1939. In January 1937 Swinton tried to sell the cabinet on another expansion plan, Scheme H. Scheme H, mindful of the several new bomber designs expected to be in production within two years, envisioned a bomber force of 1,631, compared to the 1,022 in Scheme F. The additional bombers were to be obtained by halving the war emergency reserve of combat planes. At the time Scheme H was under consideration (it was turned down), the best intelligence available on Luftwaffe strength showed a current force of 2,500 first-line air-
craft, including 1,700 bomber types, versus 1,750 British, including 1,000 bomber types. But the German bomber force, being several years newer, contained the more formidable aircraft. Furthermore German production kept going up; the gap would be greater as time passed.²³

![Lord Swinton, May 1938.](image)

²³Slessor, pp. 158-160; see also Eden, pp. 546-547.
Eden was disappointed with the Air Ministry. On taking office at the end of 1935, he had hoped that the lag behind the German Air Force would be made up by 1938 and that British diplomacy could take a more business-like line by the end of that year. But by October 1937, Eden was saying,

> It is alarming to find, with every new report that we receive, that the day of security never comes any nearer, but is successively postponed to a still more distant future. It is now apparently about four years ahead, and so far as an active ground defence is concerned, even more than that. 24

That same month the Air Staff made another expansion proposal, the first to abandon the concept of "parity" with Germany in favor of a less exacting standard called "the minimum overall strategic requirement." In analyzing where they stood the Air Ministry saw they could not complete Scheme F even by 1941 unless they registered new and amazing progress with the construction of shadow factories, made large purchases of American aircraft, and, politically the most unpalatable, received the right to bump civilian goods off the production line to make way for their orders. Therefore in the new plan, Scheme J, the Air Staff returned to the theme of more planes later, in this case 3,031 aircraft by

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24 Eden, p. 559.
Again the cabinet, at the insistence of the Treasury, disapproved Scheme J. At the round of holiday parties at the end of 1937 some "naughty" air marshals had it that rather than spend for armaments, Sir John Simon was hording money to pay the indemnity that was going to result from the loss of the next war.\textsuperscript{26}

In January 1938 the Air Ministry submitted an "emasculated" version of the J plan, Scheme K, which called for 2,795 first line aircraft in 1941 instead of 3,031. This did not come up for discussion in the cabinet until March 14, the Monday after the Anschluss. Again Germany provided from afar the stimulus to rearm which British proponents had not been able to generate locally. Like the pre-Anschluss Scheme J, Scheme K was rejected—but for the opposite reason—it was too modest! The plan was therefore revised upward, and was approved by the cabinet as Scheme L, in April.\textsuperscript{27}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Striking Force (bombers stationed in Britain)</th>
<th>Fighter Command (in Britain)</th>
<th>Total Aircraft</th>
<th>Date Matur-\textsuperscript{ing}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCHEME F</td>
<td>1,022</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>2,270 Mar. 1939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHEME L</td>
<td>1,352</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>2,863 Mar. 1940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{25}Slessor, p. 144.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., p. 161.

\textsuperscript{27}Ibid., p. 186.
It was significant that in comparison to the disapproved Scheme J of the previous December, Scheme L actually called for a smaller bomber force (1,442 for J, 1,352 for L) but a larger fighter force (532 for J, 608 for L). Peace-through-deterrence by means of the long range strategic bomber was still regarded as the main contribution of the Air Force, but fighters were cheaper and quicker to build, and in most cases required a trained crew of one. Moreover, there was a sense of time running out; bomber fleets in 1941 were no longer equal to the exigencies of the moment. Should Germany or Italy fail to feel deterred by the British bomber force on any given day in the future and be willing to accept whatever damage the bombers might do, then only the fighters would remain to protect the country from the devastation of enemy air attack. At the time of the submission of Scheme L, Air Marshal Sir Cyril Newall, Chief of the Air Staff, wrote to Swinton:

No one can say with absolute certainty that a nation can be knocked out from the air, because no one has attempted it. There can be no doubt however that Germany and Italy believe it possible, as there is no other explanation for their piling up armaments to a level which they could not hope to maintain in a long war. When, as I firmly believe, the issue is that of the survival of British civilization, we cannot afford to take so great a

28 Ibid.
chance for the sake of £60 or £100 millions.  

The seizure of Austria by Germany and the resulting British air expansion plan finally forced the Government to drop their policy of business as usual in consumer goods industries. On March 7, a week before the invasion, Chamberlain had defended business as usual in the House of Commons. Wartime "staying power," he said, came from economic stability. "I draw the conclusion that in a period of protracted and heavy expenditure, such as we are passing through now, we must be careful to preserve our economic and industrial stability."  

But on March 24 he was back to announce:

We have now come to the conclusion that in the present circumstances acceleration of existing plans has become essential. (Opposition cries of "Why?") and moreover that there must be an increase in some parts of the programme, especially that of the Royal Air Force and the anti-aircraft defences. In order to bring about the progress we feel to be necessary men and materials will be required, and rearmament work must have first priority in the nation's effort.  

Chamberlain said he would leave it to the industries concerned to work out among themselves procedures

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29 Ibid., p. 152.

30 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 332 (1938), 1558.

31 Ibid., 333 (1938), 1410.
whereby defense orders would be met first, without con-
fusion or unnecessary interference by the Government.

On April 20, the first purchase mission to the
American aircraft industry departed for the United
States.

In the House of Commons session of May 11,
Clement Attlee, who in 1934 had denied the need for a
bigger air force and rejected the concept of air parity
with Germany, opened the debate fatal to the tenure of
Lord Swinton.

My charge is this; the Government, ever since
it was first brought to their knowledge that there
was a great air force being built up in Germany,
have been guilty of an entire miscalculation on the
situation. . . . It is obvious that there has been
miscalculation from the start. Successive pro-
grammes have been found insufficient. Expansion
has been haphazard. These insufficient pro-
grammes have not been realized. Again and again we
have had optimistic forecasts. They have been
found to be unjustified. At the present time not
only have we not got air parity with the Germans,
on whatever formula you base it, but we are getting
further away from air parity every week and every
month.\(^\text{32}\)

The Government spokesman rebutting Attlee, Lord
Winterton, Chancellor of the Dutchy of Lancaster, was
unable to defend his chief effectively against the La-
bour speakers, primed with facts and figures from Hugh
Dalton's Transport House research staff on air defense.
Churchill and twenty-three Conservative allies, plus

\(^\text{32}\)Ibid., 335 (1938), 1792-1793.
Sir Archibald Sinclair's small Liberal group aligned with Labour for the purposes of this debate.

The questions dealt with the many aspects great and small of building a new air force in a time of expanding technology. The idea for "shadow factories" in the hinterlands had been under discussion since 1935, yet as of May 1938 not a single aircraft constructed in such a factory had flown. Engine production had outstripped airframe production, creating a storage problem with hundreds of as yet useless aero engines, constructed in great haste at great expense. Day flying only was possible at flying schools because artificial horizon indicators and blind navigation instruments were in short supply. Time was being wasted because there was only one aircraft for every four students. Likewise there was a shortage of radio equipment and specialists to maintain it. The Bristol Aeroplane Company had unsuccessfully tried to sell its de-icing pump to the Air Force in 1935, now the Air Force was desperate for such pumps and was looking for them in the United States. The much heralded power gun turrets for the new bombers were in production arrears.

The Air Ministry was exposed in some advertising agency legerdemain by which it had tried to make the Air Force seem larger and better than it really was; rather
than fully equip one new squadron with aircraft it would partially equip two or three, so that all could be said to be activated. The Air Ministry was still ordering batches of obsolete aircraft to keep production figures up. Spitfire and Hurricane fighter planes, whose performance was the new standard, had been on display for two years, yet only three elite squadrons of Fighter Command had received the Hurricane and of Spitfires there were none. Of the strategic bomber designs of the major powers, only Britain was still introducing single-engine types and these were to carry a very limited bomb load.

The next morning, as Churchill remembered it:

At the Air Defence Research Committee we were all busily engaged—scientists, politicians, and officials—when a note was brought in to the Air Minister asking him to go to Downing Street. He desired us to continue our discussions and left at once. He never returned. He had been dismissed by Mr. Chamberlain.\(^{33}\)

Swinton's replacement was the former Minister of Health, Sir Kingsley Wood.

\(^{33}\)Churchill, p. 208.
On May 25 there was another debate on largely the same subject, brought about by the fall of Lord Swinton. Dalton for the Labourites moved that:

In the opinion of this House, the growing public concern regarding the state of our air defences and the administration of the departments concerned calls for a complete and searching independent inquiry conducted with dispatch under conditions consistent with the national interest i.e., closed doors.  

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34 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 336 (1938), 1223.
The Labourites called for a massive inquiry to cover:

1) Quantity and quality of aircraft and related equipment. *Jane's All the World's Aircraft* was quoting superior performance figures for German and Italian aircraft over their British counterparts.

2) The organization of the Air Ministry itself and whether it would benefit from a Ministry of Supply.

3) The state of the ground defenses. At latest count the deployed examples of the latest and best heavy anti-aircraft gun totaled six.
Churchill owed a debt of loyalty to Swinton, who had gone out of his way to include him on the Air Defence Committee and thereby access to the secret information handled by the Committee. In his speech, Churchill disassociated himself from the attacks on Swinton; the situation was not his fault, certainly not all his fault. If another man was to be brought in, it should have been as Minister of Supply to help Swinton out. It was too bad that "he has had to answer for his record at a particularly dark moment for him." Churchill directed his criticism against the Prime Minister, who, a week before the Anschluss, had called attention to the sobering, steadying effect on world politics provided by "the sight of this enormous, almost terrifying power which Britain is building up."

"Government statements," said Churchill, "have a thoroughly soothing, reassuring effect on the general public, while, at the same time, it in no way represents the actuality of the position."

In his speech of rebuttal Chamberlain stressed the practical politics of the situation, with a Labour interjection helping to illustrate his point. Everyone

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36Ibid., 336 (1938), 1283-1290; Churchill, p. 208.

37Ibid., 1283.
was for a bigger Air Force immediately, but who, over the past several years, had been willing to pay the price? Chamberlain reiterated the problems of a democratic regime trying to organize and finance great armaments. What was the use of a Ministry of Supply without drastic new powers to enable it to operate?

The Prime Minister: I would remind hon. members that among those powers granted to the Ministry of Supply in the First World War were not only the power of controlling factories, but also the power of relaxing trade union practices and regulations, the power over strikes, the power over dilution.

