AFTERMATH OF MUNICH

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN BRITISH REARMAMENT

OCTOBER 1938 - AUGUST 1939.

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ABSTRACT.

Slessor, Douglas, Spaight etal justified the Munich Agreement as providing a 'breathing space' to accelerate British rearmament. Whilst Chamberlain realised Britain's military weakness, feared a German 'knock-out blow', and underestimated the Czech Army, his prime motive was to prevent, not postpone, a war which he abhorred. Nevertheless he realised the need to accelerate defensive measures such as fighter aircraft, anti-aircraft guns and civil defence.

Anxieties that Germany would invade Holland, seizing strategic airfields and the Channel Ports, over ruled the policy of 'limited Liability'. French pressure, and Lord Halifax's support enabled Hore-Belisha to raise equipment for an enlarged field force. Chamberlain opposed conscription for fear of alienating the trade unions; whilst he believed a Ministry of Supply would lose industrialists' co-operation with rearmament and undermine economic recovery. Hitler's Czechoslovakian coup, French requests for an appropriately enlarged British field force and the Premier's desire for a permanent couverture of anti-aircraft guns, combined to beget conscription. Disclosure of 50-60 week delays for deliveries of machine tools finally ended opposition to a Ministry of Supply. Extensions of subcontracting and the shadow factory system enabled British aircraft production to match Germany's by September 1939. By then both Fighter and Bomber Command enjoyed improvements in number and quality. Radar now covered most of Britain.

However Germany gained considerably by annexing Czechoslovakia. She seized equipment for 15 infantry divisions. Czech tanks provided three additional armoured divisions in 1940. Greater Germany was the second largest industrial power and less vunerable to blockade. Mismanagement denied her the heavy bombers and submarines necessary to defeat Britain.

Had Britain acted with greater urgency to establish a Ministry of Supply and provide a substantial field force, the Battle of France might have been extended or even won, thus postponing or avoiding the Battle of Britain.

CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

ANDERSON, Sir John, Ist Viscount Waverley; Permanent Under Secretary at Home Office,1922-1932; Home Secretary and Minister for Home Security, 1939-1940; Lord President of the Council, 1940

BALDWIN, Stanley; (1867-1947), Ist Earl of Bewdley,President of the Board of Trad 1921-1922,Chancellor of the Exchequer 1922-1923, Prime Minister 1923-1924,1924-1929,1935-1937, Lord President of the Council 1931-1935.

BROWN, (Alfred) Ernest; (1881-1962),Minister of Labour 1935-40, Secretary for Scotland 1940-41, Minister for Health 1941-43, Chancellor of Duchy of Lancaster 1943-1945, Minister of Aircraft Production, May-July 1945.

BURGIN, Edward Leslie; (1887-1945, Minister of Transport 1937-1939, Minister of Supply 1939-1940.

CHAMBERLAIN, Neville; (1869-1940), Director of National Service 1917, Postmaster General 1922-1923, Paymaster General 1923, Minister of Health 1923, 1924-1929 and 1931, Chancellor of the Exchequer 1923-1924 and 1931-1937,Prime Minister 1937-1940,Lord President of the Council 1940.

CHATFIELD, Alfred; Ist Baron,First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff 1933-1938, Minister for Co-Ordination of Defence 1939-1940.

CHRISTIE, Malcolm Grahame; (1881-1971), Group Capt,R,A,F., British Air Attache Berlin, 1927-1930, Source of intelligence on Germany,especially with Luftwaffe, for Foreign Office 1933-1940.

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DOUGLAS (William) Sholto; Marshall of the RAF,Ist Baron of Kirtleside, Instructor Imperial Defence College 1932-1935,Director Staff Studies,Air Ministry 1936-1937, Asst,Chief of Air Staff 1938-40, Deputy Chief of Air Staff 1940, Commander in Chief Fighter Command,(Nov) 1940-1942.

GORT,John Standish; (B,1885), Field-Marshall, Lord,Director of Military Training India 1932-1936,Commandant Staff College 1936-1937,Military Secretary to Secretary of War 1937, Chief of General Staff 1937-1939,Commander in Chief BEF in France 1939-1940.

HOARE, Sir Samuel John; Ist Viscount Templewood, Air Secretary 1924-1929, Secretary of State for India 1931-1935, Foreign Secretary 1935, First Lord 1936, Home Secretary1937-1939, Ambassador on Special Mission to Madrid 1940.

HORE-BELISHA, Leslie;Ist Baron of Devonport, Minister of Transport 1934-1937, Secretary of State for War 1937-1940,Minister of National Insurance 1945.

INSKIP, Sir Thomas; Ist Viscount Caldecote, Minister for Co-ordination of Defence 1936-1939, Lord Chancellor,(2nd Jan) 1939-1940, Leader of the House of Lords 1940.

POWNALL, Henry Royds; Lieutenant-General, Assistant Secretary and Deputy Secretary CID1933-1936, Director of Military Operations and Intelligence 1938-9, Chief of General Staff, British Expeditionary Force 1939-40.

ROBINSON,Sir (William) Arthur; Chair of Supply Board of CID 1935-1939,Secretary to Ministry of Supply 1939-1940.

SIMON, Sir John Allesbrook; (1873-1954), Attorney General 1913-1915, Home Secretary 1915-1916, resiging in opposition to conscription, Foreign Secretary 1931, Home Secretary 1935-1937, Chancellor of Exchequer 1937-1940, Lord Chancellor 1940-1945.

SLESSOR, Sir John C; (1897-1979),Marshall of the RAF,Instructor Camberley 1931-1934,India 1935-1937,Deputy Director and Director Plans,Air Ministry 1937-1941,Air Officer Commanding 1941,Assistant Chief of Air Staff 1942-3.

TRENCHARD, Hugh Montague; Marshall of the Royal Air Force Viscount Trenchard; Chief of Air Staff, 1918-29; Marshall of the R.A.F.,1927, Commisioner of Metropolitan Police 1931-5.

WOOD, Sir Kingsley;,Post Master General 1931-1935,Minister of Health 1935-1938, Secretary for Air 1938-1940,Lord Privy Seal April - May 1940, Chancellor of Exchequer 1940-1943.

ABBREVIATIONS.

A,C,	Acceleration Committee,
A,D,G,B,	Air Defence of Great Britain,
A,E,U,	Amalgamated Engineering Union,
A,R,P,	Air Raid Precautions,
B,E,F,	British Expeditionary Force,
B,M,P,	British Military Policy,
C,A,S,	Chief of Air Staff,
C,D,	Civil Defence,
C,D,P,A,	Committee of Defence Programmes and Acceleration,
C,I,D,	Committee Imperial Defence,
C,K,D,	Ceskomoravska Kolben Danek,
C,N,S,	Chief of Naval Staff,
C,O,S,	Chief of Staff
D,G,M,P,	Director General Munitions Production,
D,G,P/A,M,	Director General Production/Air Ministry,
D,I,P,	Director of Industrial Planning
D,M,O,&I,	Director of Military Operations & Intelligence,
E,E,F,	Engineers Employers Federation,
F,B,I,	Federation British Industry,
F,F,	Field Force,
F,F,A,	Fleet Air Arm,
F,O,	Foreign Office,
F,P,C,	Foreign Policy Committee,
F,S,	Foreign Secretary
G,S,	General Staff
M,of S,	Ministry of Supply,
M,P,	Member of Parliament,
N,S,A,	National Service Appeal,
N,S,L,	National Service League
P,M,	Prime Minister,
P,S,O,C,	Principal Supply Officers Committee,
R,A,	Regular Army
R,A,F,	Royal Air Force,
R,O,F,	Royal Ordancnce Factories
S,A,	Secretary for Air,
S,B,A,C,	Society British Aircraft Constructors
S,S,A,	Secretary of State for Air,
S,S,W,	Secretary of State for War,
T,A,	Territorial Army,
T&G,W,U,	Transport & General Workers Union,
T,I,S,C,	Treasury Inter Services Committee,
T,U,C,	Trade Union Congress,
W,O,	War Office,

INTRODUCTION:

Marshall of the R.A.F., Sir John Slessor firmly stated-

> 'Whether we over-estimated the dangers of air attack on England; I can only record my own feeling of profound relief that we were not called upon to answer that question in September 1938. It is not to ignore the many disasterous consequences of Munich in other fields, (but) to say that the year's breathing space after Munich went towards redressing the balance between our own capacity for defence and that of the Germans for attack.' (1)

Basil Collier agrees affirming that-

> 'The (Czechoslovakian) crisis was ended by negotiations culminating in the Munich agreement, whereby France and Gt.Britain purchased respite at the cost of some thirty Czech divisions. Notwithstanding (Chamberlain's reassuring words) preparations for war were afterwards conducted with new energy.' (2)

Both these men clearly indicate their belief that Chamberlain signed the Munich Agreement to postpone war with Germany and that the time gained was well used to prepare Britain for that conflict. However I believe that he sought to prevent a Second World War rather than just postpone the event. Chamberlain abhorred war. at least since the tragic death, in December 1917, of a young cousin Norman on active service in France. In weekly letters to his sisters he showed his belief that he had avoided war, for even after the German occupation of Prague, he declared in a letter dated 19th March 1939 -

> 'I never accept the view that war is inevitable.' (3)

An initial question raises its head. Why, when Britain had begun to rearm in 1935 was she so unprepared in 1938?. In particular the Royal Air Force had been allocated highest priority in the rearmament programme, because of the

1. Sir J Slessor: The Central Blue, (London, 1956), p.208, hereafter Slessor.
2. Basil Collier: The Defence of the United Kingdom, (London, 1957), p.66, hereafter Collier.
3. Templewood Papers, University of Cambs.,

exaggerated fear of air attack or the so called 'knock out blow'. Why were our defences against air attack so weak?. Regardless of the Prime Minister's interpretation of the situation in the autumn of 1938, the signing of the Munich Agreement did postpone the Second World War. My objective is to evaluate how well the time, from Chamberlain's return from Germany to the declaration of war, was used to prepare Britain for war.

A number of issues have to be addressed, France, having lost the Czech Army of 35 divisions as an ally, looked to Britain to remedy this deficiency. Chamberlain violently opposed raising a large field force for European warfare. What changed his mind?. Peacetime conscription would be necessary to provide the manpower for such an expansion of Britain's army. He feared that, in the eyes of the public, the very idea was synonymous with the horrors of trench warfare and would lead to the ending of trade union co-operation with the rearmament programme. What caused Chamberlain to abandon his opposition?. A greatly enlarged army made a Ministry of Supply necessary to resolve conflicts of priority, ensure the supply of raw materials and use all available firms to the best advantage. However the Premier deferred to the opposition of industrialists on this question, for fear of losing their co-operation and hamper economic recovery from the Great Slump.

Since Britain did not exist in isolation, I have assessed Germany's progress in rearmament over the same period. Britain planned, in 1938, a naval blockade against Germany in the event of war. However Hitler was obsessed with achieving self sufficiency for he subscribed to the view that the Allied blockade during the Great War had contributed to Germany's leaders signing the Armistice in 1918 - the so called 'stab in the back'. If the seizure of Austria and Czechoslovakia had led to autarky and

greatly strengthened the Third Reich, what could the Allies do to compensate?.

Slessor and Collier assume that the Battle of Britain was inevitable. However, even after plundering Czechoslovakia the German Army still deployed less tanks than France in 1940. Whether a more vigourous defence by France would have only postponed her defeat is a matter of speculation; but Chamberlain must shoulder responsibility for Britain's inadequate contribution to that campaign.

CHAPTER 1.

THE ROAD TO MUNICH.

I seek to demonstrate that Neville Chamberlain's acceptance of Hitler's demands for the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia, was based on a number of factors. One was the the widespread obsessional fear amongst Britain's leading politicians in the 1930's of an aerial 'knock out blow' or massive aerial attack against the country or London in particular. The Leadership of Nazi Germany sought to exploit this fear through propaganda playing up the capabilities of the German Air Force. (G.A.F.). The shortcomings of British intelligence on the German armed forces further led to 'worst case' evaluations. Deficiencies within the Royal Air Force, (R.A.F.); Britain's shortages of anti aircraft guns and the shortcomings of radar and related air raid warning systems also restrained Chamberlain and his Cabinet from assisting Czechoslovakia in 1938. A flawed appreciation by Britain's Chief's of Staff of Czechoslovakia's military capabilities is also examined. Above all the Prime Minister wished to prevent a war.

Fear of the Knock-Out Blow.

Neville Chamberlain on 24th September 1938, following his return from the second of his momentous visits to Hitler during the Czechoslovakian Crisis, had stated to his Cabinet colleagues -

> 'he had flown up the river over London. He had imagined a German bomber flying the same course, he had

asked himself what degree of protection they could afford for thousands of homes which he had seen stretched out below him and he felt that they were in no position to justify waging war today' (1)

This statement by the Prime Minister epitomized the obsession shared throughout a wide spectrum of British society in the 1930's, that Hitler had prepared the German Air Force to deliver an aerial 'knock out blow' to our cities, London in particular, by means of massive air raids. It clearly displays Chamberlain's lack of faith in either Britain's ability to deter Germany from launching such an attack in the first place, or ward off such an aerial onslaught once it had arrived in the skies over Britain. These fears of aerial attack can be traced back to the experiences of the 1914-1918 War. In particular, a daylight attack on Liverpool Street Station and the City of London during the summer of 1917 by German aircraft based in Belgium, made a lasting impression. In this raid 594 people were killed or wounded, whilst the German's Gotha bombers escaped intact.(2) Public outcry arose over the weaknesses and lack of co-ordination in our defences.

A Cabinet Committee under Field Marshall Smuts was hurriedly established to consider 'Air Organisation and Home Defence against Air Raids.'(3) Its first report recommended a co-ordinated network of observers, anti-aircraft guns, barrage balloons and fighter aircraft and this was rapidly established as the London Air Defence Area (LADA) under the command of General H H Ashmore.(3)

1. PRO.CAB 23/95 and Uri Bialer: The Shadow of the Bomber: The Fear of Air Attack and British Politics 1932-1939. (London, 1980). p.157. hereafter Bailer.
2. Malcolm Smith: British Air Strategy Between the Wars, (Oxford, 1984), p.17, hereafter Malcolm Smith.
3. Malcolm Smith, p.18.