Mr. Kirkwood. You are not going to get that.

The Prime Minister. That is what I am pointing out. I think we can do what we want without.

The House of Commons voted confidence in the Government, 329 to 144. Churchill and Eden abstained.

Soon after this debate, in June, Attlee, Greenwood, and I saw Chamberlain and presented him with a substantial document on Air Defence. This contained not only the "charges" which I had made publically in the debate of May 25th, but much other critical material, some very detailed. The Prime Minister received us coldly. Attlee opened briefly and then asked me to develop the case. I did so only in broad outline. The document, I said, was clear and would speak for itself. Chamberlain then said: "I assume that you have come to see me from patriotic, and not from political party, motives." After this happy start, he said he would ask the Secretary of State for Air to study the document and discuss it with us. We did not prolong the conversation. It was obvious from his demeanour, and no doubt from ours, that he 38

Ibid., 1265.
disliked us, and we him, profoundly. 40

The "rape" of Austria, as it became popularly known, was the first of four major incidents, spread at intervals of about five months each, that would finally provoke Britain and France into declaring war on Germany. Each incident was to have a progressively greater catalytic effect on British rearmament activity, as ever larger quantities of gasoline splashed on a fire.

The second incident was the German demand for the cession of the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia. This demand was acceded to by the Czechs after it was endorsed by Britain, France, and Italy at a conference at Munich, on the evening of September 29, 1938.

By September, after several months of propaganda development, the Germans were saying that the bad treatment of the ethnically German majority in the Sudetenland by the Prague Government was justification in advance for any remedial measures Germany might decide upon. Military force as a remedy was now considerably less abhorrent to the National Socialist Government as it had been in the days of the Disarmament Conference. Five years of vigorous military preparations had created a spirit far removed from that which had traditionally

40 Dalton, p. 170.
prevailed at Geneva. On September 13, Army Day, Hitler alluded to the Austrian crisis past and the Czech crisis to come.

No negotiation, no Conference, no Pact has given us the natural right to unify Germans. We had to take this right for ourselves and we could take that right only because of your existence, my soldiers. 41

France had once, in 1925, signed an obligation to defend Czechoslovakia in such a case as had now arisen. But France was not prepared to honor a signature given by another government in another time when none of the terrible dangers of the moment could have possibly been foreseen. France was socially and politically divided. Wage increases and the establishment of the forty-hour work week were the vital issues of the day. The French Army was just at the point of being overtaken in a rush by the Germans in terms of strength and effectiveness. The French Air Force in recent years had lost its place as the most formidable in Europe. Charles Lindbergh, whose admiration for the Luftwaffe was boundless, told Air Marshal Slessor that in France "the stuff they are now flying is so obsolete it should have been burned ten years ago." 42 In September 1938 France was looking for some way out of its obligation to rescue

41Baynes, II, 1275.
42Slessor, p. 219.
the Czechs.

Britain had undertaken no formal defense agreement with Czechoslovakia. However the Chamberlain Government was most anxious not to be put in a position whereby Czechoslovakia was attacked while Britain stood aside and let it happen. Even worse, should France honor her commitment and declare war on Germany upon an invasion of Czechoslovakia, and Britain should stand aside, large blocks of votes in Parliament would turn against the Government; the cabinet ministers might even be driven from office.

On September 13 Chamberlain invited himself to Berchtesgaden "with a view to finding a peaceful solution to the Czech Problem."

On September 15 he flew to Munich with his industrial advisor and unofficial foreign policy advisor, Sir Horace Wilson, and saw Hitler alone at Berchtesgaden, by which time he had already heard over the radio that the annexation of the Sudentenland was the only peaceful solution the Germans would consider. With this information, and Hitler's good wishes, he returned to London to consult the cabinet.

The French Premier, Daladier, and his Foreign Minister, Bonnet, arrived in London on September 18. The French did not share Chamberlain's apparent sincere

\[43\] Feiling, p. 363.
belief in the wisdom of appeasement, but they were with him in wanting to avoid war over the Sudentenland at all costs. They proposed advising the Czechs to cede the territories in exchange for a French-British-Soviet guarantee of what remained.

On September 21 the Czech President, Eduard Benes, accepted the principle of ceding the Sudentenland to Germany as it was clear to him that neither France nor Britain was coming to his help.

The next day, September 22, Chamberlain flew to a second meeting with Hitler at Godesburg in the Rhineland. This meeting was to arrange the mechanics of transferring the Sudentenland to Germany. He was disappointed to find Hitler in an impatient mood. Czechoslovakia was about to be dismembered by the Poles and Hungarians, Hitler said, and he wanted his share now.
"Three hours thus passed in recrimination, ending in agreement to meet at 11:30 the next morning. Hitler promised not to move his army before then. Chamberlain withdrew, "my mind full of forboding as to the success of my mission." 44

At the second Godesburg session Chamberlain ar-

44Feiling, p. 369.
rived in company with Sir Horace Wilson and the Ambassador to Berlin, Sir Nevile Henderson. The Germans had prepared at Chamberlain's request a memorandum summarizing their demands, illustrated by a map. Chamberlain found the language of the memorandum provocative. Hitler wanted the Czechs out of the Sudetenland in twenty-four hours. "I bitterly reproached the Chancellor for his failure to respond in any way to the efforts to secure peace."  

Hitler moderated his tone. He postponed the deadline for a week, saying, "You are the only man to whom I have ever made a concession."  

He gave Chamberlain to understand that Chamberlain was helping to open up a new and fruitful era for British-German cooperation for peace once the Czech question was settled.

Back in London, Chamberlain held three cabinet meetings on Sunday, September 25. Public opinion was rallying to the Czechs. The Labour Party was militant pro-Czech. With or without Hitler's unique one-week concession, his demands were impossible. The cabinet rejected them. Once more Daladier and Bonnet were on hand, and they reluctantly agreed to go to war for

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46 Ibid.; Shirer, p. 534.
In Hyde Park, London, During the Munich Crisis.

Czechoslovakia if the British backed them militarily. The British Foreign Office issued a statement that in the event of violence over Czechoslovakia "Britain and Russia would certainly stand by France." The Czech Army, a respectable force of over 300,000 men, had already mobilized. France called up some reserves. Chamberlain allowed mobilization of the British Fleet, and a war scare spread over the country.

\[47\text{Taylor, p. 425.}\]
Shelter trenches were dug in the London public parks, first by soldiers with trenching tools then by construction companies with mechanical excavators. The digging continued at night under floodlights. Such anti-aircraft artillery as was available was brought into the city and set up in the parks, along with searchlight batteries and barrage balloons, all of which became some-

Barrage Balloons, London, During Munich Crisis.

thing of a tourist attraction during the day. Emergency civil defense measures under the Air Raid Precautions Act were implemented. Foreign visitors were advised to
go home. In addition to the Navy, the Army, both Regular and Territorial went on alert. Among the fighter squadrons of the Royal Air Force silver aircraft with colorful unit markings were painted over with green and brown camouflage.

Chamberlain had not given up his quest for peace. He sent Sir Horace Wilson back to remonstrate with Hitler, without results. Hitler now wanted a capitulation agreement from the Czechs by September 28, with possession of the territory by October 1.

As the fateful September 28 approached, Chamberlain sadly marvelled that such a remote country as Czechoslovakia was apparently about to start a new world war, while Hitler repeated that he held nothing against the British—the Czechs were the villains. Then, on the 27th, with invasion and war presumably less than twenty-four hours away, a note arrived from Hitler, obviously written in one of his most tranquil and reasonable moods. He hoped there would be no war, and to be fully cooperative in guaranteeing and supporting the Czech state after the Sudentenland had been separated from it. Chamberlain replied that "after reading your letter I feel you can get all essentials without war and without delay."

48 Peiling, p. 372.
Chamberlain now called on Mussolini to come through with his good offices as he had promised the previous April in exchange for British recognition of Italian Abyssinia. Help came from Mussolini at the eleventh hour. By guaranteeing his personal participation, Mussolini prevailed on Hitler to propose a conference of major powers to discuss the peaceful solution to the Czech problem. On the very morning of September 28 Chamberlain was speaking in the House of Commons, recapitulating his diplomatic activities of the past weeks and holding out slender hope that war might yet be averted. There was a dramatic pause as the invitation to a conference at Munich was handed down to him by Halifax in the Peers' Gallery. Chamberlain read the invitation out loud and walked out of the building. Applause from the floor was greater than on any occasion since Sir Edward Grey's speech upon declaring war, in August 1914.

Persons of left wing political persuasion who had never applauded Chamberlain before, and never would again, joined the cheers of the Conservatives. Those who declined to applaud formed a small, select, but hardly homogeneous group: Amery, Churchill, Duff Cooper and Eden among Conservatives, Harold Nicolson, a National Labourite, and William Gallacher, the Communist.

Chamberlain returned to Munich the next day,
September 29. The conference lasted from noon on the 29th until two o'clock in the morning of the 30th. The Soviet Union did not attend. The Czech representatives on the scene were not invited to attend, and waited in the lobby. The conferees gave Germany indeed all the essentials—the Czech Army was demobilized and its heavy weapons handed over to the Wehrmacht; the Sudentenland was to be absorbed into Germany by stages over a period of ten days. Czechs leaving the Sudetenland were required to leave their fixed property, to include farm animals, behind.

Before returning to London Chamberlain got Hitler to sign a paper pledging to keep the peace in the future. He took his copy of the paper back with him and was photographed showing it to the crowd at Heston Airport. This was the image he left to posterity. Hugh Dalton remembered seeing also "a film showing him at Munich seated and signing the agreement, with Hitler and Mussolini standing by him and exchanging broad grins," which "was incautiously displayed at certain English cinemas but was soon withdrawn."\(^4\)\(^9\) The return from Munich was the high point of Chamberlain's career. He was invited to receive the King's congratulations personally at

\(^4\)\(^9\)Dalton, p. 195.
Queen Elizabeth, Neville Chamberlain, Mrs. Chamberlain, King George VI, Buckingham Palace, September 30, 1938.

Buckingham Palace, and great quantities of adulatory mail arrived from all over the world, particularly from the Dominions, where people were delighted not to have to choose between war or letting the mother country go it alone. An effigy of Chamberlain in fishing gear was erected at the League of Nations. Sunday, October 2, was a day of thanksgiving throughout the Empire.
Part II

The Munich settlement raised hopes among the citizenry to the point of national euphoria, which, given the realities of the situation, could not last long. Chamberlain said to Halifax as they drove by the cheering crowds, "All this will be over in three months."\(^1\) As far as Parliament was concerned, three days was a more accurate estimate.