As a consequence two German daylight raids on London in August 1917 were driven back with losses of several enemy aircraft. Henceforth the Germans only attacked by night.

A second report from Smuts committee was to have fundamental influences on British air policy. Smuts stated that the time had arrived to end the domination of the air service by the Army and Navy and implied that it should have its own government department. British naval supremacy no longer provided adequate protection for the United Kingdom. On 1st April 1918 the Royal Flying Corps. (R.F.C.) and the Royal Naval Air Service (R.N.A.S.) were combined to form the Royal Air Force (R.A.F.) under the control of the Air Ministry. Significantly Smuts claimed-

> 'As far as can at present be foreseen, there is absoloutely no limit to its (aircraft's) independent war use. And the day may not be far off when aerial operations with their devastation of enemy lands and destructions of industrial and populous centres on a vast scale may be come the principal operations of war. (2)

Thereby the Cabinet learned of the concept of strategic bombing, its allegedly war winning capabilities and credibility was given to the 'knock out blow'. Malcolm Smith has shown Hugh Trenchard* enthusiastically advocated a strategic role for the newly established R.A.F., after he became Chief of Air Staff in 1919, when he was fighting a political battle for the survival of the R.A.F. against a background of severe government cuts in defence expenditure. Supression of an insurrection in Somaliland through R.A.F. bombing attacks, and Trenchard's eloquence enabled the R.A.F. to survive as an independent service.

1. Malcolm Smith, p.18.
2. J.C.Smutts: The Second Report of the Prime Minister's Committee on Air Organisation and Home Defence against Air Raids. 17th Aug.1917. quoted by Malcolm Smith.

By the early 1930's there existed a consensus within the Air Staff and upper echelons of the R.A.F. that strategic bombing was the raison d'etre of the R.A.F.(1) Fears of air attacks were rekindled for the British public in the early 1930's by the publication of several lurid science fiction novels, such as 'The Gas War of 1940' by S Southwold.(2) Such fears were excerbated by news photographs, newsreel coverage and eye witness accounts of air attacks on Shanghai in 1932 and later during the Spanish Civil War. Korda's film presentation of H.G. Wells 'Things to Come, released by London Films in 1936, opened with a scene of a heavy air attack on 'Any Town', which leads to the complete collapse of civilisation.

It was with these problems in mind and we must remember before radar, the problems of detecting hostile aircraft in a three dimensional battlefield, that Stanley Baldwin* speaking in the House of Commons on 10th November 1932, made his gloomy statement -

> ' I think it is well also for the man in the street to realise that there is no power on earth that can prevent him from being bombed. What ever people may tell him, the bomber will always get through.The only defence is offence, which means you have to kill more women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourselves' (3)

Baldwin obviously accepted the Trenchard doctrine. A major determining factor of British policy during the Czechoslovakian Crisis of 1938 was Neville Chamberlain's acceptance of the 'knock out blow'. A clear example of

1. Malcolm Smith, pp.34-43.
2. M.Helders: War in the Air. (London,1932), and L.E.O.Chandler: War from the Air, (London,1935), and I.F.Chandler: Voices Prophesying War 1763-1984. (London,1966), p.170.
3. Sir Maurice Dean: The Royal Air Force and Two World Wars. (Cassell, 1979),p.59, hereafter Dean.

Chamberlain's fears emerged during a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence (C.I.D.) on 25th February 1935, during the discussion on a possible air pact with France. Chamberlain, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated -

> 'To the layman's imagination....,the new danger which had to be faced was that the country might think they could settle accounts by one single terrific knock-out blow on a vital spot....surely it would be a new temptation to an ill-disposed country to strike a blow of this kind.....but it might be hoped that an air blow such as he had described would more or less end the war before it had begun.' (1)

Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (C.I.G.S.) held a different view -

> 'the power of the knock-out blow must not be exaggerated. Personally he was unable to believe that any big scale air attack could be delivered which would so paralyse our whole power that we should be unable to continue the war' (2)

However this stance was countered, not suprisingly, by the Chief of the Air Staff (C.A.S.), Sir Edward Ellington who replied -

> ' If by a knock-out blow it was meant a period of twenty-four hours, it would not be possible at the present time so to paralyse a country that they were completely incapacitated. On the other hand a country seizing the iniative in this way might get a big advantage and might deal the attacked nation a blow from which it might be unable to recover.' (3)

Senior politicians readily accepted the pessimistic predictions of the Chiefs of the Air Staff, rather than those of the Chiefs of the General Staff and on this occasion,

1. C.I.D.Meeting 258, PRO, AIR 8/201,p.5. C.A.S..
2. AIR 8/201,p.5.
3. AIR 8/201,p.5.

Ramsey MacDonald, then the Prime Minister replied-

> 'referring to a case of great demoralisation caused by a Zepplin bomb in the last war (1914-1918) agreed that this was a real danger. It was not the soldiers who might be knocked out, but the public who might become so demoralised as to get into unrestrained panic. (1)

Thus we can see that this generation of politicians who had lived through the First World War and the drama of the General Strike of 1926 feared enemy air attacks, not just in terms of their perceived direct military impact but the power of a knock out blow was also viewed in terms of causing considerable damage to civilian morale or even widespread social unrest, culminating in a possible revolution.

British Reaction to German Rearmament.

The accession of Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist regime in Germany, with its aggressive foreign policy added a new dimension.

Germany's withdrawal in October 1933 from the League of Nations and the Geneva Disarmament Conference, accompanied by intelligence reports of that country's secret rearmament, obliged Britain to review her defences. A Cabinet Committee, the Defence Requirements Sub-Committee (D.R.C.) was subsequently established with its first meeting on 14th November 1933.
As early as 28th February 1934 Germany was indentified by the D.R.C. as the "ultimate potential enemy". (2)

1. AIR 8/201, p.6.
2. Wesley Wark: The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany 1933-1939. (Oxford, 1986), p.17, hereafter Wark.

Chamberlain, a member of the D.R.C., played a major role in shaping British rearmament in the 1930's. This is illustrated in his response to the initial proposals of the D.R.C. which, through both the force of his responsibility and argument, gained Cabinet approval. On the one hand Chamberlain fully subscribed to the 'knock outblow' viewpoint. On the other hand, he was a Chancellor of the Ex chequer who accepted an orthodox view of economics. i.e. Governments should balance expenditure with income. Chamberlain was concerned that increased expenditure on defence would halt Britain's recovery from the Great Depression of 1929-1932.

> 'Although the D.R.C.'s proposals amounted to no more than the completion of plans originally drawn up for the services at various times in the Twenties - the retrenchment ministers spent five months considering them, before deciding to halve the Army's proposed allocation of 40 million. This reduction was very much at Chamberlain's instigation.' (1)

Keith Feiling in his biography of Chamberlain, confirms that the Chancellor of the Exchequer not only reduced the initial proposals of the D.R.C. from £76 million to £50 million but -

> 'Within this reduced total, however, he drastically redistributed the proportions, in accordance with his now settled opinion that Germany was the menace. He therefore largely raised the committee's figure for the Home air force but halved the additional sums for the army and postponed the replacement of capital ships....<u>air defence against Germany was the pre-eminent need.</u>' (2)

<u>British Perceptions of the German Air Force & Reality.</u>

A false assumption was made by the Air Staff and by Chamberlain and his Cabinet colleagues that the G.A.F. was being developed as a strategic bombing force by the Nazi

1. G.C.Peden: <u>British Rearmament and the Treasury: 1932-1939.</u> (Edinburgh, 1979), p.8. hereafter <u>Peden</u>.
2. Keith Feiling: <u>The Life of Neville Chamberlain.</u> (London, 1946) p.258, hereafter <u>Feiling.</u>

regime, with London as a high priority on its target list.Such assessments of the G.A.F. were not helped by the dearth of information before 1939 on the technical performance of German aircraft. e.g: the range and bomb load of her bomber aircraft. Britain was hampered in the 1930's in making in depth assessments of the potentials of any Nazi Germany's armed forces by the lack of co-ordination within British intelligence gathering organisations.(1)

The Foreign Office controlled the Secret or Special Intelligence Service (S.I.S.) and acted as an intermediary between our Military, Naval and Air Attaches in posts at our Embassies and their respective Service departments in Whitehall. At the same time each of Britains armed services had its own intelligence organisation, namely Air Intelligence (A.I.): Military Intelligence (M.I.) and Naval Intelligence Division (N.I.D.). Little effective co-ordination existed between all four intelligence organisations before 1939. Whilst in July 1936 a Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee (J.I.C.) was established to perform this co-ordinating role. It was a failure -

> 'Until the summer of 1939.... it (J.I.C.) remained a peripheral body - one which had considerable difficulty in developing a function to supplement those already being performed by intelligence branches of the Service departments.' (2)

Even if the J.I.C. had functioned effectively from its creation, the situation was further complicated by a deliberate campaign of deception and misinformation by prominent persons in the Nazi regime. In 1936 significant changes of senior personnel took place within the decision

1. Wark.pp.225-240. and F.H.Hinsley: British Intelligence in the Second World War, Vol.1.(London,1979), chap.1&2.hereafter Hinsley.
2. Hinsley.p.37.

makers of the Reich Ministry of Aviation, and within the most senior staff of the G.A.F. which would effect the equipment and consequently the capabilities of the G.A.F.. In respect of this deception policy -

> Hitler, in March 1935, turned the unveiling of the Luftwaffe into an exercise in diplomatic mesmerism by claiming that Germany had reached parity in air strength with Britain. Choosing a typically well timed moment, he made the claim directly to Sir John Simon (Foreign Secretary) and Sir Anthony Eden(Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Foreign Office.)' (1)

Erhard Milch, German Air Minister, made several exaggerated claims about the strength of the G.A.F. during the 1930's whilst Hermann Goring, Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe, used Charles Lindbergh, the American aviator and Nazi sympathiser as an instrument for his propaganda.

With regard to the role of the G.A.F. in May 1933, secret discussions took place between Erhard Milch and Dr.Robert Knauss, Director of the German state airline.(2) They agreed to the creation of a force of 390 four-engined bombers and 10 air reconnaisance squadrons as a 'risk air force'. By this they meant an airforce that would deter France and Poland, from any preventive military action against the Nazi regime before the latter had achieved substantial rearmament. Britain was not considered a serious enemy.

> 'Colonel Wever, the Head of the Air Staff Command, who had intensively studied the problems of warfare, soon recognised the importance of this project and as early as May

1. Wark. p.43.
2. Wilhelm Deist: The Wehrmacht and German Rearmament. (London, 1981), Chapt.4. hereafter Deist Wehrmacht and Edward L Homze: Arming the Luftwaffe - The Reich Air Ministry and German Aircraft Industry, 1919-39.(London,1976), p.55. hereafter Homze.

1934, Junkers and Dornier aircraft were awarded a development contract. The four engined strategic bomber was supposed to go into production in 1938.'(1)

In the intervening period Germany had had to develop an intermediary force of medium twin engined aircraft, viz. the Heinkel HeIII, Dornier Do17 and Junkers Ju86 and the tri-motor Ju52. In early 1936 Wever had indentified the Luftwaffe's tasks as:

'1. to combat the enemy airforce.
2. to give direct support to Army and Navy operations.
3. to strike at the source of power of the enemy's armed forces and to cut off the flow of power to the front.".'(2)

Such combat operations were still only aimed at Germany's immediate neighbours. France remained the arch enemy but Czechoslovakia rather than Poland might be the next objective. Great Britain was not included as a military target until publication of a German Chief of Staff paper on 18th February 1938, which identified British airbases in Eastern England, the port of London and its munitions industry and the English channel ports as the target of future tactical missions.(3) However by late 1937, when at last Hitler recognised that Britain might be a serious opponent, the Luftwaffe had suffered a number of serious setbacks. Wever was killed in a flying accident, (3rd June 1936.) and his successor Lieutenant General Albert Kesselring, although an able administrator, lacked his predecessor's indepth knowledge of the problems of air warfare. Kesselring was more cautious and having tested the Ju89 and Do19 raised doubts on their speed and range and priority was then given to the development of a twin engined high speed long range bomber-the Junker JU88.

1. Deist Wehrmacht. p. 64.
2. Deist Wehrmacht. p. 65.
3. Deist Wehrmacht. p. 68.

When the Luftwaffe commanders first seriously addressed the issue of aerial warfare against Britain in May 1938, they concluded that the occupation of the Netherlands and Belgium would be necessary to bring the Heinkel HeIII and Dornier Do17 bombers within range of British targets.(1) However the Junkers Ju88 would have the range to operate against the United Kingdom from airfields in Germany, but only the prototype had been manufacturered.

Production of the aircraft was delayed until 1939 by a stipulation of Ernist Udet, the Luftwaffe's Technical Director, that the Ju88 should be able to operate as a dive bomber. Reports from the Spanish Civil War of the operations of the German air units of the Condor Legion, Hitler's contribution to General Franco's cause, were interpreted by Udet as confirming his view - or rather obsession - that dive bombers achieved a higher record of accuracy than convential level bombing aircraft. Henceforth Udet stipulated that any newly developed bomber must be able to dive bomb. This seriously delayed the production for several years of an effective long range bomber for the G.A.F..

Other factors seriously hampered the Luftwaffe offensive. This became apparent after 23rd August 1938 when Luftwaffe Chief of Air Staff instructed General Felmy, Commander in Chief of Luftflotte 2 (2nd Air Fleet), based in North West Germany, to be prepared to operate bomber squadrons against Britain in case the Czechoslavakian crisis should escalate into a war.(2) General Felmy's response to this

1. Diest Wehrmacht, p.68.
2. Derek Wood & Derek Dempster: The Narrow Margin-The Battle of Britain and the Rise of Air Power 1930-1940. (London, 1969), p.162, hereafter Wood & Dempster.

order, in a paper of 22nd September 1938, cast serious doubts on the possibility of any immediate German air attacks on the United Kingdom. He concluded that not only did his squadrons aircraft, Heinkel HeIII's and Dornier Do17's suffer inadequate range and bombload to attack Britain, but also his aircrews lacked the training and experience to operate aircraft in numbers against distant targets across an expanse of water, such as the North Sea.(1) Felmy's fear regarding his aircrews were confirmed in exercises by the 2nd Air Fleet in May 1939.(2)

Col.Wever had also helped to create the Luftwaffe as both a strategic and tactical airforce, but after his accidental death in 1936, his successors failed in two crucial areas. Firstly to develop effective long range aircraft and secondly, had not given the air crews sufficient training for long range operations. e.g. Navigation across water. These shortcomings would effectively restrict the G.A.F. to a close support or tactical role and rule out operations against Britain. 'Even mass production of the (Junkers) Ju88 could not have altered this conclusion for a long time to come.'(3) Unfortunately, in 1938 the British Government was largely unaware of the shortcomings of the G.A.F. Dr.Neil Young correctly concluded -

> 'its perception nevertheless was of an enemy air force ready to launch itself against the British Isles and it is upon this basis that a judgement of British policy at Munich must be made.'(4).

1. Deist Wehrmacht.p.69 and Williamson Murray, German Air Power and the Munich Crisis. from B.Bond & Ian Roy: (editors) War and Society Year Book, Vol.1.1976, hereafter Murray:GAP.
2 & 3. Deist Wehrmacht.p.69.
4. Neil Young, The Development of the Royal Air Force Fighter Aircraft Defences in Gt.Britain,1934-June 1940. Ph.D.Thesis, (Bristol University 1983), hereafter Young,RAF.

The Czechoslovakian Crisis.

In March 1938, Hitler having annexed Austria, began a campaign for the German acquisition of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland, the areas bordering Germany which were predominantly German speaking people. (3½million.) Almost straight away, Chamberlain asked the Chiefs of Staff to produce an appreciation of the military implications of German aggression against Czechoslovakia. (1) On 21st March, the C.O.S. produced a pessimistic worst case assessment. (2) They outlined the deficiencies in Britain's defences; e.g. she could only send a Field Force to the Continent of two divisions which were seriously deficient of modern equipment; Fighter Command could only mobilise 27 squadrons, of which 20 were equipped with obsolete or obsolescent aircraft. No 3.7 inch or 4.5 inch anti-aircraft guns were available and only 252 of 3inch calibre could be deployed.

However the report was fatally flawed in its assessment of the Czechoslovakian Army. Using information that was compiled between 1933 and 1935, the C.O.S. stated the Czechoslovakian Army consisted of 17 infantry and 4 cavalry divisions, but in fact, by 1938 through calling up reservists, they could mobilise a much larger army. Milan Hauner claims this to be 42 divisions(3) as against the 35

1. N.H.Gibbs: Grand Strategy,Vol.1,Rearmament Policy, (London,1976),p.642, hereafter Gibbs,
2. CAB 27/627,C.O.S. 698, Military Implications of German Aggression Against Czechoslovakia
3. M.Hauner:Czechoslovakia as a Military Factor in British Considerations of 1938.J.S.S.1,No.2.(1978) pp.194-222. hereafter Hauner,Cz38.

divisions stated by Brian Bond.(1). Whatever is the more accurate of these two assessments, it was much greater than the C.O.S. figure, and much closer to the 47 divisions which Germany could deploy against Czechoslovakia in 1938.(2) Czechoslovakia's extensive fortifications which protected the pre Anschluss (i.e. before Austria was incorporated into the Reich) frontier with Germany, are only mentioned by the C.O.S. as-

> 'field defences on the Bohemian frontier, but these have now been turned by the incorporation of Ostmark (Austria) in the Reich'.(3)

In fact the Czech Government was carrying work night and day work to construct fortifications to cover its former Austrian frontier.(4) No mention was made of the Panzer Mark I and Mark II in both their armament and armour protection.(6) The C.O.S. were guarded about the French military capabilities, in contrast to the Secretary for War, Leslie Hore Belisha* who had returned from a visit to the French Army manoevres of September 1937 favourably impressed.(6)From their doubtful assessment of Czech and French capabilities and their dismissal of the Soviet Union,although she had a treaty of assistance with Czechoslovakia, they concluded -

1. Brian Bond:British Military Policy between the Two World Wars.(Oxford,1980),p.280,hereafter Bond,BMP and Winston Churchill,The Second World War,Vol.1.- The Gathering Storm.,(London,1985),p.302.hereafter Churchill.
2. Hauner.Cz38.p.209.
3. CAB 27/627.COS 698,p.4.
4. Memo by Col.H.C.T.Stronge,FO 371/21715,C.2805 to FO. 4thFeb.1938.
5. Hauner Cz38.p.208.
6. R.J.Minney:The Private Papers of Hore-Belisha. (London, 1960),pp.56-58,hereafter Minney.

> that no pressure that we or our possible allies can bring to bear, either by sea, on land or in the air, could prevent Germany from invading and over-running Bohemia and from inflicting a decisive defeat on the Czechoslovakian Army. We should then be faced with the necessity of undertaking a war against Germany for the purpose of restoring Czechoslovakia's lost integrity and this object would only be achieved by the defeat of Germany and as the outcome of a prolonged struggle. In the world situation to-day it seems to us that if such a struggle were to take place it is more than probable that both Italy and Japan would seize the opportunity to further their own ends, and that in consequence the problem we have to envisage is not that of a limited European war only, but on a world war.' (1)

The comments concerning Italian and Japanese involvement seem questionable since Italy had felt obliged to resort to using poison gas to defeat a comparatively backward country Abyssinia, whilst Japan had become bogged down in her war against China. (2) In the light of the C.O.S. report the Cabinet decided in March 1938 not to go to war to support Czechoslovakia. Instead they would try to persuade the Czech Government to make concessions to Hitler, and also put pressure on France to follow this policy, rather than implement the treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia. (3)

When the Czechoslovakian crisis came to a climax in September 1938 our Military Attache in Prague informed London that -

> 'the morale of the Czech army and nation is high' and 'there are not shortcomings in the Czech Army...which are of sufficient consequence to warrant a belief that it cannot give a good account of itself....In my view, therefore, there is no material reason why they should not put up a really protracted resistance single handed.' (4)

1. CAB 27/627, COS 698, p.15.
2. Richard Overy & Andrew Wheatcroft: The Road to War, (London, 1989), regarding Italy-p.165; re. Japan, p.246, hereafter Overy & Wheatcroft.
3. Bond BMP, p.277.
4. H.C.T.Stronge, Memo 3rdSept.'38. DBFP, 3rd ser., II No.794.

However, the Prime Minister preferred the pessimistic assessments of the British Military Attache to Berlin, Colonel Mason-MacFarlane, who had only a fleeting glimpse of Czechoslovakia and knew almost nothing about her Army or defences. (1) The COS, while updating their information on the Czech Army, still came to their pessimistic conclusion that 'no pressure Great Britain or France can bring to bear.. could prevent Germany over running Bohemia and from inflicting a decisive defeat on Czechoslovakia.' (2)

Other factors that equally troubled Chamberlain and his colleagues are highlighted by Richie Ovendale -

> 'the British cabinet in making a decision on the Czechoslovakian situation had to take into account the reluctance, or refusal, of Canada, South Africa and Australia to take part in European ventures. Practical support from the United States could also be discounted. (3)

Britain had benefited considerably during the Great War from the full support of the Dominions and the British Empire, whilst United States entry to that conflict in 1917, had swung the balance in favour of the Allies. Preconceived fears of a German 'knock out blow' played on the minds of Chamberlain and his Cabinet, as they received contradictory messages from the Air Staff. Within the German section of the British Air Intelligence (A.I.3.) there was a belated attempt to question the role of the Luftwaffe. As Hitler escalated his campaign of propaganda and threats against Czechoslovakia, the Plans Branch of

1. H.C.T.Stronge.Memo 3 Sept.'38. DBFP,3rd ser.,II,No794.
2. Bond.BMP.,p.281.
3. CAB.53/41,COS.765[Revise],Appreciation of the Situation in Event of War Against Germany,14th Sept.'38.
4. Richie Ovendale:Appeasement and the English Speaking World-Britain,The United States,The Dominions and the Policy of Appeasement,1937-1939.(Cardiff 1975),p.144. hereafter Ovendale.

our Air Ministry requested, on behalf of the Chief of Air Staff (C.A.S.) an assessment of the G.A.F. bombing potential as at 30th September 1938. Consequently a paper, AIR 9/90 appeared, which questioned a worst case scenario with all German long range bombers being turned on the United Kingdom. The report stated -

> 'The (worst case) assessment (of 945 tons of bombs in 24 hours and 50 casualties per ton) assumes the whole of the long range bombers operate against this country. Such a concentration seems impractical from the existing landing grounds and highly improbable while war is in progress against Czechoslovakia and France.' (1)

Moreover the worst case assumption was based on the Heinkel HeIII having a bombload of 4,400lbs and sufficient range to reach London and the Midlands. The report's authors believed -

> 'On the assessed and adopted performance data only the Do17 and Ju86 (of which few were available) type aircraft can reach London. The HeIII aircraft, which represents the greatest striking force, are believed to be limited by the capacity of their fuel tanks to a range of 700 miles.' (2).

With regard to the bombload of the Heinkel HeIII it was stated-

> 'There is a very good authority for the belief the HeIII cannot carry more than half its bombload of 4,400 lbs of bombs with full tanks and normal takeoff on 1,000 yard aerodromes'. (3).

The report, which was confusing and contradictory, concluded -

> 'A scaling down by 50% during the progress of war in Czechoslovakia seems, without analysis, reasonable and conservative. For there is no doubt whatever that the German Army Command believe in the potency of air power in land operations. A mere fifteen squadrons of short range dive bombers will not satisfy the army requirement for the rapid conquest of Czechoslovakia and the holding of the French Army.' (4).

1. AIR 9/90, Section 1, p.6.
2. AIR 9/90, Section 2a, p.4.
3. AIR 9/90, Section 1, p.5.
4. AIR 9/90, Section 1.p.7.

Moreover this optimistic tone was substantiated by intelligence on the location of the Luftwaffe.(1). It could be seen that Group II or Air Fleet 2, were best situated of the German Air Groups for attacking Britain. They had a maximum strength of 279 Heinkel HeIII aircraft; hardly enough for a 'Knock out blow'. The airfields were so located in relation to the Low Countries and France that in order to attack Britain, the aircraft would either have had overflown neutral Belgium and Holland or made lengthy detours. These bombing squadrons were much better placed to attack targets in North East France. The majority of the Luftwaffe's bomber aircraft were shown to be deployed against Czechoslovakia.

Such information of the deployment of the G.A.F. and also concerning the German Army had been supplied to Czech Intelligence since 1937 by Major Paul Thummel, code name A54, a Anti Nazi officer in the Abwehr or German Secret Service. Czech intelligence passed on this information to France and Britain.(2) Thummel or Malcolm Christie * were the likely sources of the intelligence deployed in the A.I.3 paper. Both had been proven to be reliable, but this information was not brought to the attention of the Cabinet. Wark rightly points out that-

> 'Air Chief Marshall Sir Cyril Newall had already informed the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Kingsley Wood on September 10th 1938, that he could not visualise the possibility of a "bolt from the blue". A solitary communication of this kind was not enough, however to overturn a conception of the future air war that had been ingrained by two decades of Air Staff and civilian rhetoric.' (3)

This paper may have been overlooked during the frenzy of activity which engulfed the Air Staff during August and

1. AIR 9/90, Section 2a.
2. Hinsley,p.58. and General Frantisek Moravec: Master of Spies. (London,1975),pp.57-68 and pp.104-119, hereafter Moravec.
3. Wark.p.67 and AIR 8/248.

September 1938, engendered by the crisis over Czechoslovakia. Two senior members of the Air Staff, John (later Sir John) Slessor * , then Director of Plans, and Sholto Douglas *, in 1938 Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (A.C.A.S.) were certainly unwilling to accept the Reports conclusion. Slessor states with regard to the events of 1938 -

> 'There is, of course, always a tendency, which should sometimes be discounted, for Military staffs to over-insure and assume the worst case. But it is difficult to blame the Air Staff for assuming that we might find the whole air-power of Germany directed against this country very early in a war. That was not impossible, and we should certainly have been blameworthy if it had occurred and we had uttered no warning of the possibility or taken steps to guard against it.' (1)

Douglas was disturbed during the crisis by -

> 'What effect an air attack on Britain would have if it took the shape of the expected mass bombing...I could not avoid believing that, if war should come at that time, Britain, and in particular London, would be in for a terrible and probably a disasterous pasting from the German air force.' (2)

As Chamberlain and his colleagues were not given any objective and succinct assessments of the German air power during the Munich Crisis, it is not suprising the P.M. should fear the worst by visualising a German bomber flying up the Thames. (3)

Certainly the Cabinet were made aware of the deficiencies of Britains defences. For example, the D.C.A.S. had received a report on 29th August 1938, that Fighter Command by 1st October, would only be able to mobilise 406 aircraft, of which only 70 were Hurricanes and 14 Spitfires, with the

1. Sir John Slessor, The Central Blue. (London, 1956), p. 178 hereafter, Slessor.
2. Sholto Douglas. Years of Command. (London, 1966), pp 36-38, hereafter Douglas.
3. CAB 23/95, and Bailer, p. 157.

remainder being obsolescent or obsolete biplanes.(1). Whilst the R.A.F. had been giben the highest priority in the rearmament programme, the Government had also followed a policy of 'business as usual', i.e. they had not given defence orders priority over normal trade. This later factor, together with the technological revolution taking place in the changeover from fabric covered biplanes, to metal skin monoplanes; the decline in the British aircraft industry before 1934 and the lengthy process of developing new designs had combined to holdback the expansion of the R.A.F. Only in February 1938 had the policy of 'business as usual' been ended for the R.A.F.;too late to have much impact before the Munich Crisis. Bomber Command was not much better placed.