The interpretation put on the Munich agreement by certain members on both sides of the House of Commons was that it had bought, at terrible expense, a little more time to rearm. In May, Harold Nicolson had had one of his depressing conversations with a knowledgeable official in the Government which would contribute to his insight into the true nature of the Munich settlement:

Diary 12 May 1938

Gladwyn Je\(\text{b}\)\(\text{b}\) feels that we must cut off any controversy at almost any price until our air defences are in order. He says that really the issue is one between losing something of our old magnificence and ceasing to be a Great Power. We have simply got to throw something to the wolves.\(^2\)


\(^2\) Nicolson, p. 340. Gladwyn Jebb was then a private secretary to the Permanent Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs.
Thomas Jones, Baldwin's friend and still privy to the private conversations of Baldwin's ministers still in office, wrote at the height of the crisis to a correspondent in the United States:

As I write the situation is most critical. Underlying all the talk in the Press about Czechoslovakia, Sudetens, etc., you may take it that we have not faced the possibility of war because

1) The French ministers besought ours to avoid it at all costs. They could only put 700 planes in the air!

2) Our ministers responsible for air defence knew that London was at Germany's mercy;

3) No one seemed able to state with any certainty what Russia was prepared to do or what the result of the slaughter of the Generals (In the 1938 Army purge) would be.

Furthermore,

Five of our younger Ministers are so against Chamberlain's policy that they have threatened resignation. We are all filled with gloom and shame and wondering what if anything we can rescue from the debacle.

Duff Cooper, First Lord of the Admiralty, did resign. Robert Boothby recalled:

On the night of the Munich Agreement I dined at the Other Club. I sat between Walter Elliot Secretary of State for Scotland and Duff Cooper. . . . At one o'clock in the morning the first edition of the morning papers arrived and I read out the terms. I can see the blood rising to Duff Cooper's cheeks now. "I can't stomach this," he said with—

3Jones, p. 409, in a letter to Abraham Flexner of the Princeton Institute for Advanced Study.
out a moment's hesitation, "I shall resign." He was the only one.\(^4\)

There were four days of debate in Parliament over Munich, beginning Monday, October 3. The course and character of the debate was not of the sort to be expected after a great foreign policy triumph. Chamber-

\(^4\)Boothby, p. 165.
lain and Hoare maintained the official, "peace in our time" view, because to do otherwise, Hoare later wrote, would have "frightened the country into immediate war measures," which "might, in the Autumn of 1938, have destroyed the hope of any result from the Munich agreement."  

He merely drew out a scheme which he thought would please Herr Hitler. . . . He tried to find out what Herr Hitler wanted. It was his determination to try to get something which he thought Herr Hitler would accept, then he brought it and forced it on President Benes.

Churchill's oration against Munich was a brilliant moment in the history of parliamentary orations, its natural eloquence enhanced after the fact by the deadly accuracy of all the unpleasant predictions it contained. The Government's vote of confidence on the Munich question, 366 to 144, with over thirty Conservative abstentions, was more than adequate but still rather faint praise for Chamberlain, the national hero.  

One of the Conservative abstainers raised the question of a national election to be called by the Government to cash in on the popularity of the Munich

5Hoare, p. 331.

6Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 339 (1938), 59.

7Ibid.
settlement out in the streets.

There is also a rumour going around that if things go smoothly and comfortably there may be a General Election. I don't care at this time about my party or any other. There can be no greater iniquity in the world than to force a General Election on this country at this moment (Hear, hear). What would be the advantage? At the expense of much dishonour we have gained a temporary respite of peace. In the name of all that is decent let us use that for rearmament (Hear, hear). If we have a General Election now, with all the stupid bitterness that occurs at every General Election, and both sides abusing each other, who will have gained anything by it? Whichever way the election goes, does anyone think that such a solution would be to the advantage of the country? (Hear, hear.) Will this respite have helped us to rearm? Does anyone in the House believe there is anything except rearmament that can help us?8

Chamberlain did not propose a national election, but only moved to adjourn Parliament as quickly as possible. He wanted and needed a holiday. Debate was resumed over the issue of adjournment, with such diverse members as Eden, Cripps, Duff Cooper, William Gallacher, and Harold MacMillan saying adjournment of Parliament was inappropriate under the circumstances. MacMillan complained that "We are being treated more and more as a kind of Reichstag to meet only to hear the orations and register the decrees of the Government of the day."9

There was a bitter exchange between Chamberlain and

8Ibid., 243–244. Quoted Captain Sir Sidney Herbert.

9Ibid. (Commons), 339 (1938), 448.
Churchill, after which Churchill, finding abstention an insufficient gesture, voted with Labour on the adjournment.

Did the time bought by the Munich settlement improve the military position of Britain relative to that of Germany? The affirmative view, held by the Government, was that Britain's essential military capabilities had not matured.

Only ten per cent of the theoretical two thousand-odd anti-aircraft guns required to defend London were in place, mostly 3-inch guns developed for the Navy in the First World War, with low velocity, short range, small lethal radius of shell burst, and generally unsatisfactory performance against targets above 15,000 feet.

There were now five squadrons of Hurricane interceptors operational in Fighter Command, and one squadron was just in the process of converting from the Gauntlet biplane fighter to the Spitfire. As in the case of the anti-aircraft guns, the new fighters were useless above 15,000 feet; their eight Browning guns were still without heaters and froze up easily. The Germans now had a force of several hundred bombers that could easily cruise above 15,000 feet, at a speed that would make their interception by the older biplane very
difficult.

There was a list of other figures to be quoted—1,428 searchlights available out of the 4,128 believed required to defend the capital alone; 140 out of the 450 barrage balloons required, 60 fire pumps for all of London.  

The next year would be different.

It was estimated that, provided that we had a further twelve months without war, we should in the autumn of 1939 have a radar chain from the Orkneys to Land's End, sufficient 3.7-inch and 4.5-inch antiaircraft guns to cover London and the chief industrial cities, enough searchlights and balloon barrage for all major strategic points, ten squadrons of Spitfires and twenty of Hurricanes, all of them with improved equipment, and the first of our new bombers within sight.

Churchill and other critics of the concept of time bought for rearmament argued that the soldiers of the Czech Army, fighting for their lives, would be more than enough to offset the ascendancy of the German Army over the French; the British air defenses, however weak, could have dealt with the German bombers, which, since Germany lacked airfields near the Channel coast, would be coming over without fighter escort. Any war coming in the next several years would find the striking power

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10Halifax, p. 415; Hoare, p. 333.

11Hoare, p. 334.
of Germany even more formidable than at present.\textsuperscript{12}

Leslie Hore-Belisha, who had been against military action in behalf of Czechoslovakia "unless there was overwhelming public demand first," believed that "the present episode is all part of a relentless plan on the lines of Mein Kampf. Whatever the result of the P.M.'s plan, we should at once intensify our rearmament programme."\textsuperscript{13}

On October 9, less than two weeks after the official triumph of "peace in our time" Sir Kingsley Wood announced Royal Air Force expansion Scheme M, replacing Scheme L of the previous April, which contained a further, and much heavier emphasis on the production of eight-gun fighter monoplanes.\textsuperscript{14}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Striking Force</th>
<th>Fighter Command</th>
<th>Total Aircraft</th>
<th>Maturing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 1940</td>
<td>1,352</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>2,863</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. 1942</td>
<td>1,360</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>3,185</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next day Hore-Belisha announced his March reform of the Regular Army divisions, now under way would be extended to the Territorial Army divisions,}

\textsuperscript{12}Churchill, pp. 300-302.

\textsuperscript{13}Minney, pp. 138-140.

\textsuperscript{14}Slessor,
three of which would be fully motorized. The Regular Army would eventually expand from five divisions of infantry to nine, plus three mechanized infantry divisions and one special mobile division.

On October 31 Sir John Anderson entered the cabinet as Lord Privy Seal, with the unofficial title of Minister for Air Raid Precautions. Anderson had had a successful career as a civil servant, most recently as Governor of Bengal. He returned to Britain in 1937 and entered Parliament via Ramsay MacDonald's old Scottish Universities seat. In April 1938 Sir Samuel Hoare, the Home Secretary, asked Anderson for help in what had become the Ministry's largest concern, the civil defense problem. Hoare was having trouble with both finance and recruiting. After the Anschluss he had asked for a million A.R.P. volunteers and gotten an official total of 400,000, largely women brought in through the Women's Volunteer Service organization, sponsored by Lady Reading, the widow of an old colleague. Not all of the volunteers attracted to the program were the sort of people required. Reliability and the knack of working with others seemed to be rare virtues in a democratic society of individualists.

Anderson, a non-party man, became chairman of an amalgamated A.R.P. committee, composed of the former
Government and Labour committees, which had been functioning as rivals. There were twenty-five meetings of the A.R.P. committee in the thirty-one days of July, and at the same time the A.R.P. staff at the Home Office doubled to some four hundred twenty individuals.

The Commodities Reserves Bill, passed the previous month empowered the Board of Trade to acquire stocks of strategic goods applicable to civil defense, whale oil, sugar, fertilizer, wheat, and the like, to be moved in to storage areas in the west of England. This was an extension of the principle of defense priority over civilian needs established earlier in regard to aircraft production.

The result of Anderson's investigations into the state of A.R.P. in this period of rapid expansion was the so-called Anderson Report, issued at the end of July. The report contained five main recommendations. First, mass evacuation of all the population of London and the other metropolitan targets was not possible, nor was it desirable to attempt it. Second, the war effort would require industrial production continue in the cities wherever possible. Third, the only practical way to shelter those that were evacuated was by compulsory housing in private homes. Fourth, the initial costs of evacuation would have to be borne by the Government, with
continuing expenses of the evacuated persons to be paid on the basis of need, and fifth, schools should acquire the capability to evacuate children in groups lead by teachers.\textsuperscript{15}

Evacuation planning began at the Home Office on September 5 as part of the Government reaction to the building Munich crisis. Localities were classified, according to the threat, as evacuation areas, neutral areas, or reception areas. Emergency measures to maintain civilization under primitive conditions, some

\begin{center}
\textbf{Sir John Anderson Demonstrating Gas-Protective Clothing.}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Parliamentary Debates} (Commons), 338 (1938), 3283.
based on the experiences of the great General Strike of 1926, were incorporated into a plan called "Civil Defence Emergency Scheme Y." The country was divided into five regions for purposes of civil defense, each with a commissioner who would act for the Government should communications with the central authority break down.