On 27th September 1938 the Air Ministry produced a paper setting out a policy for the deployment of the R.A.F.'s bomber aircraft at the commencement of hostilities. (2) This paper made gloomy reading for it greatly undermined the long cherished role of the R.A.F. as a strategic bombing airforce. Whilst identifying the German industrial area of the Ruhr as the most important objective, the report warned-

> ' only our heavy long range bombers (9 squadrons of Whitleys and 5 squadrons of Harrows), operating at night, can cover the Ruhr direct from this country.Taking the above factors into consideration, it is considered that it would be unwise to begin by retalisation on the Ruhr until we are in a position to do so effectively.'(3)

In the meantime the R.A.F. would attack targets on the coast and in the extreme North of Germany in the hope of drawing German fighter planes away from the French and Czechoslovakian fronts, and also drop propaganda leaflets.

1. Document from Sqdrn.Ldr.H.M.Fraser to Air Vice Marshall R.E.C. Peirse, 29th Aug.1938, & Appendix 1.
2. AIR 16/254.The General Policy for Employment..at the Onset of War.
3. AIR 16/254.p.3.

This report added that 'we must concentrate the limited effort of the medium bombers on giving every possible assistance to the French offensive, by attacks on purely military objectives in connection with the land battles.' (1)

All the theories of deterrence and counter deterrence did not apply. Air Vice Marshall W.L.Welch, Air Member for Supply and Organisation (A.M.S.O.) summed up the predicament of the R.A.F. on 27th September 1938, telling the Air Expansion Progress meeting -

> 'We have during the past few years been building up a front line Air Force which is nothing but a facade. We have nothing in the way of reserves or organisation behind the front line with which to maintain it.'(2)

This apparently pessimistic assessment was confirmed by a paper, entitled'Statement of Air Defence Deficiencies', presented to the Air Council in the following month. (3)

Although the provision of anti-aircraft guns had been given a high priority within the rearmament programme, the Commander of the 1st A.A.Division recalled their mobilisation during the Munich Crisis in the most depressing terms -

> 'It was almost impossible to imagine a more chaotic dress rehearsal for war: not only were the soldiers amateurs, training on equipment that was deplorably short, but there was in high places, a woolly optimism that everything would turn out alright on the night' (4)

Only 126 long range A.A. guns were ready to protect London and the Medway ports.(5) Secretary for War, Leslie Hore Belisha later admitted -

1. AIR 16/254,p.5.
2. AIR 6/54,Expansion Prog.Meeting 137.,27.9.1938,p.9.
3. AIR 6/55. Oct.1938, see my Appendix 2.
4. General F.T.Pile:Ack-Ack - Britain's Defences Against Air Attack During the Second World War(London,1949), p.86, hereafter Pile.
5. Pile,p.85.

'Guns sent from practice camp in some cases were separated from instruments and delay was caused...Some of the guns were issued without dials... Some predictors were out of order....Electric storage batteries (required to operate the predictors) were in some cases run down...Certain did not draw their full compliment of stores and particularly furze keys.' (1)

As no light A.A. guns were available, 4,450 Lewis machine guns had to be deployed in their place.' Only five radar or Radio Direction Finding (R.D.F.) stations were operational' but four of these did cover the approaches to London. (2)

These deficiencies in Britain's defences, understandably discouraged the Cabinet from going to war during the Czechoslovakian Crisis. A further note of caution was sounded by Colonel Ismay, Secretary to the C.I.D. in a service appreciation to the Minister for Co-Ordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip * and Sir Horace Wilson, senior advisor to the Prime Minister. (3) Ismay admitted -

'This note makes no attempt to enter into a detailed comparison of military and economic strengths, but merely to invite attention to a particular aspect of the problem'.(4)

Ismay perceived this problem to be that -

'In the air Germany enjoys a considerable superiority in striking power over the France-British Air Forces.(5)

The Secretary to the C.I.D. concluded that-

'from the military point of view, time is in our favour, and that, if war with Germany has to come, it would be better to fight her in say 6-12 month's time, than to accept the present challenge'.(6)

1. Speech by Hore-Belisha,3rdNov,1938. Hansard 5th ser., Vol.340, p,528.
2. Telford Taylor: Munich: The Price of Peace. (London,1979), p.987, hereafter Taylor, and my Appendix 1.
3. CAB 21/544. ' note on the question ..military advantage to fight Germany now or postpone the issue.

4 & 5. CAB 21/544.p.1.

6. CAB 21/544,p.6.

However, Brian Bond rightly highlights that-

> 'At no point during the (Czechoslovakian) crisis did either the Cabinet or C.O.S. try to draw up a balance-sheet on an issue which was to be much discussed afterwards: whether it was better to fight Germany in 1938 in order to gain the considerable asset of the Czech Army.(35 well equipped divisions) and Air Force and to try to deny these forces, together with Czechoslovakia's Skoda armaments complex to Germany. Instead the Government appears only to have taken account of Britain's own pathetic unpreparedness'(1)

This view is supported by Professor Gibbs. (2) British military weakness, together with Ismay's note swung the Cabinet behind Chamberlain's policy of conciliatory diplomacy towards Hitler. However, the Prime Minister's stance during the Munich Crisis sprung not only from any consideration of the military balance of strength.

Chamberlain's objective certainly up to 15th March 1939, and possibly even later, was not just to postpone a Second World War but to prevent one altogether.

> 'Chamberlain well remembered the letters he had received from his cousin Norman who had died in the First World War, pleading for him to work to prevent such ghastly slaughter from ever happening again. His horror of war, like that of many contemporaries, was perfectly genuine.'(3)

The Prime Minister's weekly letters to his sisters, Hilda and Ida Chamberlain, reveal the man's optimistic hopes for preventing war. Writing on 11th September 1938, Chamberlain stated-

> 'I am satisfied that we should be wrong to allow the most vital decision... the decision as to peace or war, to pass out of our hands into those of a ruler of another country (Hitler) and a lunatic at that.'(4)

1. Bond.BMP.,p.280.
2. Gibbs.p.648.
3. Peter Neville:Neville Chamberlain- a study in failure? (Personalities and Powers Series),(London,1992), p.69, hereafter Peter Neville.
4. N.Chamberlain to Ida Chamberlain.11 Sept.1939.,Univ.Lib.,Cambs., Templewood.

Even after the German occupation of Prague, which repudiated the Munich Agreement, the Prime Minister wrote- 'As always, I want to gain time, for I never accept that war is inevitable.' (1) At the height of the Munich Crisis, on 27th September Chamberlain broadcast, by radio to the nation that -

> 'if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear or force, I should feel that it must be resisted. Under such a dominance, life for people who believe in liberty would not be worth living: but war is a fearful thing, and we must be very clear, before we embark on it, that it is really the great issues that are at stake.' (2)

The Prime Minister was making the avoidance of war his highest priority, whilst still giving Hitler and his regime the benefit of the doubt regarding any further territorial ambitions. Fear of a 'knock-out blow' by an enemy airforce, had grown in Britain from daylight air raids on London in 1917. Hugh Trenchard and other senior officers of the R.A.F. developed theories of strategic air power after the 1914-1918 War, partly to prevent their service falling victim to the drastic defence expenditure cuts of the 1920's. These theories tend to exaggerate the power of the 'knock-out blow'. By the time Hitler gained power , Neville Chamberlain together with many within the Establishment and much of the general public in Britain, shared a fear of enemy air attack. Consequently rearmament placed a great emphasis on R.A.F. expansion and an anti-aircraft or Air Defence of Great Britain role for the British Army. Ironically the G.A.F. was developed initially under the Nazi regime with the objective of acting as a risk airforce or diplomatic weapon against

1. N.Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain.19 Sept.1939.,Univ.Lib.,Cambs., Templewood.
2. Feiling.p.372.

only its immediate neighbours, France and Poland. However Hitler and other senior Nazis quickly realised the impact of the Luftwaffe in generating anxiety in Britain, and a black propaganda campaign began which greatly contributed to the caution of the C.O.S. and British Government during the Czechoslovakian Crisis. However the death in 1936 of Colonel We ver, a leading advocate of strategic air power in the Luftwaffe, had so postponed German development of four engined long range bombers, that when asked, in August 1938, to prepare for the bombing of Britain, Colonel Felmy, Commander of Air Fleet 2, replied that without bases in Belgium and Holland, his Heinkel HeIII bombers lacked the range to carry this out effectively.

The British Government were unaware of this and at best received contradictory information on the strategy and capabilities of the G.A.F.. A C.O.S. paper of March 1938 which under-estimated the strength of the Czech Army by half, encouraged Chamberlain to negotiate with Hitler over the ceding of Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland. His colleagues agreed because of Britain's defence shortcomings together with the negative attitude of the Dominions and the fear of the 'knock-out blow'. These shortcomings had arisen, in the main, because Chamberlain's major concern was to prevent rather than postpone a second World War. When Ismay, in a paper, urged postponing war with Germany by 6 to 12 months, this ensured Cabinet support for the Prime Ministers policy of concessions to Hitler. No balance sheets were drawn up of the strategic implications of losing Czechoslovakia as an ally. Chamberlain's triumphant return from the Munich Agreement posed him problems in correcting the deficiencies in Britain's defences.

CHAPTER 2

IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF MUNICH.

Hope For the Best and Prepare for the Worst.

This chapter begins with Neville Chamberlain's triumphant return from the Munich Conference on 30th September 1938 and ends with a momentous Cabinet meeting a few weeks later on 7th November. Whilst the Prime Minister believed that the Munich Agreement had been a diplomatic coup he could not ignore the glaring weaknesses of Britain's defences that had been revealed during the Czechoslovakian Crisis. The crucial issue for Chamberlain was how to overcome these shortcomings whilst still maintaining his dual policy of, on the one hand, fostering friendly relations with Nazi Germany by redressing her grievances, and on the other, deterring Hitler from aggressive acts through Britain's rearmament programme. The proceedings of the Cabinet Committee, known as 'The Committee on Defence Programme and Acceleration,' (C.D.P.& A.), are discussed in their role of making good the weaknesses of Britain's defences. Particular emphasis is placed on two significant memorandum submitted to the Committee; namely Hore-Belisha's on 'The Role of the Army' and Sir Kingsley Wood's concerning the improvement of the country's position in the air.

> "It was as Chamberlain's car threaded a way through the cheering throng from the airport to Downing Street on his return from Munich that he remarked to Halifax, 'Edward, we must hope for the best and prepare for the worst.' "(1)

1. David Dilks: The Raleigh Lecture in History. 1987, transcript.p.25.

What did the Prime Minister mean by this? Hoping for the best can certainly be interpreted as Chamberlain's much quoted speech from an upper window of No.10 Downing Street, on the evening of 30th September that " This is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time. " (1) Chamberlain's optimis m that the Munich Agreement had not just postponed a war, but abolished the prospect entirely, is reflected in a reported conversation with Lord Swinton, then still a powerful figure in the Conservative Party, on the morning of 3rd October 1938. The Prime Minister was seeking a pledge from the former Secretary of State for Air, (Lord Swinton), to support the Munich Agreement in a House of Lords debate. Speaking in private Swinton said-

> ' " I will support you as Prime Minster, provided that you are clear that you have been buying time for rearmament." Neville Chamberlain produced the paper for a third time, exclaiming:"But don't you see, I have brought back peace.' " (2).

Chamberlain hoped even after the German occupation of Prague to prevent a second world war holding to the belief that-

> ' As always I want to gain time, for I never accept the view that war is inevitable. ' (3)

Certainly Chamberlain's early post Munich optimism can be attributed in part to Hitler's willingness to sign the joint statement of 30th September. The German public had given the British Leader such a welcome reception in Munich that he interpreted it to indicate they also shared his desire for peace. (4)

1. Feiling.p. 381.
2. Ian Colvin: The Chamberlain Cabinet. (London, 1971), p.168 from a conversation between Colvin and Lord Swinton, hereafter Colvin.
3. N. Chamberlain to Hilda Chamberlain, 19.3.1939. Templewood Papers, Univ.of Cambs.Library.
4. Feiling.p.377.

This view was confirmed by the British Military Attache (B.M.A.) in Berlin, who stated 'In the days which had led up to Munich almost all the Germans had been terrified of war and had made no bones about saying so.'(1)
An indication of what Chamberlain had meant by 'preparing for the worst ' was given at the Cabinet meeting on the morning of 3rd October. Duff Cooper had just resigned as First Lord of the Admiralty but was the only Cabinet Minster who took that step because he felt the Munich Agreement too harsh.

Walter Elliot, Minister of Health whilst questioning the Prime Minister stated-

> 'One view.....strongly held.....was that we must never again allow ourselves to be got into the position in which we had been in the last few weeks, and that every effort should be made to intensify our rearmament programme.'(2)

Lord Halifax supported this view and during Chamberlain's triumphant drive from Heston aerodrome to Downing Street he advised him not to hold a General Election but to 'reconstitute his Government, bringing in Labour, if they would join, and Churchill and Eden.'(3) Unfortunately the P.M. only followed the first piece of advice. Andrew Roberts has highlighted that during the Czechoslovakian Crisis, Halifax had drawn back from supporting Chamberlain's stance of forcing the Czechs to concede all of Hitler's demands.(4) Hitler's invitation for Chamberlain to attend a Four Power Conference at Munich,

1. Ewan Butler: Mason-Mac- The Life of Lieutenant General Sir Noel Mason-Macfarlane. (London, 1972), p.87. hereafter Butler.
2. CAB 23/95. p.301.
3. The Earl Halifax: Fulness of Days, (London, 1957), p.200, hereafter Halifax.
4. Andrew Roberts: The Holy Fox-A Biography of Lord Halifax. (London, 1991), pp112-122, hereafter Roberts.

induced by the mobilization of the British Fleet and an approach from Mussolini, had intervened at a crucial moment. Now after Munich, the Foreign Secretary, openly supported greater rearmement by Britain concerning the role of our Army.

Chamberlain's Dilemma.