Like the active defense measures, the civil defense measures taken during the Munich crisis did not inspire confidence that they would have saved many lives if war had actually broken out. It was better luck than management that the only death in London directly attributed to the Munich crisis was that of a man who somehow fell into an open shelter ditch at night.

Anderson's appointment to the cabinet after the Munich crisis removed A.R.P. from the responsibility of the Home Office and Sir Samuel Hoare. It came three days before a major debate on civil defense in the House of Commons.

In the debate of November 3 Labour moved "that this House expresses its grave concern at the admitted unpreparedness of the Government to protect the civil population when the country was brought to the brink of war."\(^{16}\)

\(^{16}\)Ibid., 340 (1938), 411.
Sir John Simon, answering for the Government, did not attempt to disavow the censure but amended the Labour resolution to say that the House declared "its full approval of the Government's determination to complete with the utmost speed the measures to provide for the country's needs." 17

Herbert Morrison, in developing the Labour case, hit at the Baldwin-Chamberlain technique of buying off criticism through timely offerings of ministerial scapegoats.

We shall no doubt be told . . . "Let us not worry too much about the past; there is a new Minister and a new order of things. There are to be changes." I do hope that Ministers will not merely say, "Well, do not worry about the past; there is a new minister who has never been a Minister before [Anderson] though he has had to do with Ministers before—Ministers of all parties." We have heard that before. There was grave discontent with the War Office and a new War Secretary was appointed. We were told, "Never mind the past, there is a new live lad [Hore-Belisha] on the job. He will not hide his head under a bushel. Give him a chance." Then there was grave criticism of the Air Ministry and the Government did two things. They solemnly declared that the former Air Minister [Swinton] was a first class Air Minister, and, at the same time, they said, "Well, even if he is not, which we do not admit, we will have a new Air Minister who is a cheerful cherubic personality [Wood]. Give him a chance." So the past was wiped out. We had trouble about the co-ordination of the Defence Services and we had a larger edition of cherubic personality [Inskip] appointed as Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence. The Government said, "Things may have been wrong in the past, but here is a new man,

17 Ibid., 434.
learned in the law. What more can you want? Give him a chance. — Sir Kingsley Wood

Morrison went on to list deficiencies in the many facets of air raid precautions—the scarcity of trained people, fire engines, and other emergency vehicles, or—

18 Ibid., 340 (1938), 412-413. Both Wood and Inskip had affable, cheerful personalities, and were somewhat stout in build.
ganization of hospitals and shelters, the placing of air
raid sirens.

Dalton followed with an indictment of the active
defense measures. He bemoaned the less than two hundred
anti-aircraft guns brought in to defend London. The
situation had not improved since, neither the new Vickers
guns nor the Bofors guns to be imported from Sweden had
arrived. During the crisis the Navy had many of the old
3-inch guns for which it had no immediate use. Why were
these not brought to defend the capital? This was "a
complete failure of the so-called Minister for Co-ordina-
tion of Defence."19

Conservative Leo Amery had a question for the Gov-
ernment. "I am told that during the recent crisis a very
large proportion of London air wardens found the climate
of Dorset and Devon more salubrious than that of London.
How is that going to be met?20

The Government had no response to these questions
other than hope for the future. It survived this test by
its usual comfortable margin.

On December 1, a month after taking office,
Anderson presented his ideas to the House of Commons.
He announced on behalf of the Government that the prin-

19Ibid., 515.
20Ibid., 530.
ciple of compulsory national service had been considered and, for the moment at least, had been laid aside. He then announced a new national service organization, to be run by local committees throughout the country, "by whom full information and guidance can be given to assist individual men and women to decide where their duty lies and to make their choice between the various forms of national service which are open to them." A handbook was to be published in twenty million copies, one to be mailed to each family in the country, showing the citizen the ways he might serve the state. The national service organization was also to launch a great integrated recruiting drive throughout the country to bring the armed forces up to war strength and identify volunteers especially useful skills applicable to military or civil defense.

The machinery of the coming 1941 census was to be used to identify non-volunteers with special skills, in the event of a need for compulsory conscription of such people into the service of the state.

In December Anderson called for 40,000 more auxiliary fire volunteers nation-wide, with 30,000 of

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them needed in the County of London. The Times published a summary of recruiting results in various parts of the country.22

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Percentage of required personnel recruited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rochdale</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doncaster</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The state of civil defense preparedness varied widely from place to place in the British Isles, depending on factors ranging from the personalities of those charged with organizing it to the comparative likelihood of an enemy attack, but nowhere was it entirely satisfactory.

Leo Amery wrote that after Anderson's December 1 speech there was an appeal by the Prime Minister in behalf of national service, in turn "followed by an all party rally at the Albert Hall, and by a campaign which, helped by the 20,000,000 handbooks, had, at the end of three months secured no more than 170,000 offers of men to do something."23


23 Amery, III, 302.
The appointment of Anderson did achieve vigorous development of civil defense organization and planning from the top. In February the five A.R.P. regions were increased to twelve, ten in England and one each for Scotland and Wales. The more vulnerable the area, the smaller was its geographical size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Headquarters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeastern</td>
<td>Leeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Midland</td>
<td>Nottingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>Cambridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>68 Victoria St., S.W. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>Reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwestern</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>Cardiff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midland</td>
<td>Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>Manchester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern</td>
<td>Tunbridge Wells</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within each region was a system of public shelters, dispersed as much as possible. The philosophy of shelters was that they should avoid a situation whereby large numbers of people would run for distant shelters at the beginning of a raid, with the danger of being caught by the bombs before reaching the shelter, together with the danger of overcrowding and panic inside. Legislation was passed requiring employers to provide shelter during working hours. The citizen was responsible for his own shelter while at home. The shelters

constructed by the Government were comparatively small, and designed for those caught on the street, neither at home nor at work.

The problem of shelters for the home and place of employment was met by two innovations—first, "the armoured basement," of steel sheathing bolted to the building joists, with additional load-bearing steel supports, and secondly the "Anderson Shelter" for family use. The Anderson Shelter was a steel igloo-like structure, with room for five. It was recommended that the shelter be placed outside the home whenever possible, so as to avoid the grim prospect of the family roasting inside the shelter should the house catch fire. Sunk two feet into the back garden and bunkered over with the displaced earth, the Anderson Shelter offered reasonable protection against any bomb explosion not a direct hit. Anderson himself tested its durability by jumping with all his might on the small scale model shown him.

The first of the Anderson shelters, sold or given away according to need, appeared in February 1939. One and a half million of them were turned out that year. The Anderson approach to sheltering was an alternative to the large, elaborate, civilization-underground shelter approach, sometimes known as the "trog-loydite scheme," which was being carried out independently.
at Finsbury and a number of other communities.

With the arrival of the new year 1939, British relations with Germany worsened. The afterglow of Munich was gone, assuming it ever existed. The German Foreign Office regarded Munich as an instance of undeserved magnanimity on the part of the Führer, for which foreigners should be grateful. In November, the assassination of a German diplomat in Paris by a displaced Jew provoked a pogrom of unprecedented savagery in Germany. Jews who had already been made to understand that they were no longer welcome in Germany but had stayed on anyway now willingly traded their life's possessions for a chance to exit the country. The treatment of the Jews was observed with shock and outrage in Britain, where nevertheless most refugees were refused entry at the behest of various political interests, prominent among them the British labor unions.

The pattern of by-elections to Parliament in the autumn and winter of 1938 showed a trend against the Government. At Bridgewater, a safe Conservative constituency, Percy Bartlett, a journalist by trade, with no real organization behind him, defeated a Conservative opponent by nine thousand votes solely on the strength of his articles and radio talks condemning Munich and
the slow pace of rearmament. 25 Where Conservatives won, which was still more often than not, it was usually by sharply reduced majorities.

In November Chamberlain and Halifax made a trip to Paris, as Chamberlain put it, "to give the French people the opportunity of pouring out their pent-up feelings of gratitude and affection, to strengthen Daladier and encourage him to do something to put his defences in order." 26 They found the French Government more gloomy and irresolute than ever, and the French public now opposed to the Munich settlement.

In January 1939 Chamberlain was again invited to Rome, again at his own initiative, with Halifax again accompanying him. The Italians had no proposals to make to Britain, for whom they had lost respect. The Italians kept the visit "in a minor key," and after Chamberlain had left, Count Ciano, Mussolini's Foreign Minister and son-in-law, telephoned Ribbentrop to tell him what a fiasco ("a big lemonade") the visit had been. Mussolini remarked, "these men are not made of the same stuff as Sir Francis Drake and the other magnificent adventurers that created the Empire. They are after all


the tired sons of a long line of rich men."  

The white paper of defense which in recent years had appeared before the reading of the service estimates appeared earlier than usual, on February 15. With the white paper was a new Defence Loans Bill, asking to borrow an additional £400,000,000, making the total defense loan for the 1937-1942 period £800,000,000 a staggering sum. The Bill passed on March 6, as Simon explained what everyone already knew; defense needs had set a gradient of expenditure which "the engine of revenue" could no longer climb.  

The 1938 white paper had hinted that the £1.5 billion all-source revenue for defense for 1937-1942 might not be sufficient. Now, a year later, it was plain that there was no way the £1.5 billion would cover expenses even through fiscal year 1940-1941. The estimated total military spending for the coming financial year compared with the two previous financial years was:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937-1938</td>
<td>£262 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-1939</td>
<td>£388 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-1940 (projection)</td>
<td>£523 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


28Parliamentary Debates (Commons) 344 (1939) 49.  

29Ibid., 52.
The loan funds, as opposed to tax revenue, expended in the two years past was £65 million and £132 million respectively, with an estimated £230 million in borrowed funds required for financial year 1939-1940. This meant that the loan money authorized in 1937 would be exhausted before 1940. "The ingenuity of the inventor," said Simon, "is for ever resulting in new devices and improvements, which, while they add to the effectiveness of the weapons in question, add appreciably to the cost." The new loan would also cover A.R.P. expenses and the expenses of the new Commodities Reserves Fund, which for the coming year were estimated at £51 million and £12 million respectively, for a total 1939-1940 defense-related expenditure of £586 million. 30

In the discussion in the House of Commons on the evening of February 20, Labourite F. W. Pethick-Lawrence pointed out that, when what Simon called "the full blast of production" was achieved, given the upward trend of expenses, even the new four hundred million would be inadequate. 31

The next day Chamberlain agreed that the insufficiency of the new loan was "a serious prospect, to

30 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 344 (1939), 52.

31 Ibid., 232.
which no one, I think, can look forward to with a light heart."\(^{32}\)

The 1939 defense estimates were the first since 1918 to reflect the concept of "arms to the limit," the limit being the capacity of the British military-industrial complex rather than money. The importance of fiscal responsibility seemed to evaporate as fear of Germany grew.

The Navy estimates, issued the last day of February called for an expenditure of £149,399,000, with a maximum-effort building program including two battleships, one aircraft carrier and four cruisers.\(^{33}\)

The Army estimates, at £161,133,000 surpassed the Navy's for the first time since 1918, and amounted to four times the 1932 estimates. The provision in the estimates for £60,000,000 worth of "warlike stores" was thirty times the provision for 1932.\(^{34}\)

For the first time the Air Force, once the smallest of the three appropriations (£17,000,000 in financial 1932), was first in spending with a budget of

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\(^{32}\) Ibid., 234.


\(^{34}\) "Higher Army Estimates," Ibid., March 2, 1939, p. 9.
£205,951,100. Behind the great increases in the Army and Air Force budgets was the heavy national anxiety over air defense—fighters and radar under direction of the Air Force and anti-aircraft artillery, balloons, and searchlights under direction of the Army. Added to the air defense budget was another £51,000,000 strictly for civil defense.

In the course of discussion of the military appropriations, Hore-Belisha announced an upgraded, nineteen division field force for the British Isles, including both Regular and Territorial components. Three mobile divisions, now to be called armoured divisions, were to be included, and all were to receive their full inventory of equipment, no more flags representing guns, by the end of the year. He also announced the formation of two additional anti-aircraft artillery divisions making a total of five in various stages of construction, plus the two actually deployed and ready for use.

It was painful to Winston Churchill to listen to the great improvements in the armed forces now programmed for the next year or two at a time when the security of the country might be called into question and settled within any given month. In connection with the Army he

noted that if his advice had been followed and the Territorial Army rearmed to modern standards in 1936, it would have been ready for battle, and known to be ready for battle among the general staffs of Europe, by 1939. But in 1936 the Government could not see their way to rearm the Territorial Army on a large scale before 1940 or 1941, nor did the events of 1937 and 1938 change the mind of the Government before now.

In his valedictory as advocate of rearmament as an unpopular cause, he said, with as much bitterness as ever appeared in his speeches:

I quite recognise that the Prime Minister and his colleagues are perfectly safe and will get away with it. They will get away with it without any difficulty because there are too many in it. Many powerful forces and interests have been responsible for the decision and the great mass of a great Party has endorsed it, and endorsed the neglect. So undoubtably they will escape. What would have been the fate of any other administration that I have ever seen on that Bench, if faced by anything like an equal parliamentary Opposition, would have been the grave censure of Parliament. That Government will escape. They will face only such censure as the course of events may inflict upon them in the pages of history. No doubt many will say what very bad taste it is for me to mention that fact. They will say that the Territorial Army is now being armed, that I am getting what I asked for, only three years later than it was asked for. Why look a gift horse in the mouth? Why not accept it in the spirit in which it is made? I will endeavour to do so, and I will conclude this section of my remarks by offering my sincere congratulations to His Majesty's Government upon the decision to which they have come in this matter.36

36 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 345 (1939), 254.
Part III

Adolf Hitler was quoted as saying, "It was clear to me from the first moment that I could not be satisfied with the Sudeten-German territory. That was only a partial solution."¹

The complete solution was implemented in March 1939. Hitler, who had ignored British pressure to involve himself in guarantees of the truncated Czech state as he had promised to do at the time of the Munich crisis, directed a campaign of subversion against the Prague Government which resulted in the secession of Slovakia and Ruthenia on or about March 14. The head of the Prague Government, by now an elderly man named Hacha, was summoned to Berlin, where he was prevailed upon to sign over the western part of his country to Germany as the Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia. Slovakia shortly followed suit, via the "telegram method" used with Austria the year before. Ruthenia went to Hungary, and Poland, in a move very shortsighted in view of what was to come, associated itself with the partition by taking parts of Slovakia.

Once more Britain was faced with the obvious fact

¹Shirer, p. 577, quoted from Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Nuremberg, 1946), III, 573.
that Germany had bullied another country into abject surrender, while at the same time the official sequence of telegrams, interviews, and communiques would serve to justify inaction if inaction was the course the British Government was resolved to take.

In a short speech on the subject on the House of Commons on March 15, Chamberlain explained that Britain had no control of a situation where the national leaders of a country themselves declared it dissolved, even though he was very surprised by what had happened and thought Hitler must be, too. The unspent portion of the ten million pounds Britain had given to Czechoslovakia, some seven million pounds in the Bank of England, would be reclaimed by the Government.

Simon followed, saying some might advocate some form of retaliation on Germany, but "our duty to our own people requires us to adopt a more cautious policy."

Yet within the space of two days Chamberlain changed his approach, and in fact instigated a new foreign policy which put Britain on a collision course with Germany. It has never been fully explained what factor or combination of factors prevailed upon Chamberlain to

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2 *Parliamentary Debates (Commons)*, 345 (1939), 435-438.

change his mind. Harold MacMillan thought "it was the pressure exercised by Lord Halifax and by the Whip's office, now beginning to be alarmed, that made Chamberlain change his tune." Chamberlain himself said, "as soon as I had time to think, I saw that it was impossible to deal with Hitler after he had thrown all his assurances to the winds."

In a speech at Birmingham on the evening of March 17, Chamberlain said he was dissatisfied with his own statement to Parliament on the Czech question; "I hope to correct that statement tonight." He then reviewed the disappointing results of the Appeasement policy, and to correct a misconception that he knew existed in the chancellories of Europe, said, "No greater mistake could be made than to suppose that because it believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, this nation has so lost its fiber that it will not take part to the utmost of its power in resisting such a challenge if it were ever made."

Commenting on Chamberlain's change of mind, Churchill remarked that:

4MacMillan, p. 511.
5Feiling, p. 401.
If Chamberlain failed to understand Hitler, Hitler completely underrated Chamberlain. He mis-took his civilian aspect and his passionate desire for peace for a complete explanation of his personality, and thought his umbrella was his symbol. He did not realise that Neville Chamberlain had a very hard core, and that he did not like being cheated.7

The diplomatic activities of Britain and France on the one side and Germany and Italy on the other following the Birmingham speech indicated that patience was mutually exhausted. Germany seized the Baltic city and district of Memel on March 23. Britain announced a defensive alliance with Poland on March 31. Italy seized Albania on April 7. Britain and France announced another alliance with Romania and Greece on April 13, and with Turkey on May 12. The application of "encirclement politics," which Germany feared and which Britain for years had disavowed, was now pursued with disregard for the military practicalities. What immediate aid could the British Army and Air Force furnish the Poles in case of a sudden German attack? Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, assumed the Royal Air Force would be in a position to bomb Germany into submission, which certainly was not in accordance with the facts.

The missing piece in the new encirclement alliance system, and the piece necessary to make it effec-

7Churchill, p. 308.
tive, was the Soviet Union. The British Government viewed collaboration with the Soviet Union with dis-
taste. The Soviet communist ideology was an excuse and justification for all manner of bad behavior by the Stalin regime; from the moral aspect there was little to choose between Stalin and Hitler. Moreover, since Stalin had just had most of his Army leadership put to death on suspicion of treason, the Red Army was of doubtful quality. Nevertheless negotiations for an alliance with the Soviet Union began on April 15 and continued spor-
adically throughout the summer. The immediately visible impediment to an alliance was the fact that neither Fin-
land, nor the Baltic Republics, nor Poland, nor Romania would consent to the entry of Soviet troops into their countries for any reason.

On August 22 the Soviet Union signed a nonaggress-
sion pact with Germany, with which negotiations had been proceeding simultaneously. This event was immediately interpreted, and accurately so, as paving the way for a German attack on Poland.

The attack was planned in connection with the quarrel Germany had raised over the legitimacy of the Corridor and the free City of Danzig, although the true German aim was to liquidate Poland and reassert the line of the Vistula, as in the days of the German Empire,
with the Soviets getting the former Russian land to the east of the Vistula as payment for their complicity.

The invasion of Poland began on September 1, 1939. It was the fourth and ultimate blow to the peace of Europe, and it put the restoration of European civilization to its pre-1914 condition, which during the 1920's and 1930's had been attempted to some degree, forever out of reach.

Following the Czechoslovakian collapse in March 1939, the futility of recriminations over the past combined with apprehension for the future combined to discourage the petty criticism and artificial ideological poses that had characterized past defense debates. Only the far leftward fringe, disposing of less than a dozen votes in Parliament, pursued a pacifist line, and this was in some cases merely in support of the new turn in Soviet policy.

Only one major confrontation on party lines remained, over the question of compulsory military service in time of peace. Hore-Belisha made conscription his personal cause within the cabinet. It was not a popular cause. Churchill wrote:

He certainly took his political life in his hands, and several of his interviews with his Chief were of a formidable character. I saw something of
him in his ordeal, and he was never sure that each day in office would not be his last.

The issue arose concurrently with a proposal to double the Territorial Army. On March 28, Hore-Belisha was summoned to the Prime Minister's office for a talk.

After lunch I went straight to the House and saw the Prime Minister in his room. He told me Halifax was insistent that some forthright action should be taken as immediate evidence that we meant business in resisting aggression. An announcement of a bigger military effort on our part would be the most convincing gesture we could make in the present international tension.

Hore-Belisha proposed conscription, "but he said that on political grounds it was impracticable." Instead, Chamberlain approved Hore-Belisha's idea to simply double the Territorial Army from thirteen to twenty-six divisions.

I returned to the War Office, called a meeting of the Army Council, and explained the whole position. The plan is to raise the peace-time strength (130,000) of the Territorial Field Force to war strength (170,000) and then double it (340,000). The method proposed is to over-recruit in every unit so as to form a cadre from which a duplicate unit can be built.