Chamberlain's diplomatic triumph could be interpreted in placing him in a delicate situation. On the one hand the Crisis had revealed Britain's unpreparedness for war. However, wouldn't much greater rearmament to rectify this appear to contradict 'peace in out time' and provoke Hitler ?. On balance our military weakness indicated, surely, that greater emphasis should be placed on remedying this and less on placating Hitler by redressing German grievances. After all, the Fuhrer had said the Sudetenland was his 'last territorial claim in Europe.'

However, the P.M. appeared to compromise stating-

> ' The contacts established with the Dictator Powers opened up the possibility that we might be able to reach some agreement with them, that would stop the armaments race. It was clear, however, that it would be madness for the country to stop rearming until we were convinced that other countries would act in the same way. For the time being, therefore we should relax no particle of effort until our deficiencies had been made good. That, however, was not the same as saying that we would embark on a great increase in our armaments programme as a thank offering for the present detente" (1)

Chamberlain reiterated this point later that day in the House of Commons. (2) What did all this mean? The situation became clearer on the 26th October 1938

1. CAB 23/95, p.305.
2. Speech by N.Chamberlain, 3 Oct.38, Hansard, 5th Ser., Vol.339.50.

when the Cabinet agreed to appoint a Cabinet Committee to be called the Committee on Defence Programmes and Acceleration. (C.D.P.& A.)(1).

Immediately after Munich each of the armed services had to produce their own report on what Henry Pownall*, Director of Military Operations and Intelligence (D.M.O.&I.) at the War Office referred to as 'lessons of the (Czechoslovakian) crisis.(2) Now the P.M. wished those reports to be considered when the Cabinet Committee discussed how existing programmes for rearmament could be accelerated. As all the Cabinet was concerned with the shortcomings of the R.A.F. it had also been agreed that the Acceleration Committee was to examine the paper, C.P. 218(38) on 'Relative Air Strengths and Proposals for the improvement of the Country's Position'(3) by the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Kingsley Wood. * To ensure that this Committee did not stray from the policy of priority for home defence, and in particular defence against a 'knock out blow' from the air, it was to be comprised of some of Chamberlain's staunchest allies. These were Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for Co-ordination of Defence and Chairman of the Committee; Sir John Simon *: Chancellor of the Exchequer; Sir Samuel Hoare *: Home Secretary; and Ernest Brown*: Minister of Labour. The P.M. was to discover that two other members of the Committee, Hore-Belisha and SirKingsley Wood had developed distinct views of their own; the former questioning the role of the Army whilst the Secretary for Air's proposals for the R.A.F. would almost give the P.M. and the Chancellor an apoplexy. Only the new

1. CAB 27/648.p.6.
2. Brian Bond: Chief of Staff - The Diaries of Lieut.Gen.Sir Henry Pownall.(London,1972), p.165, hereafter Pownall.
3. CAB 27/648,item 8.

First Lord of the Admiralty, Earl James Richard Stanhope, replacing Duff Cooper appeared as a comparatively unknown quantity. Stanhope had previously held minor posts of Minister of Works (1936/7) and Minister of Education (1937/8).

Some sense of urgency grasped the Committee as shown by the fact that it held its first meeting on 27th October, the day after the Cabinet decision.Five meetings were squeezed into the days up to 3rd November 1938, when it was wound up. However, it became clearly apparent , at the first meeting , that the P.M.'s staunch allies would do their best best to limit discussions to a narrow agenda. Quickly the Home Secretary, proposed and received approval that the Committee's priorities would be anti-aircraft guns and equipment, the strength of the R.A.F. and measures to improve Civil Defence, (1)

Hore-Belisha then produced a brief paper of his own, (2) which proposed to reinstate the 'Ideal Scheme'; for the Air Defence of Great Britain, agreed in 1937, but subsequently scaled down in 1938 to control defence expenditure. This proposal amounted to an immediate increase of 686 heavy AA guns (3.7" and 4.5") and also asked for 1,000 light AA guns, (2 pounds or 40mm)over and above the 1200 specified in the 'Ideal Scheme'. Henry Pownall stated in his diary the -'He (Hore Belisha) had never been advised more than half these figures and simply ran amok and doubled the stakes'(3) General Lord John Gort* C.S., later rebuked Hore-Belish pointing out that these irresponsible demands would only divert funds that

1. PRO CAB 27/648.pp.183-196.
2. See my Appendix 3.
3. Pownall.p.166

would be better spent elsewhere, on equipment for the Regular Army and the Territorials.(1) The Committee was bought back to reality by the intervention of Sir Richard Hopkins, Second Secretary to the Treasury, who through the Chancellor Sir John Simon, made the point that asit was necessary first to create new industrial capacity, there was no need to authorise the actual placing of anything like the total orders asked for, until their manufacture could begin many months hence.(2). As a consequence the request for heavy AA guns was amended. The final conclusion of the Committee was to recommend that the number of 3.7" and 4.5" guns, at present authorised, be increased to the 'Ideal Scheme' but that immediate orders be placed for 300 AA guns, not 686, to bring into being new industrial capacity. Hore-Belisha received a more sympathetic reception for his request for light AA guns; the Committee's conclusion being -

> 'to request the War Office to investigate and report,... on the possibility of obtaining from any source British or Foreign, deliveries of 1000 light AA equipments of any type, on the assumption that such equipments would be additional to the 1200 equipments envisaged in the "Ideal Scheme"'(3)

The Committee quickly assented -

> ' to recommend to the Cabinet that additional 600 searchlights (including approximately 50 required by the Admiralty) on the understanding...detailed arrangements were made with the Treasury.'(4)

Treasury officials were still exerting much more stringent control of the War Office proposals compared with other Armed Services.(5)

1. Pownall.p.166.
2. Peden, p.135.
3. CAB 27/648,p.25.
4. CAB 27/648,p.31.
5. For fuller discussion see Peden,Chapt.2.

Britain was suffering alarming shortcomings in its Anti-Aircraft defences despite these being given a high priority in the rearmament programme. These deficiencies sprung from the Government's opposition to placing defence orders before civilian work. Instead 'business as usual' or no interference with normal trade was the policy with regard to equipping the Army.

My chapter 6 'Creation of a Ministry of Supply' illustrates that Hore-Belisha, Winston Churchill and others pressed for such a Ministry because they realised it would avoid overlapping, resolve conflicts of priority, ensure the supply of raw materials to Service needs and quicken production deliveries, by diverting both firms and labour to munitions production. Had the Government acted with more vigour by introducing a Ministry of Supply earlier, the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) would have been better equipped to tackle the German onslaught in May 1940.

The Role of the Army.

The proceedings of the Committee became more controversial when Hore-Belisha presented a memorandum , and one by the General Staff, both entitled 'The Role of the Army in the Light of the Czechoslovakia Crisis.'(1) Both reports argued that the Czechoslovakian crisis had revealed the lack of preparation and equipment of the Army to meet even its existing limited role and that the cut of £70m imposed on the Army's five year budget in March 1938 should be reversed. If all the six points of the G.S's proposals were taken together they estimated a cost of around £200 million, but as they were only asking for immediate action on items i. to iv. these would cost about £70 million.

1. CAB 27/648, pp 179-196.

General Staff Proposal.

i. Formation of two Mobile Divisions. (out of existing Mobile Division.)
ii. Equipping Field Force with above ancillary troops, to be ready for despatch at Z+14 days.
iii. Equipping two divisions, organised and equipped at a lower scale than field force formations, by Z+1 month, to support overseas garrisons.
iv. First T.A. Contingent of a Corps of four divisions at Z+4 months.
v. Second T.A. contingent of two motorized divisions and one Corps of two divisions at Z + 6 months.
vi. Third T.A. Contingent of one motorized division, one mobile division and one Corps of three divisions at Z+8 months.' (1)

However, both the Secretary of State for War and the General Staff were addressing a more fundamental issue. During the Czechoslovakian crisis the French had indicated their concern that all the British Army might send to her assistance, would be only two regular divisions and these might not embark until after 21 days. Now the Munich Agreement had tilted the balance of power towards the Germans. Czechoslovakia had previously been able to mobilise a well equipped army (of 35 divisions) as an ally of France. At best Czechoslovakia's military resources had been neutralised or at worst they would be prey to German overtures. It was implied in both papers in these circumstances France would look to a much larger contribution in ground forces from Britain. A 'continental commitment' might be a thorny nettle for the British, but it was one they would have to grasp, sooner rather than later. Hore-Belisha denied that he proposed to create a continental army. (2) No one was asking for a mass conscript army on the scale of the British Expeditionary Force (B.E.F.) of 1918. However cross questioning from the Chancellor and Home Secretary, led him to round on them by demanding-

1. CAB 27/648. p. 196.
2. CAB 27/648, p. 57.

'that if we did propose to send an army to the Continent in any circumstances, we should say so, in the past we had always ended up by sending an army to the Continent.'(1)

He obviously thought that history would repeat itself in the future. The memo of the G.S. was more explicit. It stated -

'events which have occurred during the successive phrases of the Czecho-Slovakian crisis have impressed on the General Staff the necessity for reviewing certain hypotheses on which the role of the Army is at present based. Outstanding amongst these events may be recorded :

a. The very marked desire of the French for the assistance of the British Army formations in the Continent.
b. The declaration by the Italian Foreign Minister to the British Ambassador on 28th September 1938 , that if war broke out, Italy.... would side actively and fully with Germany.
c. The decision of the Government to guarantee the future frontiers of Czech-Slovakia.

These recent developments have accentuated the need for speeding up and enlarging all our defensive preparations. The object of this paper is to review the role of the Field Army.'(2)

Sir John Simon argued that Belgium's neutrality and the considerable protection rendered by the Maginot Line, meant France did not need the help of a large B.E.F., however neutrality had not protected Belgium in 1914. He then came to the crux of the matter stating -

'that our military position had been substantially altered for the worse by the events of a month ago (i.e. The Munich Agreement.) by reason of the fact Czechoslovakia had been eliminated as a potential ally and the weight of the attack which Germany could bring to bear on France had been pro tanto-increased.'(3)

However the other members of the Committee were unable or unwilling to grasp the harsh realities of the Allies'

1. CAB 27/648,p.57
2. CAB 27/648,p.183.
3. CAB 27/648 p.58.

position. Kingsley Wood claimed that both the paper and memorandum where outside the Committee's terms of reference, viz.'to consider proposals for extending the scope of the defence programme and measures designed to accelerate production.'(1) Pownall, who was in attendance at the Committee shrewedly commented in his diary -

> 'No reasonable interpretation of the English language gives this impression, tho' they could not decide they were quite empowered to consider and advise the Cabinet, which they were doing on other matters.'(2)

Lord Gort argued that the G.S. were not advocating an army on the size of the larger European powers-

> 'even it these proposals were implemented, the forces available would fall far short of an army on the Continental scale, which is beyond our resources'(3)

Instead they were looking for a "general purpose" Regular Army (R.A.) which was ready to be sent to the Continent, Egypt or elsewhere and more training equipment for the Territorials.(4) However no amount on perspicacity by Lord Gort or Hore-Belisha could make other members of the Committee realise that the demise of Czechoslovakia made an early review of the Army vital to restoring the balance of power in the Allies' favour. After some discussion Sir Thomas Inskip, who was the least hostile, made a compromise proposal. He suggested Hore-Belisha should submit the paper to the C.I.D. This was readily agreed.

Sadly all this clearly illustrated that within the Cabinet Committee only the Secretary for War grasped that the

1. CAB 27/648.p.58
2. Pownall,p.168
3 & 4 CAB 27/648,p.60.

Munich Agreement had weakened the Allies, and this demanded that the re-equipment and expansion of our Army, outside its air defence role, now be given a much higher priority within the rearmament programme. Lord Halifax was to become the only immediate Cabinet ally of Hore-Belisha's viewpoint on the role of the Army.(1)

Admiralty Programme:

Not all matters discussed by the Acceleration Committee had led to such controversy. A report for the Admiralty, containing a number of significant proposals for curing the shortcomings of the Navy was rapidly agreed, subject to the usual higher approval.e.g.The Treasury or The Treasury Inter Service Committe (T.I.S.C.), (This committee is of permanent treasury officials and representatives of the Armed Services empowered to resolve queries concerning commercials contracts with firms under the rearmament programme.) These proposals included - immediate laying down of 10 escort vessels; construction of 12 small mine sweepers;purchase of 8-10 trawlers for conversion to anti-submarine work and mine sweeping; and joint discussion by the Admiralty and Air Ministry of the aircraft deficiencies of the Fleet Air Arm.(F.A.A.) (2)

Civil Defence Proposals:

A number of measures to improve Air Raid Precautions (A.R.P.) or Civil Defence (C.D.) were agreed with little

1. Roberts. Chapts.13 & 14.
2. For fuller datails see Appendix 4.

debate. It was proposed to recruit a substantial cadre who should be paid and employed full time on C.D. duties, whilst new statutory duties should be placed on Local Authorities and employers to extend the protection of the public against air raids. (1)

R.A.F. Expansion.