This measure not only served as a warning to Germany but also to meet domestic criticism that the services were turning away able bodied volunteers for


lack of capability to usefully absorb them. To double
the Territorial Army had a certain grand simplicity
about it, but it overcompensated for the overflow of
willing volunteers and turned it into a scarcity of
volunteers. Hore-Belisha returned to his original theme
of conscription, using the expansion plan that Chamber-
lain had approved in lieu of conscription as additional
justification. Particularly he cited the growing need
for trained anti-aircraft gun crews to be on duty at all
times. The anti-aircraft artillery was a Territorial
function and present force levels would require men to
stay on position at the expense of not only leisure time
but also of sleep, hardly a practical or an equitable
sacrifice for them to make.

On April 15 Hore-Belisha wrote to Chamberlain,
who was out of town, for permission to circulate studies
by the War Office on the need for mobilization, and con­
sequently, conscription.

As we cannot in the circumstances of the present
day rely any longer solely on a Citizen Force on
part time duty for our permanent defence against air
attack, it follows that a permanent force must be
enlisted for this purpose. As it is quite beyond the
capacity of the existing voluntary system, unless
great inducements are offered, to provide the regular
personnel, even for the Regular Army, it behoves us
to take steps which will remove the present defi­

10Ibid., p. 194.
Chamberlain replied that he did not want the War Office Papers to circulate among the cabinet members before they were separately studied by advisors of his choice.

18th April 1939

At 11.15 a.m. I saw the P.M. It was not a pleasant interview. I said I understood he wished to see me and he answered, "You wished to see me." I said it was so, that I felt it was my duty to do so about the War Office Papers, which I had sent him to Chequers on Saturday.

He said I was adding to his difficulties and that I had made up my mind; that I had a bee in my bonnet about conscription; that the War Office wanted it and that I had therefore a biased view; that I mentioned it in my speeches and so on. He referred to the repeated pledge Baldwin had given that conscription would not be introduced in the present Parliament, but it seemed to me that what really influenced him was the attitude of the Labour Party and the Trade Unions. From his enquiries, he said he felt it be a very dangerous course to pursue. He then went on to say he refused to believe that the Territorials could not be called out to man the searchlights (his proposal was that they should volunteer to do this for about three to six months).

I pointed out to him that the regulation was they could only be called up in an emergency. The papers I had sent to him Chequers had explained the position in full, but he did not seem to have grasped it.

I again told him that Lord Derby, the Chairman, and the Council of the Territorial Association, and also employers had been consulted and that they had unanimously agreed that the proposal he had made was impracticable, that it would not achieve the result desired, and that it would do harm to the Territorials.

Unless an emergency existed, I said, it would be an intolerable burden of Territorials to be called upon to serve whole time for indefinite periods. It was impossible to combine the duties in question with civilian work, more particularly in the case of searchlights, which were situated at considerable
distances from the headquarters of units.

I argued that our defence system should be considered as a coherent whole and that all the integral parts of it should be manned, including the balloon barrage and the Observer Corps. Any attempt to obtain the necessary personnel by voluntary methods would fail and would deal a shattering blow to the voluntary system.

I said my task was impossible if he rejected some form of compulsory military service, but he refused to take "No" for an answer to his proposals, and in reply to my asking him what he wanted me to do, he said I was to go back and consider them again.

John Simon on the bench in the House told me that he had read the War Office papers with an eye prepared to pick holes, but he was bound to admit that the case I had presented was unanswerable and that he was in agreement about conscription.

At 5.30 I called a meeting of the Army Council and again put before them the P.M.'s views. They unanimously agreed there was no alternative to what we had submitted.

In the end, Hore-Belisha got his way. On April 26, Chamberlain announced to the House of Commons his intention to introduce a conscription bill, the first ever in time of peace. In doing so Chamberlain demonstrated how fragile can be the promises of politicians, even those of high moral character.

Mr. Attlee. Is the Prime Minister aware that this decision will break a pledge—(Opposition cheers)—solemnly given (renewed Opposition cheers) to this country and reaffirmed only four weeks ago, that compulsory military service would not be introduced in peace time, will increase the widespread distrust of the Prime Minister (Opposition cheers and cries of "Resign"), and so far from strengthening this country, (Opposition cheers) will gravely imperil the national effort, and that this departure

Ibid., pp. 196-197.
from the voluntary principle will meet with strenuous opposition? (Opposition cries of "Resign!")

The Prime Minister. Of course I was quite aware that my interpretation of my pledge would be challenged (Opposition cheers). My own conscience is perfectly clear on the matter. I believe that when people have had time to consider the circumstances in which we are living they will agree with me that it cannot properly be described as a peacetime measure (Ministerial cheers).¹²

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¹²Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 346 (1939), 1154-1155.
The next day there was a debate on conscription with Labourites fighting it on grounds that it was unnecessary. Attlee quoted B. H. Liddell Hart to the effect that "ultimate efficiency is impaired rather than assisted by enlisting men before there is adequate equipment to train them." The Liberals voted with the Government, which was sustained on the matter by a vote of 376 to 145. The passing of the Compulsory National Service Bill, aimed at twenty-year-olds from all social classes, assured a sufficient flow of young men (some two thousand a day after April) into the Territorial Army for six months of active duty.

The need for the draft was explained by the Government in terms most likely to elicit a favorable public response—as an air defense measure, and as a gesture of warning to Germany. However, it was also true that the cabinet had come to a crucial decision about sending an expeditionary force to France upon the outbreak of war, a measure that would require conscription and was by no means universally popular.

In his 1939 book The Defence of Britain Liddell Hart was unenthusiastic about reviving the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) of 1914-1918.

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13 Ibid., 1358.
14 Ibid., 2058.
We outlasted our rivals in previous centuries because we avoided overstraining ourselves. Yet there were times—in facing Louis XIV and Napoleon—when the menace was greater, and the situation apparently more precarious than in 1914-18, when, for the first time, we abandoned regard for the principle of economy of force and put our utmost strength into the land struggle abroad. Might we not learn from our own history? 15

In an address to the Staff College at the end of 1937 reprinted in the book, Liddell Hart asserted that given the conditions of modern war, B. E. F. in France would, in any event, be unnecessary.

If we can credit the German Staff with a sense of realities, the possibility of a serious German offensive in the west becomes more than doubtful. . . . It is doubtful whether our small contribution is needed to maintain the integrity of the French frontiers. 16

Elsewhere in his book Liddell Hart pointed out the great improvements in the defenses opposite the German border. The Maginot Line in the south, the system of dikes, canals and forts in the low countries, and between them the Ardennes region, heavily wooded and cut with ravines, where

There is ample evidence of preparations designed to make any hostile progress a march in slow time, and compel an enemy to make the most exhaustive efforts. At many points . . . a handful of machine-guns might

15 Liddell Hart, p. 48.
16 Ibid., pp. 56, 59.
hold up an Army Corps.  

But by the spring of 1939 there were strong considerations put forward in favor of preparing an expeditionary force. The promise of a British army in Flanders would have the positive effect of stiffening the French diplomatic approach to European questions generally. Furthermore it was well remembered, now that the German Army was again the most powerful on the Continent, what close-run things European campaigns could be. In 1914 the B. E. F. delayed the right wing of the invading German forces just long enough to spoil the initial German plan to capture Paris, and, as Liddell Hart himself remarked:

If France fell under hostile domination, and her ports or air bases were available for an enemy's use, the flow of our life could easily be stopped. Hence her risks are our risks.  

The military community viewed the prospect of the expeditionary force with mixed emotions. In the Army, professional advancement depended on the successful command of troops, and obviously more opportunity for such commands would be opened up.

But the creation of such a force made problems for the other services, particularly the Air Force. The Air

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17 Ibid., p. 219.
18 Ibid., p. 136.
Force was strained to the limit meeting the demands of air defense and creating the strategic bomber fleet in preparation for the day when the national leadership would allow it to "take the gloves off" in dealing with Germany.

We never had the least doubt that sooner or later the gloves would come off; but our policy was to gain time—to improve our own defences and to build up the great force of heavy bombers of the Scheme M programme.  

Now it appeared that the Army expansion would call for some 1,440 combat aircraft stressing light and medium bombers, to support operations in France.

One cannot say one day [said Air Marshal Sir John Slessor], "we are not going to have an Army on the Continent—we'll concentrate on the production of bombers and fighters," and then, when the industry is all designed and jagged and tooled for that policy, suddenly turn round and say, "Oh no, sorry—we now intend to send a large Army to France and we want the Royal Air Force all organized and equipped to support it."

In April General Lord Gort went to France and settled the arrangements for a B. E. F. with his French counterpart, General Gamelin. It would be an expeditionary force of token size (by September there were still only four British Army divisions ready to fight in France), but for the moment the approval of the B. E. F. in principle was of greatest significance. On July 14,

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19 Slessor, p. 214.
20 Ibid., pp. 184-185.
the hundred fiftieth anniversary of the fall of the
Bastille, there was a great military parade in Paris,
with British infantry participating, and British uni­
forms of the three services prominent on the reviewing
stand.

The Exchequer report of April 25 announced
sharply increased surtaxes on higher incomes, and more
elaborate machinery to catch tax evaders now that the
burden was heavy enough to make tax evasion, from the
financial point of view, a very worthwhile endeavor.
Death duties and a long list of excises on luxury items
were raised. Simon stressed the sacrifices the rich
would be making, to head off the criticism of Labour,
who advocated the "conscription of wealth," especially
now that men were being conscripted.21

In May the Government created a Ministry of
Supply, which various members of Parliament had been
calling for since 1936. The Ministry was to have the
following powers under the terms of the Ministry of
Supply Bill:

1) To secure priority for the execution of Gov­
ernment orders.

2) To requisition output if the exercise of the
power under (1) does not achieve the end desired.

21Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 346 (1939),
997.
3) To require available storage to be placed at the disposal of the Government.

4) To examine the records of contractors and to fix prices in case of difficulty occurring between producers and traders on the one hand and Government Departments on the other.

5) To require the protection of essential plant, through compulsory conversion of manufacture from civilian goods to military.\textsuperscript{22}

For the immediate future the Navy and Air Force would continue to use the procurement facilities they had already set up, leaving the Ministry of Supply as a buying agent for the Army, which, rearming later, was at a disadvantage with the other services in competing for material. The Minister of Supply was a National Liberal Politician, Leslie Burgin, "another horse from Caligula's well stocked stable."\textsuperscript{23}

Labour used the debate on the Ministry of Supply Bill press once more for the nationalization of defense industries. Said Sir Stafford Cripps, who had been an official in the previous Ministry of Supply in the First World War:

With all the elaborate costs accounts and all the checking that was done during the late War, the profiteers were there just the same at the end as they were at the beginning. . . . There is only one

\textsuperscript{22}Paraphrased from "Ministry of Supply," \textit{Times}, May 26, 1939, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{23}Taylor, p. 444 n.
real way of getting rid of them, and that is by nationalising the manufacture.24

Germany responded to the British conscription law by repudiating the 1935 Naval Treaty. After that, there was silence, due to the breakdown of diplomatic rapport.

24Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 348 (1939), 721.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

An ominous, unhealthy tranquility settled over Europe in the summer of 1939. Each of the great powers saw to its military machine, and intense activity in all realms of the military establishment prevailed in Britain throughout that summer.

In view of the state of Anglo-German relations, the Air Raid Precautions budget was revised from fifty to seventy million pounds. The civil defense establishment still could not promise safety to citizens caught in air raids or even predict the effects of air raids, but its plans had by now jelled into a reasonable series of programs that would obviously be of some benefit. The A.R.P. Headquarters for the County of London had moved from an office building to a large basement in Kensington, complete with large lighted situation maps and a nerve center of telephones, teleprinters, and radio communications gear.

Another sector of air defense just reaching maturity was the radar warning chain, which could detect incoming aircraft at all but the lowest altitudes at a distance of sixty miles. A supplementary low cover system was being installed to detect aircraft at short
range and low altitude. The new fighter-interceptor aircraft and the pilots to fly them, now entering Fighter Command in substantial numbers, were equipped with I. F. F. (identification, friend or foe) transmitters, which, when queried by an electronic impulse from a radar site, would transmit a coded signal that would show up on the screens of air defense radar sets. The heart of the training program for Fighter Command was the G. C. I., ground controlled intercept exercise, in which the fighter was guided to a simulated intruder by a ground controller, using information obtained from the radar sites. Another area of concentration was interception of hostile aircraft by night.

Air raid drills had begun in schools as early as 1936, and since that time had gradually increased in size and scope. The night of August 10th was the first of a series of massive A. R. P. blackouts over southern England. Twenty-eight counties and 27,000 square miles were involved, including London, which darkened at 12:30 A.M., a half hour later than the rest. A Times reporter, looking from an airplane, wrote, "By midnight last night London was standing out in the surrounding darkness like a fire at sea."1

The summer of unease ended on August 22, with the signing of the nonaggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union. Thereafter Parliament met not in an atmosphere of unease, but "in an atmosphere of stupendous crisis."² On August 24 the House of Commons met at three o'clock to hear the Government proposal for a Defence of the Realm Act (D.O.R.A.). This Act read in part:

His Majesty may by Order in Council make such Regulations as appear to him to be necessary or expedient for securing the public safety, the defence of the realm, the maintenance of public order and the efficient prosecution of any war in which His Majesty may be engaged, and for maintaining supplies and services essential to the life of the community.³

The effect of D. O. R. A. was to suspend the constitutional rights of British citizens. It passed through its various readings in the House of Commons in the space of two and a half hours, passing by a vote of 427 to 4.⁴ The House of Lords took up the Act at 9:30 that evening and approved it without amendment after twenty-five minutes of discussion. The King affixed his seal to the text at 10:25 P.M. That same evening George

³Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 351 (1939), 63.
⁴Ibid., 62-63.
Brown, Minister of Labour, introduced a Labour Conscript Act, which passed 340-7.5

The next day the first in a series of emergency regulations was handed down under the provisions of the Defence of the Realm Act by the King's Privy Council covering espionage, misleading acts prejudicial to defense, aid and comfort to an enemy, and unauthorized use of cameras, fire arms, radio transmitters and carrier pigeons.

A week passed. Then came the German invasion of Poland, at dawn on Friday, September 1. That evening Parliament met. A member of the House of Commons described the scene as he remembered it forty-eight hours later.

It was the same Parliament, but strangely and grimly different. Half a dozen of the younger members were in military uniform. One M.P., a mere boy in appearance, was booted and spurred and wore the badge of a colonel. Another, only a year or two older, had come in uniform from his air squadron. A third and older M.P. was dressed as a lance-corporal.

There was no excitement on the floor of the House or in the galleries. There was no passion or conflict of opinion. Even the ambassadors in their gallery looked like directors attending the liquidating of a business that had once promised well. Corbin, of France, sat next to the Polish ambassador. M. Maisky, the Russian ambassador, did not lean over the ledge with the high spirits of a few weeks back. He seemed shrunken in size.

5Ibid., 238.
The Duke of Kent and the Duke of Gloucester sat behind the clock. They listened intently to every word, but, like the rest of us, showed nothing of the emotions that were almost out of control.

The Prime Minister was cheered when he entered, and again when he rose to speak. His hand was shaking as he placed his papers on the table and he looked near the point of exhaustion. Yet as he spoke his voice grew stronger and his agitation lessened.

Sir John Simon, as Leader of the House, looked on with a face that revealed little. His mind must have gone back to that day in August, twenty-five years ago, when he sat on the same bench and listened to Sir Edward Grey make his speech which was the prelude to war. Opposite Chamberlain was Lloyd George. His memories, too, must have been aflame.

As it turned out, the main business of the evening was to consider and pass a special finance bill introduced by Simon which resolved:

That a sum not exceeding £500,000,000 be granted to His Majesty beyond the ordinary grants of Parliament toward defraying the expenses which may be incurred during the year ending on March 31, 1940, for securing the public safety, the Defence of the Realm, the maintenance of public order and the efficient prosecution of any war in which His Majesty may be engaged...

There were at this time frantic efforts involving Chamberlain, Halifax, Sir Nevile Henderson the Ambassa-

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6 This text was inserted into Vol. 351 of Parliamentary Debates (Commons) maintained at the University of Nebraska. It comes from "Beverley Baxter's London Letter," MacLean's Magazine, October 1, 1939. Beverley Baxter was the Member for Woodgreen.

7 Ibid., 351 (1939), 139.
dor at Berlin, and various go-betweens to find the right combination of verbiage that would cause Hitler to accept a cease-fire in Poland so that peace might somehow be saved at five minutes after twelve, figuratively speaking. Chamberlain wavered, as if agonized over the prospect of Europe going down to ruin because he could not find the right words to put in a telegram. All hope was not lost in Chamberlain's mind as late as the evening of September 2, and for that reason when he addressed the House of Commons that evening he did not speak the words that the House had assembled to hear.

"Speak for England, Arthur!" cried Leo Amery to the next speaker, Labourite Arthur Greenwood.

"I hope," said Greenwood, that by tomorrow morning, however hard it may be for the right hon. Gentleman--and no one would care to be in his shoes to-night--we shall know the mind of the British Government, and that there shall be no more devices for dragging out what has been dragged out too long.8

"Right Gentlemen, this means war," said Neville Chamberlain to a deputation of his cabinet, and authorized the dispatch of an ultimatum to Germany to which an answer was neither received nor expected.9

7Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 351 (1939), 283.  
8Birkenhead, p. 447.
It was that the conflict of interests between Britain, the British overseas Commonwealth, and France on the one side and Germany on the other moved from diplomatic negotiations to the international court of last resort—trial by force. Britain's preparation for this eventuality had been slow and hesitant.

The slowness of rearmament can be traced to the character of the Government. The British Government was dominated by men who lacked a sufficient grasp of Germany's intentions and lacked sufficient confidence in themselves to lead public opinion in the direction of a prompt and resolute response to the German challenge. As businessmen they feared an unbalanced budget in economically shaky times, and as politicians they feared the pacifist Left. They waited until the international situation had deteriorated to the point where the unsophisticated mass of the electorate, preoccupied with their own daily cares, could not help noticing the need for rearmament. The occasion for the turn-around in opinion among responsible citizens previously opposed to rearmament was the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, closely followed by the German and Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War.

Once committed to massive rearmament, the Brit-
ish had to re-learn the lesson that military strength cannot be bought with money alone, but rather requires a combination of money and gestation time. Therefore even while spending great sums on rearmament, Britain continued to suffer diplomatic reverses brought about by lack of a credible military capability, until goaded into a declaration of war.

Aside from the late start dictated by political considerations, British rearmament was hindered by divisions of opinion among defense planners over the direction rearmament should take. There was unanimous opinion that the 1914-1918 method of land warfare could not be repeated; it consumed too much manpower. Military men in general had faith that mankind was ingenious enough to find a more economical means of doing battle, and did not share the widely held view among intellectuals that a new world war would destroy civilization. Military men visualized a mobile, limited liability war, drawing heavily on naval and air expertise.

The 1930's saw a dramatic change in the position of the Royal Air Force. From a small air arm supporting the operations of the Army and the Navy the Air Force by 1939 had tripled in size and was acknowledged in the defense budget as the most vital component of defense. The
main Air Force role in the later 1930's was to deter the Germans by the threat of bombing. In this the Air Force failed completely. With aviation technology advancing at such a pace as to render airplane designs obsolete before they could be mass produced by the limited facilities available, no meaningful bomber construction program existed until the very eve of the Second World War. In 1938 the fighter construction program with its ground radar component was recognized as the thread upon which the security of the British Isles was hanging. Fighter Command was not tested until 1940, after two years of unlimited financial support, and then proved adequate by a razor-thin margin.

The Royal Navy operated in a more stable technological environment than the Air Force. There had been a world wide slump in naval competition after the First World War and Britain's sea supremacy went unchallenged by any potentially hostile power. The capabilities of the submarine and the aircraft carrier were the chief unresolved technological questions of the time. Aircraft themselves were not to be especially feared provided the ships defending against them had adequate anti-aircraft guns and were compartmentalized to limit damage below decks.

During the 1930's the British Admiralty was con-
cerned with the question of whether to build more capital ships at the expense of cruiser and destroyer construction, or vice versa. Warships, like diamonds, reach the point in size where great sums must be spent for marginal increases. A compromise was reached by rehabilitating the old capital ships constructed between 1913 and 1918, laying down two new ones, and for the rest concentrating on cruisers and destroyers. At the outbreak of war in 1939 the Admiralty felt a severe shortage of the smaller, more agile ships to combat the German submarines and surface raiders.

From 1934 onward the Army was embroiled in controversy over what use to put the internal combustion engine. There were those who saw it primarily in terms of the threat it posed to the traditions of the Army. The concept of firepower plus mobility as the goal of Army organization was not fully defined until the tenure of Hore-Belisha as Secretary of State for War from May 1937. The favored theory of warfare, publicized by B. H. Liddell Hart, held that the defense was inherently more powerful than the offense. It was believed that the British overseas garrisons, properly distributed and properly armed, would be able to defend themselves even if cut off from the mother country. In modern land warfare a key role would be played by the
armored vehicle. Tanks, armored cars, and self-propelled artillery were to effect economy of force by enabling the defenders to rapidly concentrate decisive firepower at the crucial time and place within a defensive system. This view contrasted with a more radical view, held by certain officers in France and Germany, wherein armor was to be employed in an offensive rush through the static positions of an enemy, disrupting his rear areas.

The Army doubled in size between 1933 and 1939, despite recruiting problems in a draft-free society. However it remained too small to be capable of a decisive role in any campaign on the Continent of Europe.

In reading British history of the 1930's, the particulars of which are already fading from the memory of the general public, we are again reminded of the paradox that the primary function of the military establishment is to prevent war. The military establishment of a nation, maintained judiciously and without ostentation, is the good fence that divides good neighbors in the international community. To some it is morally aesthetic to remove this fence, but all of mankind's experience, the British being a recent example, shows it unwise to do so.
In closing we may add a comment on the secondary function of the military establishment, to win wars once embarked upon. Here the contribution of the military is bound to be less satisfactory. While an army may be victorious and beat down all of the nation's enemies, the victory will not necessarily bring lasting peace. The greater the spoils yielded up by the fallen enemy, the poorer the chance for lasting peace. As George Lansbury said in the House of Commons on the morning of September 3, 1939:

The cause that I and a handful of friends represent is this morning going down to ruin. But I think that we ought to take heart and courage from the fact that after two thousand years of war and strife, at least those who enter upon this colossal struggle have to admit that force has not settled and cannot settle anything.9

9Parliamentary Debates (Commons), 351 (1939), 299.
APPENDIX
MILITARY SPENDING
BRITAIN vs GERMANY 1933-1939

Millions of Pounds
One Pound = Twelve Reichmarks

SOURCES: BRITISH DEFENSE ESTIMATES AS PRESENTED IN PARLIAMENT AND DATA CONTAINED IN BURTON H. KLEIN, GERMANY'S ECONOMIC PREPARATIONS FOR WAR.
Primary sources. The foregoing discussion of British rearmament was built around a perusal of the London Times between January 1, 1932, and September 3, 1939. A few selected articles of earlier vintage from The Times were also used. The Times in those years had immense prestige, unshared by any other British newspaper. It was not unusual to see The Times quoted by speakers in Parliament. Foreigners supposed that The Times spoke for the Government. Referring to the leading editorial in the issue of April 4, 1935, which contradicted the Foreign Office on certain points of policy, Anthony Eden said, "It is of little use for members of the Government to make long journeys if a part of the confidence they have striven to create is thus to be destroyed."^1

Under the editorship of Geoffrey Dawson, a reputed member of the Cliveden Set, The Times was pro-Government, and in support of the Government line tended to accentuate the possibility of a modus vivendi with Germany. In this regard one of the more severe critics

^1Eden, p. 197.
said that Dawson "did not hesitate to suppress, or to pervert, the reports of his own correspondents." One reporter covering the House of Commons resigned because of editorial tampering with a story he had filed. However, for the purpose of this thesis, great quantities of applicable material were published by The Times without editorial interpretation or comment— the texts of speeches in and out of Parliament, election results, the comings and goings of statesmen and warships, and most important, an overall feel for what educated people were doing and saying in regard to the rearmament question in the 1930's.

The Times carried summaries of speeches in Parliament which served as a guide to pertinent material in Parliamentary Debates, still informally known as "Hansard." This official record of what was said in Parliament covers both Houses in separate volumes, although by the 1930's virtually all of the significant debates were held in the House of Commons. Parliamentary Debates contains the official text, the time of day, and the elapsed time of all speeches, plus a transcript of the give-and-take question sessions, and voting tallies

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2Taylor, p. 418.
showing how each member present voted. Only in the matter of audience reaction, the mood of the House listening to a speech is "Hansard" less informative than The Times. Only a very occasional "interruption" appears in the "Hansard" text, whereas the audience reaction as reported by The Times is stereotyped but more descriptive—examples being "cheers," "Ministerial cheers," "ironical Opposition cheers," "hear, hear," and "cries of 'Oh!'" as a euphemism for booing.

Very few of the many speeches in any given volume of "Hansard" would be of interest to the casual reader, although there are exceptions. Sections of Volume 351 pertaining to August and September 1939 read as high drama.

One inconvenience encountered in both "Hansard" and The Times is the sketchy identification of many members better known in their own day than they are now. The 1940 edition of Who's Who was a valuable locator for first names and for establishing the family relationship if any for individuals with the same surname. Who's Who was also a valuable reference for establishing the background of people such as Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, who did not write memoires, do not appear at length in others' memoires, and generally shunned publicity.

Most of the principal participants in British
politics published autobiographies, and there are also diaries kept by associates of the leaders of the state. Among autobiographical material Churchill's *The Gathering Storm*, published in 1948 as the first of his six volumes on the Second World War, ranks outstanding from the point of view of both the unique qualifications of the author and his literary style. Lord Londonderry's apologia, *Wings of Destiny*, differs from the others in that it was published in 1943, closest to the times described, and before the issue of the Second World War was settled. For the same reason the *Diaries and Letters* of Harold Nicolson, and Thomas Jones's *A Diary With Letters* contain views and impressions collected on the scene rather than reminiscences colored by hindsight.

The autobiography giving the longest and fullest inside expose of the Baldwin and Chamberlain governments was Anthony Eden's *Facing the Dictators*. This, the first of three volumes covering Eden's career, published in 1962, contains many small details of the diplomatic picture not provided elsewhere. Another, less distinguished work in the same vein is Duff Cooper's *Old Men Forget*. Two other works by men of more junior standing, representing recalcitrant attitudes on the Conservative back bench, are *Winds of Change* by Harold MacMillan, published in 1966, and Robert Boothby's *I Fight to Live*. 

The post-war autobiographies of members of the Baldwin and Chamberlain cabinets who remained loyal to the end—Sir John Simon's *Retrospect* (1952), Lord Halifax's *The Fullness of Days* (1959), and Sir Samuel Hoare's *Nine Troubled Years* (1954)—show no eagerness to dwell on rearmament and related issues. Instead these authors pay more attention to earlier achievements in earlier years, as if to balance out what would otherwise be an unfavorable historical image. Only the Earl of Winterton, former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and spokesman for the Air Ministry in the House of Commons, conducts a critique of rearmament with some gusto in his book *Orders of the Day*.

ship, but history left them waiting in the wings.

The three most valuable autobiographical sources dealing more specifically with the technical aspects of rearmament in air, sea, and land, respectively, were Air Marshal Sir John Slessor's *The Central Blue* (1957), Fleet Admiral Lord Chatfield's *It Might Happen Again* (1947), and *The Private Papers of Hore-Belisha* as edited by R. J. Minney (1960). *The Defence of Britain*, compiled in 1939 from the speeches and articles of B. H. Liddell Hart, Military Correspondent for *The Times* and unofficial advisor of Hore-Belisha when he was Secretary of State for War, served as a supplement to the *Private Papers*. *The Defence of Britain* demonstrates that Liddell Hart, a man of eminent reputation then as now, had no clear idea of the nature of ground warfare in the coming war, but rather excelled in describing what had happened after the war was over.

**Secondary sources.** Standard among the biographies to be consulted in any research on British national affairs of the 1930's are G. M. Young's *Stanley Baldwin* and Keith Feiling's *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*. These early, "authorized" biographers had access to the private correspondence of Baldwin and Chamberlain, as well as some personal contact with their subject, particularly in the case of Young. These two books were used
for the private correspondence they contained rather than to judge the overall merit or blame to be assigned Baldwin and Chamberlain.

Other biographies containing material in British rearmament include J. W. Wheeler-Bennett's John Anderson, Viscount Waverley, J. R. M. Butler's Lord Lothian, and Halifax, by the Earl of Birkenhead. Again the value of these biographies is in the incidental details on rearmament and related matters that are not available elsewhere rather than the overall conclusions of the book, which are generally that their subject was a good and upright man, with any failings the natural failings of us all.

The foremost and perhaps sole monograph on the Geneva Disarmament Conference to be published in English is J. W. Wheeler-Bennett's The Pipe Dream of Peace, written in 1934. The foreword to the book contains a short, lucid and accurate assessment of the situation, despairing of peace and predicting the coming of the Second World War. In contrast, the main text, a detailed compilation of what was said by whom at the Disarmament Conference over a period of two and a half years, together with the itineraries of statesmen coming and going on the business of disarmament, puts merciless demands on the attention span of the reader, just as the
actual proceedings did upon the delegates present.

Among the overviews of the 1930's, A. J. P. Taylor's *English History, 1914-1945* is the most detailed and valuable, particularly for its cross references. *English History* is a textbook type of overview except that Taylor does not write the bland prose usually found in textbooks. He enjoys controversy, and some of his asides are to be taken with a grain of salt. Another useful text, more modest in scope but closer to the times described is W. N. Medlicott's *British Foreign Policy Since Versailles*, first published in 1940. A concise summary of what British foreign policy looked like from Berlin is provided by William L. Shirer in his well-known *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*.

Of other general works on the period which involve themselves in rearmament and related issues, four were especially helpful. Ronald Blythe's *The Age of Illusion* contains entertaining vignettes of the 1930's, and was of greatest value in one called "The Dove," a sketch of George Lansbury. Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott wrote a book called *The Appeasers*, an unsympathetic view of Lady Astor and her many friends, which depicts Chamberlain as toadying to the strong and bullying the weak in his attempt to make appeasement work. A book of essays taking its title from Shakespeare is Beverley
Nichols's Cry Havoc! In his essays on the conspiracy of the military-industrial complex, Nichols forces himself to admit that the pacifists of the world must form a similar international conspiracy, equally effective among all the powers of the world, if the pacifist movement was to succeed. Finally, a light, witty, 1940-vintage treatment of British social and political life, touching on the dilemmas of Stanley Baldwin, appears in The Sun Never Sets, by Malcolm Muggeridge.

Much additional material on rearmament undoubtedly exists in transcripts of cabinet conversations and in the archives of the Ministry of Defence and the Imperial War museum—material which would have expanded the size of this thesis and at the same time made it more concise. Under the Thirty Year Rule which releases once-secret documents to the academic world, many additional details must now be available that make this topic a rewarding one for professional historians.
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