Kingsley Wood generated a heated discussion on his memorandum 'Relative Air Strengths and Proposals for the Improvement of the Country's Position. (1) He put his case for further expansion forthrightly, stating -

> There was no question but that a month ago (during the Czechoslovakian Crisis) German demands in the field of policy had gained enormously in strength, because everyone knew of the potentialities of air bombing which lay behind these demands. In his judgement the state of our Air Force had been our greatest anxiety at that time' (2)

Britain could reduce Germany's lead by concentrating production on a limited number of types, namely in fighter: Spitfire, Hurricane and Defiant and in bombers, the heavy two engined Manchester and the four engined Stirling and Halifax. Ultimately his aim was a programme of approximately 12,000 aircraft by April 1942. His immediate request was for authority to order 1,850 fighters, 750 Manchesters, 750 Stirlings and 250 Halifaxes and 2400 other types (which would include trainers.) (3) The Air Secretary calculated the Air Estimates would now rise during the years to 1939/40-£195million, 1940/41-£245 million, 1941/42-£180 million. (4)

1. My appendix 4, Section D.
2. CAB 27/648, p.34
3 & 4. CAB 27/648, p.36.

These proposals marked a small shift in emphasis from bombers to fighter aircraft for defence. Predicting critism he stated-

> 'Such a figure as these had, however, to be balanced against the cost of a major war. It might be fairly said that an Air Force of this size was ...was the only effective deterrent to war.'(1)

He believed that these proposals were not beyond British industrial capacity and revealed that effective steps had recently been taken to increase the country's production capacity .In fact these measures did lead aircraft deliveries to rise, reaching 781 in September 1939.(2)
In response the Chancellor of Exchequer launched a sustained attack on Sir Kingsley Wood's proposals stating these might have 'literally stupendous results on the stability of the country'.(3) Further questioning revealed that the 12,000 aircraft proposed were making a grand total of 29000.(4) Sir John Simon was quick to point out the heavy bombers proposed were much more expensive than the medium bombers. However the Air Secretary countered outlining the advantages the heavy bombers had in bombload (i.e.2½to4 times as great), in range and defensive armament over the medium bombers. The Chancellor responded by stating higher expenditure would arise from deploying the maximum number of heavy bombers by way of greater numbers of aerodromes, pilots and fuel consumption. Under this concerted opposition Sir Kingsley Wood agreed to circulate a memorandum answering these criticisms before their next meeting. Sir John Simon had won the first round. When the Committee reconvened on Mon.31st October that memorandum, which had been

1. CAB 27/648,p.36
2. M.M.Postan: British War Production.(London,1952(,p.484, hereafter Postan
3. CAB 27/648,p.38.
4. My appendix 5 for breakdown of figures.

circulated during the weekend break, was placed before them. 'Considerations effecting the Design of the Ideal Bomber Aircraft for the Royal Air Force.' (1) The Chancellor suggested to save the Committee time, it would be best to adjourn the discussion on this memo and the paper on 'Relative Air Strengths' inorder that he and Sir Kingsley may discuss them in private. This was agreed. These two Cabinet Ministers were subsequently unable to reach any private agreement on this matter and it was therefore passed on for the Cabinet to resolve at their meeting of 7th November.

Deterrance Abandoned:

On 7th November the Cabinet had before them a lengthy report from the Committee on Defence Programmes and Acceleration (C.D.P.A.), accompanied by several weighty papers. However most items were resolved without much debate. e.g The Admiralty's proposals, but disagreement arose over the proposals for expansion of the R.A.F. which was reflected in the hard fought debate which followed. Sir Kingsley Wood argued that at the time of the Czechoslovakian crisis ' our weakness in the air was the cause of great anxiety to the country.'(2) He proposed to increase our first line fighter strength by 30% which he thought would reassure the public that a big effort was being made. The Air Secretary then stated ' the bomber force was the best deterrent to avoid war. Further, a heavy bomber programme afforded the best means of enabling this country to get on level terms with Germany.'(3) He had made the point that 'one could not have a team

1. CAB 27/648, Item No.27.
2 & 3. AIR 8/250.

composed only of goal keepers.'(1) and repeated 'that we should (also) have sufficient bomber force to ensure that any country wishing to attack us would realise that the game was not worth a candle.'(2) There is no evidence to suggest that either Erhard Milch, Goring or Hitler held any fear of Bomber Command.(3)The British Government's desire to attempt to maintain numerical parity of the R.A.F. with the Luftwaffe had led to 'window dressing'.i.e. production of large numbers of light bombers (the Fairey Battle) which were of limited value as a deterrent or otherwise.

However deterrence was about to be abandoned, not by reason of logic, but because of economy and plain fear of a 'knock out blow.' A warning shot had already been sounded by Warren Fisher of the Treasury during the Munich Crisis. Air Marshall Freeman had written to Fisher on 29th September 1938 seeking Treasury approval to order 1000 Hawker Hurricane fighters. Fisher replied next day giving his approval and commented -

> 'I hope this may infer that the Air Staff are seriously reconsidering the relationship between the bombers and fighters from the point of view of this country being the agressee'.(4)

Sir John Simon reiterated this view to the Cabinet on 7th November. He reminded his colleagues that the Government had embarked in 1937 on a five year rearmament programme of £1,500m, whereas the cost of the programme as now presented would be over £2,000m and it might well be £2,100m for the quinqennium.(5). The Chancellor doubted if it was within Britain's power to raise the necessary

1. CAB 27/648,p.37.
2. AIR 8/250
3. Richard Overy:Goring -The Iron Man,(London,1984), hereafter Goring.
4. Peden,p.133.
5. AIR 8/250.

£1,400m over the next three years. Summing up, he stated-

> ' he was by no means clear that if we were to adopt the programme now proposed we should get through without .....some real injury to our financial strength, which constituted a fourth arm of defence.'(1)

He therefore proposed-

> 'that special emphasis should be laid on the Fighter part of the programmes and that orders should be placed forthwith for one-half of the total fighter programmes. As regards Bombers....sufficient orders should be placed to avoid substantial dismissal in the aircraft factories concerned, and to secure an adequate flow of production.'(2)

Only the Minister of Health, Walter Elliot, subsequently spoke in favour of the proposals stating that-

> 'It might be necessary that we should make a supreme effort in this direction even if it meant borrowing £1,000m.'(3)

The Lord Chancellor, Home Secretary, Minister for Co-Ordination of Defence and the Prime Minister all supported Sir John's proposal.

As on numerous occasions since May 1937, Chamberlain stamped his authority on the debate and emphasised that the proposal for 3,700 fighters could only be interpreted as a defensive measure. Whereas the heavy bomber programme could be seen as an offensive weapon. The P.M. was still bending over backwards to appease Hitler, despite the Germans continuing to expand their squadrons of bombers and ground attack aircraft. Although German policy was to build large numbers of twin engined medium bombers,Chamberlain feared that our heavy bomber programme would start an arms race similar to that of the dreadnoughts at the beginning of the century and that Germany might produce a 'super' Halifax. In fact Hitler

1, 2 & 3. AIR 8/250.

had ordered a massive expansion of Germany's medium bomber force.(1) Chamberlain administered his coup de grace stating that four fighters could be produced for the price of one heavy bomber, i.e. the new fighter programme would cost £45m compared with £175m for the bomber programme. The Cabinet then agreed to the Chancellors proposal.(2)

Following the reprieve of the Munich Agreement, the Premier had turned more towards 'hoping for the best' rather than 'preparing for the worst'. Proposals by the C.D.P.A. were only accepted if they either fell within existing programmes, or could only be interpreted as defensive measures and thus would not offend Hitler or halt the policy of appeasement. Consequently proposals to increase anti-aircraft guns, fighter aircraft and escort vessels were all approved. Scaling down the heavy bomber programme now restricted Britain's option in the event of a major war in Europe. The thesis of the Chancellor that our financial strength was the fourth arm of defence had become a circular argument of tautology. Hitler realised that he could not afford Britain the time to build up her resources and those of the Commonwealth. Ironically, the diversion of Hore-Belisha'a paper on 'The Role of the Army' into the proverbial 'siding' reduced Britain's opportunity to assist France and deny the Germans airfield and naval bases in the Low Countries. Without these facilities, Hitler could not launch the 'knock out blow' against Britain, which the Prime Minister and his colleagues so greatly feared. Hore-Belisha was now facing the daunting task of persuading Chamberlain and his supporters to abandon their policy of limited liability.

1. Goring,Chapt.4.
2. CAB 23/96,Meeting No.51 (1938)

CHAPTER 3.

Debate on Strategic Priorities: Nov. 1938-Jan. 1939.

'Limited Liability' Under Attack.

In September 1938, Britain had only been willing to send two poorly equipped divisions to help France, in addition to the prospect of our Advanced Air Striking Force of mainly obsolescent light bomber aircraft. By the end of January 1939, the British Government had accepted a German invasion of Holland as a *cassus belli*. This chapter describes the events and forces which obliged Chamberlain to make such a crucial change in policy.

We saw that the recommendations of the Committee on Defence Programmes and Acceleration, which were accepted by the Cabinet on 7th November did little to rectify the serious deficiencies of the Army, whilst Hore-Belisha's paper on the 'Role of the Army' was referred to the C.I.D.. Chamberlain's viewpoint is clearly shown by a statement in the House of Commons on 1st November.-

> 'It must be remembered that we are not today in the same position as we were in 1914, in this respect: that we are not now contemplating the equipment of an army on a continental scale.'(1)

In complete contrast Henry Pownall Director of Military Operation & Intelligence (D.M.O.& I.), had noted in his diary on 3rd October-

> 'The ruin of Czechoslovakia does not improve the military position, far from it. She ...has all the greater forces to turn to the West..The first and main lesson is that we

1.Bond,BMP,p.287.

> must expect to have to send troops to help the French. The G.S. have consistently held this view and now is the time to raise the whole question again.' (1)

Chamberlain and Halifax were to have conversations in Paris with their French counterparts between 23rd and 25th November. Pownall decided to capitalise on the situation-

> ' I had Willie Fraser, Military Attache in Paris, over during the week. We much hope that when when the P.M. and Halifax return.... they will be more receptive to the idea of sending troops to France - and be prepared to pay for preparing the troops for that role. General Dentz....said that England must realise that 'effort financier' is not enough; we must be prepared to make an 'effort du sang.' The fact is, the French won't stand unless we are ready to support them...I told Fraser to have a nice chat with Petibon..... and to make hints... that such questions might be raised during the discussions. (2)

Coincidentally during November correspondence appeared in The Times debating whether Britain should have a 'Continental Commitment.' Sir Auckland Geddes, Director of Recruiting at the War Office 1916-17, Minister of National Service 1917-19, had written strongly opposing any large scale commitment of troops by Britain to assist France in any future war. Opposing the policy of limited liability was a correspondent using the pseudonym 'Civilian'. (3) As Brian Bond comments-

> The French feared, with some justice, that these letters represented a wide sector of British public opinion. The Foreign Office became alarmed lest France lose heart and make the best terms she could get from Germany.' (4)

Unfortunately nothing that Chamberlain said during his visit to Paris would reveal any change of heart regarding

1. Pownall, p.164.
2. Pownall. p.170.
3. Enquiries with The Times & the Bodlian Library, Oxford, which holds the papers of Geoffrey Dawson, Editor of The Times in 1938, failed to reveal the identity of 'Civilian'.
4. Bond. BMP., p.291.

increasing the British Field Force above the miserable twodivisions offered during the Munich Crisis. Pownall's intrigue had failed in respect of the P.M.,for, after stating to his French counterpart that Britain could not afford a large Army as well as a powerful Roval Navy and R.A.F., Chamberlain used the occasion to impress on the French that they must accelerate the expansion and modernisation of their airforce.(1) Prof.Gibbs points out-

> 'In the end Mr.Chamberlain agreed to further staff talks, without committing himself to any but the vaguest definition of their scope.'(2)

Pownall complained bitterly about the French P.M. in his diary, recording that -

> 'Daladier hardly pressed at all and said he realised that England could not do more now on land but it would be nice is the two divisions could appear in eight days (instead of twenty-one)... but this was out of the question as it took eight days to get the shipping together.'(3)

All was not lost however, for the Foreign Secretary had taken account of the French feeling that Britain must support her with a larger field force. Lord Halifax indicated his concern for French opinion at the C.I.D. on 15th December when it discussed the paper on 'The Role of the Army'.(4)

Strategical issues had been raised in both Hore-Belisha's and the G.S. papers which the S.S.W. realised would still remain unacceptable to his Cabinet colleagues. As a consequence Hore-Belisha decided to prepare a new paper for the C.I.D.. What emerged from the Secretary for War's

1. Gibbs.pp.493-494.
2. Gibbs.p.494.
3. Pownall.p.171.
4. see previous chapter.

dilegence was a concise document (1) which clearly avoided strategic issues. Disingenuously Hore-Belisha claimed he was not seeking to change the role of the Army, previously agreed by the Cabinet, but merely to make good deficiencies which prevented the performance of its existing role. However the G.S. had realised that defence of France must now be the first, rather than the fourth priority of the Army and Hore-Belisha reluctantly accepted this argument whilst cautiously attempting to convert his Cabinet colleagues. His memorandum (2) made five requests with a total cost of £81 million. He was seeking not only to reverse the cut of £70m in the W.O.plan, which had been accepted in April 1938 but to add a further £11m. As Professor Gibbs outlines:

> 'Hore-Belisha emphasised three points. First that "in the light of their memories of the early days of the Last War," it was inconceivable that the further contingents of the Field Force should be allowed to remain deficient of both units and ammunition as they were by the decisions of the previous spring. Second, that there was no authority to supply the requirements of the 18 units in Palestine; the War Office, in order to supply the day to day needs of these battalions had had to borrow vehicles and ammunition from units of the Field Force. This was, he argued an "intolerable situation". Finally, no equipment had been authorised for the Territorial Army (excluding the anit-aircraft divisions) beyond the bare minimum for training needs.' (3)

Despite the soundness of Hore-Belisha's arguments he received a hostile reception. Chamberlain was absent but the Home Secretary carried his torch by vigorously upholding that the anti aircraft defence of Britain was the principal role of the Army, whilst the Chancellor of the Exchequer claimed he had not sufficient time to study

1. CAB 24/282. 'The State of Preparedness of the Army....Its Role.' and my Appendix 6.
2. CAB 2/8,341st Meeting of the C.I.D.,p.4-5, and my Appendix 6.

these important items of expenditure. However the Foreign Secretary conceded some doubts as to the validity of the policy of 'Limited Liability'.Lord Halifax, mentioning the Anglo French conversations stated -

> 'the French pressed very strongly, the necessity for a contribution by Great Britain on land and that both our Ambassador and Military Attache in Paris were emphatic that the French would return to the charge on the subject....he was bound to point out that a time might come, when the French would cease to be enthusastic about their relations with Gt.Britain, if they were left with the impression that it was they who must bear the brunt of the fighting and slaughter on land.'(1)

The Foreign Secretary was to play a crucial role in later persuading his Cabinet colleagues to abandon their isolationist policy of limited liability. In the meantime Hore-Belisha played for time by suggesting his paper be referred to the Chiefs of Staff (C.O.S.) Sub Committee. This was quickly agreed.

Before the C.O.S. met on 21st December, Lord Gort wisely circulated his G. S. paper on 'The State of Preparedness of the Army.' (2) the memorandum which Hore-Belisha had witheld from the C.I.D. on 15th December. Gort had stated that the General Staff-

> 'do not envisage the creation of an army on the Continental scale, but in order that the Army may fulfil its agreed commitments, it is necessary to create a "general purpose" Army in the true sense of the term, fitted for war against a first class Power, either in Europe or elsewhere.' (3)

What may be regarded as the crux of the paper appeared in the Strategic Factors section, namely -

> 'The effect, military and moral, of despatching (to the Continent) an effective and well equipped British Field Force may again (as it had in 1914) play a decisive part in

1. Gibbs,p.494 and CAB 2/8 C.I.D. 341st Meeting.
2. CAB 53/34, C.O.S.811.
3. CAB 53/34, C.O.S.811.p.12.

> stabilizing the situation and so gaining time to develop the strength of the Empire. We can win a long war. The German General Staff, realizing our latent strength, may be expected to pin their faith on winning a short war. We must make sure that they do not succeed.'(1)

When the C.O.S. convened on 21st December, Gort reiterated the five requests of Hore-Belisha's memorandum. Air Chief Marshall Sir Cyril Newall, Chief of Air Staff (C.A.S.), who chaired the meeting, was hostile to these proposals, in particular those for equipping the Territorial divisions for war, as this would be the opening of the door 'to unlimited expansion of land warfare,' to which he was opposed.'(2) Whilst the Chief of Naval Staff, (C.N.S.) Admiral Sir Roger Backhouse, conceded that the Regular Army must be properly equipped, he thought that our army contingent to France would have to be restricted to what numbers could be voluntarily recruited by the Regular Army and Territorials. Gort realising that he was making little progress shrewdly raised the issue of the defence of the Channel ports and the airfields of the Low Countries. This had the desired effect and after an acrimonious discussion Backhouse was stung into responding that Allied control of the English Channel had been crucial in the 1914-18 War, and would again be vital, particularly in preventing German submarine and torpedo craft attacks on our shipping. Gort had won an ally and Newall acquiesced in his colleagues' wish to continue the discussion after the Christmas holidays.

Before the Chiefs of Staffs met again on 18th January two developments significantly influenced the outcome of the

1. CAB 53/34.C.O.S. 811.p.7.
2. CAB 53/10.C.O.S. 265.p.11.

debate on strategic priorities. Firstly our Ambassador in Paris had despatched, to the Foreign Office (F.O.), a number of reports from Colonel William Fraser. The crux of his reports was that the Munich Agreement had deprived France of a substantial ally, Czecholsovakia, with an army of thirty five divisions and that the French G.S. now saw Britain as her only source for a compensatory land force.

Fraser also pointed out the diminished effectiveness of an Allied naval blockade against Germany. This was not only an outcome of Hitler's policy of self sufficiency, but as a consequence of the Munich Agreement, which had removed Czechoslovakia as a barrier to German ambitions of domination of South-Eastern Europe and its raw materials, e.g. Roumanian oil.

The second development was a series of reports from our intelligence sources in Germany (1) that Hitler was planning either an air attack on the United Kingdom or an invasion of Holland. In particular, Ivone Kirkpatrick, our Charge d'Affaire to Germany, had returned from Berlin in mid-December with a rumour that Hitler was planning a surprise air strike against London on or near 21st February (2). A threat of a 'knock-out blow' against London could not be ignored. Pownall recalls that Chamberlain had convened a meeting at short notice to discuss the reports and initiated contingency plans. (3) Again this fear was to shape British strategic policy. Pownall states-

'The P.M. said that this scheme of Hitler's did not tally

1. Hinsley. pp. 82-83. and Patricia Meeham: The Unnecessary War- Whitehall and the German Resistance to Hitler. (London, 1992), pp. 198-199, hereafter Meeham.
2. Roberts. p. 127.
3. Pownall. p174.

> with his impression of Hitler's next move... However that might be he did not think we should disregard this warning and he directed Service Departments and Sir John Anderson * to examine and report on any measures that can immediately be taken to improve our defensive position as on 1st March 1939'(1)

One consequence was a further impetus to the actions after Munich for the early completion of Britain's chain of radar stations. In the contect of changing the role of the Army, the threat of a great surprise German attack in the Spring of 1939 was to be crucial. A first step on that path was the decision to refer these intelligence reports to the Foreign Policy Committee (F.P.C.), who in turn invited the C.O.S. for consultation.

Before the F.P.C. had met, the C.O.S. had reconvened on 18th January to continue their deliberations. Backhouse had obviously taken on board the reports from our Military Attache in Paris, since the C.N.S. reiterated Fraser's point that -

> 'The German population was twice as much as the French, if the colonial Empire was excluded.'(2)

The C.N.S. adds-

> 'Italy had a population of 45,000,000 and the two combined would therefore have a perponderance over France of about three to one' and if we did not give full support to her 'the French would decline to undertake a war against such odds (and this) would in the end prove fatal to us. Germany would dominate the Continent and (this) would enable her in the end to bear us down'.(3)

In the light of such cogent argument, Newall,C.A.S., reluctantly agreed to Hore-Belisha's proposal for equipment for the Army. During the meeting, Sir Edward Bridges, Secretary to the Cabinet, made the point that -

1. Pownall.p.174
2. CAB 53/10.C.O.S.268th Meeting,p.5.
3. CAB 53/10.C.O.S.268th Meeting,p.5.

'If we do not now increase industrial capacity so as to be able to equip a greater army than now authorised, we shall be unable to expand our forces in any way when war breaks out until such capacity has been created.'(1)

The C.O.S. agreed and asked their Secretary to take this in to consideration in the draft report requested. This report was a landmark in British strategy since it clearly indicated the need to break with the policy of limited liability. It made the point that since Munich the military balance on the Continent had changed for the worst for France, and the French were only too aware of this. France now looked to Britain for assistance and-

'It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that such assistance may have to include support by land forces if only for the moral effect which would thereby be produced on the French nation.'(2)

Whilst co-operation in the defence of the territories of our allies had, until now, been only fourth in the priorities of the Army, agreed by the Cabinet in 1937, the C.O.S. Report concluded-

'that if France were over-run by Germany and forced to her knees, not only would the further prosecution of the war be compromised but we should have already failed in one of the main objects for which we entered the war, namely the defence of France.'(3)

Security of Great Britain was the first priority for the Army but the report pointed out -

'If we do not have land forces available to take the field in the first year of war, not only may we lose the war, through being unable to counter the enemy's major offensive but we may be prevented from seizing good opportunities for offensive action overseas. Failure to take advantage of such

1. CAB 53/10.C.O.S.268th Meeting, p.11.
2. CAB 53/44.C.O.S.827,p.10.
3. CAB 53/44,C.O.S.827,p.11.

opportunities may greatly lengthen the duration of the war.(1)

With regard to the composition of our land forces they not only agreed with the W.O. proposals on the strength and equipment of the Field Force but added the recommendation-

'that industrial capacity should be set up and orders placed in peace to ensure that the provision of war equipment and reserves for four Territorial Divisions will be completed in four months after the outbreak of war.(2)

This C.O.S. report was published on 25th January and the next day the F.P.C. convened to discuss German aggression against Holland, and a paper setting out the C.O.S. conclusions were crucial in framing the decisions of the F.P.C. Therefore I quote the C.O.S. conclusions in some detail. They stated-

'On purely strategic grounds, therefore we have reached the conclusion that, if our defensive preparations were reasonably complete, we should have no doubt in advising that the integrity of Holland constitutes so vital a strategic interest to this country that we should intervene in the event of aggression by Germany against Holland. The only doubt in our mind arises from the present strength of our defensive preparations.....Nevertheless, the strategical importance to the British Empire of Holland and her colonies is so great that a German attack on Holland must, in our opinion, be regarded as an attack on our own interests... and would be the first step in giving Germany a great initial advantage in a subsequent attack on this country. Overseas, the destruction of Dutch Authority in the East Indies would weaken our position throughout the Far East.'(3)

The C.O.S. thought our intention in support of the Dutch -

'would almost inevitably bring Italy and possibly Japan against us.'(4)

Since France was our only likely major ally in such a war

1. CAB 53/44 C.O.S.827.p.11.
2. CAB 53/44.C.O.S.827,p.17.
3 & 4. Gibbs.p.500, CAB 27/624.p.1.

'The ultimate outcome of the conflict might well depend upon the intervention of other Powers, in particular of the United States of America.'(1)

However, if we did not intervene this-

'would seriously undermine our position in the eyes of the Dominions and the world in general.'(2)

and the C.O.S. were forced to back the conclusion that we had-

'no choice but to regard a German invasion of Holland as a direct challenge to our security.'(3)

Chamberlain chaired the F.P.C. meeting. Many senior members of the Cabinet were also present and the most forceful contributions were made by the Foreign Secretary and Malcolm McDonald, Secretary for the Dominions. Lord Halifax stated-

'that failure on our part to intervene(if Germany attacked Holland) would undermine our position in the world and would only mean that at some later stage we should have to face the same struggle with fewer friends and in far worse circumstances.'(4)

Malcolm MacDonald firmly believed that-

'If invasions of Holland evoked no response from this country, the Dominions would conclude that our sun had set.'(5)

Chamberlain, perhaps with some reluctance, agreed with these views, whilst the others fell in behind. Amongst the F.P.C. recommendations and conclusions (6) was an agreement to have Staff Conversations with the French and Belgians, proposal to move two Regular Anti-Aircraft Regiments from Lichfield to London and that a Special Cabinet meeting be held on 2nd February to discuss Hore - Belisha's and the C.O.S. papers on 'The State of Preparedness of the Army in relation to its Role.' Not only was the Army to receive greater consideration in our

1-3. Gibbs,p.500,CAB 27/624,p.1.
4. CAB 27/624,p.4.
5. CAB 27/624,p.5.
6. see my appendix 7.

rearmament policy, but it was agreed

> 'that if Germany should invade Holland(and Holland resists) this country must go to war with Germany.'(1)

Formal Cabinet approval to the F.P.C. recommendation that a German attack on Holland was a casus belli was given on 1st February 1939. Lord Halifax had again made forceful presentation. A crucial change had been made in British strategic policy. The C.O.S. had advised in September 1938 -

> 'that, from the military point of view, time was in our favour, and that if war with Germany has to come, it would be better to fight her in say 6-12 months time.'(2)

Now in less than six months - Britain was prepared to go to war on behalf of the Netherlands. What had changed?.

Since Munich, the Foreign Secretary had grasped the messages coming from the French, that Britain must make her Army available on the Continent, to make recompense for the loss of Czechoslovakia's Army. If we did not assent to French requests, then they might make their own agreement with Germany, which may well prove a disaster for the British Empire. At the W.O.,Pownall had persuaded Hore-Belisha that in the near future, we should have to send our troops across the Channel, whether we liked it or not, and it was better that they were properly equipped for Continental warfare, otherwise they would be slaughtered and the Government would fall. Whilst-

> Opinion within the Dominion governments in September 1938, with the exception of New Zealand, had been even more isolationist than the British.In the formers eyes, they had even more justification in claiming the issue of the Sudetenland was'a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing.'(3)

1. CAB 27.624,p.24.
2. 21/544,p.6.- Note on the question of whether it would be to our military advantage to fight Germany now, or postpone the issue.
3. From Chamberlain's radio broadcast.27th Sept.'38. Roberts,p.120.

However a threat against Holland and its colonies was a different matter. Dutch speaking South Africe would perceive this as endangering their spiritual homeland; French Canada would be aroused by what they would see as a German manoeuvre to outflank France, whilst Australia and New Zealand interpreted any menance to the Dutch East Indies as also endangering their security.

Michael Howard (1) states the C.O.S. had carried out a remarkable volte-face. Sir Roger Backhouse gave forceful advocary of the importance of protecting the Channel Ports (and airfields) which, had rendered untenable the C.A.S. position as the sole remaining supporter of limited liability.

The change of incumbents within the C.O.S. had been a major factor in this change of policy. General Ismay had replaced Sir Maurice Hankey as Secretary to the C.I.D. and had come to the view that-

> 'The Low Countries and Northern France, in the hands of an enemy, would constitute bases for air and sea attack, which would directly threaten our very existence'. (2)

The C.I.D. Secretary made the further significant points -

> 'Left unaided, they (the French) may not go to the help of Belgium. The Belgium Army and to an even greater extent, the Dutch Army, would be incapable of holding back the German Armies for long.' (3)

A major factor in persuading both the C.O.S. and leading members of the Government to abandon 'limited liability' was their shared obsession of a 'knock out blow' against Britain by the Luftwaffe. Members of the F.P.C would have -

1. Michael Howard: The Continental Commitment-The Dilemma of British Defence Policy in the era of Two World Wars. (London, 1972), p.127, hereafter Howard.
2. CAB 53/34,C.O.S.811,p.6.
3. CAB 53/34,C.O.S.811,p.5.

However Hore-Belisha still had not received Cabinet approval for his paper requesting the necessary equipment for a continental field force. This was the logical consequence of such a strategic policy. No decisions were made as to how manpower was to be provided or whether the Territorial Army should be expanded or conscription introduced, or both. Within the Government only Hore-Belisha had grasped that a Ministry of Supply was now necessary, before the outbreak of war. A process which might be called the 'Rebirth of the Army' was now about to begin.

Corrigenda.

Please note, regretfully page 66 is bound after page 67.

seen the paper, COS 811, by Ismay who raised a chilling prospect that -

> 'Whatever range aircraft may attain in the future, it will still be true that the scale of air attack on this country will be vastly increased by the loss to an enemy of the Low Countries or Northern France. The establishment of air bases so close to the shores would increase the frequency of attacks and enable relatively untrained pilots to reach and bomb London and our Midland towns.'(1)

Sir Alexander Cadogan, direct advisor of the Foreign Secretary reinforces this point recording-'the F.P.C. didn't pooh pooh our paper and were quite prepared to face risk of German attack'(2)

Uri Bialer succinctly states-

> 'so convincing and so disturbing were the reports that the Government requested Staff talks with the French, something which the C.O.S. had hitherto consistently and vehemently opposed.'(3)

Limited liability was being abandoned, because the Cabinet feared that the French thought we would not despatch, in the words of Ismay-

> 'an efficient and well equipped British field force.'(4)

They might make their own treaty with Germany, leaving Belgium and Holland to the mercy of Hitler. Should Hitler seize those two countries he would be well placed to launch a 'knock out blow' against London and the Midlands. If we did not support the Low Countries against such an invasion, the Dominions would be extremely reluctant to back Britain in any subsequent hostilities.

1. CAB 53/34.C.O.S.811.p.6.
2. David Dilks:The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan 1938-1945. (London,1971),p.140, hereafter Cadogan.
3. Bialer,p.159.
4. CAB 53/34,C.O.S.811,p.7.

CHAPTER 4.

REBIRTH OF THE ARMY.

We saw in the preceding chapter how the Cabinet had ended its policy of isolationism. However, it had not grasped the consequences of this step. This chapter relates how Hore-Belisha had to fight to extend the role of the Army by gaining Cabinet approval for the paper entitled 'The State of Preparedness of the Army in Relation to its Role.' He was aided by pressure from France, significant support for the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, and a ground swell of support in Parliament and the country, which gained momentum with the German occupation of Prague on 15th March 1939. I show the important contributions made by Anglo-French Staff talks, the C.O.S. Strategic Appreciation and the fear of a German suprise air attack, in persuading Chamberlain to expand the British Army. Hitlers seizure of Prague would lead the P.M. to lessen his emphasis on remedying German grievances, and try instead to avert war, by deterring Germany with greater British rearmament and the prospect of a war on two fronts.

FIRST ROUND.

On the same day as the momentous meeting of our F.P.C., 26th January, the French Chamber of Deputies (their House of Commons) was concluding a debate on their foreign policy, during which three votes of confidence in the French Government were taken. George Bonnet, the French Secretary had declared -

'Friendship with Britain, was the basis of French policy. In

the event of war. all British forces would be at the disposal of France and vice versa..The Munich Agreement had averted a terrible adventure for France and the rest of Europe. During that crisis we were able to appreciate the value and loyalty of Anglo French friendship. This is the cornerstone of French policy... All forces of Great Britain would then be at our disposal , just as all the forces of France would be at the disposal of Great Britain.'(1)

Bonnet's statement obviously had the immediate objective of allaying any fears with the French Parliament, that Britain would not support France and thus won votes of confidence in the French Government. However, the French Foreign Minister was seeking a public statement of military support from the British Government, to satisfy French public opinion and a confidential commitment from the British. of a timetable for Anglo French Staff Talks to discuss how Britain would come to the support of her European ally.
Chamberlain's initial response was guarded,. A House of Commons debate on foreign affairs took place on 31st January,during which the P.M. stated -

'our relations with France are, perhaps closer and more intimate than they have been in our recollection. More than that they are solidly based on mutual confidence.'(2)

On 2nd February, a special Cabinet meeting was held to discuss reports from Hore-Belisha and the G.S. on the 'State of Preparedness of the Army'. The views of the French played a key role in this debate.
Hore-Belisha claimed that he was only attempting to assist the army to achieve its existing role more effectively and that these proposals were 'modest'. However when questioned by Chamberlain, he admitted that his proposals went beyond the decision of 1938, suggesting the Field Force be equipped for continental warfare. Hore-Belisha made a valid point that-

'the General Staff were now greatly perturbed lest some situation might arise, committing British Troops to undue and unnecessary risks as at present equipped.'(3)

1. The Times. 27th Jan.1939.
2. East Anglian Daily Times. 1st Feb.1939.,p.7.
3. Colvin,p.183.

However, neither the P.M. or the Chancellor were initially prepared to accept the urgency of these proposals which would cost an additional £81 million. Chamberlain responded-

> 'This is a rather new conception. The Secretary of State for War has described his proposals as modest. Far larger proposals could, of course, have been submitted. It is clear that an unanswerable case could be made out for increased armaments in every arm, if the financial aspect of the proposal is ignored. But finance cannot be ignored, since our financial strength is one of our strongest weapons in any war which is not in over a short time.'(1)

The P.M. was being economical with the truth in describing the proposals as a 'new conception', since a very similar paper had been referred by the Cabinet to the C.I.D. in the previous December. Whilst advocating the Inskip doctrine of finance being Britain's fourth arm of defence in a long war, Chamberlain ignored the harsh reality that if Germany seized the Low Countries and the Channel Ports in a rapid attack, Britain and France might then be in a very weak position. They might be unable to hold off Hitler until aid arrived from the Dominions and hopefully the United States. The P.M. was trying to go back on the logic of the F.P.C.'s decision to protect Holland as the first line of defence of Great Britain. The Chancellor backed Chamberlain stating-

> 'The proposals..now under discussion are.. broadly equivalent to the whole cost of the Army in 1938-1939. Next year the Army Estimates will stand at about £160 million, and the total for the three Defence services will be over £500 million. But where is the money to come from? There are limitations to what we can borrow...Further...the defence forces now being equipped will cost an annual figure (£300 million) far in excess of any figure which we have ever raised out of revenue to meet defence services.'(2)

After referring to the difficulties we had in the autumn

1. Roger Parkinson: 'Peace For Our Time-Munich to Dunkirk-the inside story', (London, 1971), p.99, hereafter Parkinson.
2. Parkinson, p.100.

of 1938, protecting the exchange value of the pound, the Chancellor gloomily concluded -

> 'We might be faced with a financial crisis as grave as that of 1931, but with the foreign situation, far more worse.' (1)

Just as the weight of argument seemed to be against Hore-Belisha, Halifax intervened. The Foreign Secretary, having received a reply from France following our request for wider staff talks stressed the sensitivity of French feeling on this issue.-

> 'Surely,... Britain could risk borrowing money in these exceptional circumstances:either war would come soon or the Nazi regime would collapse. He allegedly said he would sooner be bankrupt in peace than beaten in a war against Germany.' (2)

Oliver Stanley, President of the Board, stepped in to support Halifax, stating the Foreign Secretary -

> 'had expressed what many of them were feeling. From one point of view we are already at war and have been for sometime... It is clear that some of the conditions under which we are now living cannot go on much longer - perhaps not for another year - and the present is probably the crucial year.' (3)

Walter Elliott, Minister of Health, made a key point that whatever steps were taken as to the role of the Army, Britain would have to act as arsenal in time of war. He suggested that s decision about creating an increased war potential (which would meet Hore-Belisha's proposals) should be taken at once. (4)

Halifax's contribution led to a compromise. It was agreed to supply all twelve territorial divisions with a full scale of training equipment whilst the other proposals were referred to an ad hoc group of Simon, Hore-Belisha, Chatfield,the new Minister for Co-Ordination of Defence

1. Parkinson.p.100.
2. Bond,BMP.,p.300.
3. CAB 23/97,meeting of 2.2.39.
4. Gibbs.p.511.

and Chamberlain, who was to act as Chairman. Again Chamberlain had deferred a decision on a matter of strategic importance in order that time was found for him, the Chancellor, or Treasury officials to whittle down the cost of the proposals. Despite the positive stance taken by some of his colleagues, the Prime Minister had displayed little sense of urgency over this crucial decision and valuable time was again wasted. Before they were able to report back to the Cabinet, the Prime Minister was publicly tested on the Government's support for France. A Labour Member of Parliament, (M.P.) Arthur Henderson, (son of the late and former Labour Cabinet member of the same name) asked Chamberlain on 6th February-

> 'Whether the recent statement of the French Foreign Minister, that in the case of war, the forces of Gt.Britain would be at the disposal of France just as all the forces of France would be at the disposal of Britain, was in accordance with the views of the Goverment? (1)

Replying the Prime Minister stated-

> 'This is in complete accordance with the views of His Majesties Government.....It is impossible to examine in detail all hypothetical cases which may arise, but I feel bound to make it plain that the solidarity with which the interests of France and this country are united is such that any threat to the vital interests of France, from whatever quarter it may come, must evoke the immediate co-operation of this country.'(2)

Chamberlain's response illustrates that he, however reluctantly, was shifting away from his former policy of limited liability. The favourable response shown in Britain, as well as in France, to Chamberlain's statement of Anglo-French solidarity is a clear indication that a significant change of public opinion had occured since the Munich Agreement. Sir Alexander Cadogan recorded in his diary for 7th February, 'P.M. statement yesterday has gone very well. It may be a turning point.'(3)

1&2. The Times, 7th Feb. 1939.
3. Cadogan. p. 147.

Brian Bond rightly points to the shift in opinion within the Opposition in the House (1) and the unrest of a section of the backbenchers on the Conservative side. A faction centred around younger M.P.'s, such as Robert Boothy and Harold Macmillian openly advocated conscription. Writing in 1978, Lord Boothby claimed that 'I was the first man in public life to advocate, in my constituency, compulsory national service'.(2) and this he claimed, happened as early as January 1938.

In November 1938, Harold Macmillan had published a pamphlet, 'The Price of Peace.'(3) This attacked the Munich Agreement for turning the balance of power in Europe in favour of Nazi Germany. He advocated greater rearmament by Britain,accompanied by an Anglo French alliance with the Soviet Union. Unfortunately Macmillian represented very much a minority view at that time within the Conservative Party and its allies in the National Government. A wider section within the Conservatives grouped around Leo Amery, favoured introducing a milder solution, through a form of compulsory national service training.(4) However, Chamberlain and his Minister of Labour, Ernest Brown* ardently opposed any form of compulsory military service or training. Both knew that the Trade Union Congress (T.U.C.) and the Labour Party had expressed vehement opposition to conscription, believing it would lead to conscription of labour.i.e. direct government control of the nation's workforce. The P.M. and Minister of Labour were concerned that conscription would alienate the labour movement to the extent of seriously undermining the rearmament programme, and the expansion of the R.A.F. in particular.

1. Bond BMP.,p.301.
2. Lord Robert Boothby:'Boothby Recollections of a Rebel'. (London,1978),p.126,hereafter Boothby.
3. Harold Macmillan,'Winds of Change 1914-1939',(London,1966), Appendix 4.,hereafter Macmillan.
4. Bond BMP.,p.301.

On the other hand the Government had been critised for not providing adequate guidance to the thousands of volunteers who had come forward during and after the Munich Crisis, offering their services to either the regular armed forces or the auxilaries, e.g. the T.A.,or Civil Defence. Piece meal recruitment could lead to persons whose existing work would become 'reserved occupations' e.g. those employed in the aircraft and armaments industries or agriculture, would no longer be available for that employment when hostilities began. As a solution the Government decided on a National Service Appeal (N.S.A.). Since the appeal emphasised voluntary service it gained all party support and that of the T.U.C.(1) Chamberlain made a radio broadcast on 23rd January launching the Appeal, and an all party rally was held the following evening at the Albert Hall in London. Twenty million N.S.A.handbooks were printed, for delivery to every household in the country, within a few days of the broadcast, but unfortunately many booklets were not delivered until several days later.-

> 'Their design was uninspiring and the order of priorities....hardly corresponded to the sense of urgency....felt throughout the country. The needs of the Regular Army...were dealt with only very briefly.'(2)

The amateurish manner in which the N.S.A. had been handled would catch up with the Government before the end of March.

A good example of the change in opinion outside Parliament regarding the role of our Army, was the generally hostile reception given to articles in The Times of 7th & 8th February 1939, by its military correspondent, Basil Liddell Hart. These articles entitled,'An Army across the

1. Peter Dennis:'The Territorial Army 1906-1940'.(Boydell Press,1987),p.235, hereafter Dennis.
2. Dennis,p.236.

Channel' were widely interpreted as a defence of 'limited liability' and consequently critised for allegedly taking such a stance.(1) To be fair, the correspondent wrote the articles in the autumn of 1938, but the editor had held them back. Liddell Hart quickly realised that our abandonment of Czechoslovakia at Munich had turned the balance of power in favour of Germany. He believed that it would help France more if Britain despatched mechanised units, e.g. tanks, as opposed to large numbers of infantry divisions, shades of 1918, as the former would provide a qualitive improvement to the French position, whereas the latter would likely be under equipped and under trained. Following up a suggestion by Liddell Hart, the Secretary for War had proposed that the mobile division be reorganised into two small divisions.(2)

Between the Cabinet meeting of 2nd February and their report to Cabinet 22nd February, the ad hoc committee on the Army met twice(3), but no minutes of these two meetings appear to have survived. Pownall recorded in his diary for the week commencing 6th February -

> 'on Friday this week H.B. had a conference with the P.M.,Simon and Chatfield...(H.B. is now fighting gallantly for the F.F. and indeed the army as a whole.)He squeezed £13 million out of them to bring the first contingent of the F.F.-two divisions- up to proper "European" standards of war equipment. Which shows at last the principle is recognised- only money is standing in its way. The case is really cast iron.'(4)

Pownall's observations are really very astute.

When the Cabinet discussed this committee's report on 22nd February, the Chancellor stated gloomily 'other aspects in this matter outweigh finance.'(5). Chamberlain was

1. Bond BMA p.302.
2. B.H.Liddell Hart:'The Memoirs of Captain Liddell Hart.Volume Two',(London,1965),pps.196-198, hereafter Liddle Hart.
3. Gibbs.p.511.
4. Pownall.p.186,
5. Peden.p.148.

unenthusiastic for equipping the Army for continental warfare, but realised he had little alternative and conceded the case 'with some reluctance'.(1) Pownall hit the nail on the head commenting,'a historic week from my own and indeed the Army point of view !'(2) The S.S.W. had gained approval for his five proposals (see Appendix 6 for details) with minor amendments which reduced the cost to £64.6 million to placate the Chancellor (3) Pownall was right in perceiving this change of policy as 'a great victory' but overstates his case when saying the Prime Minister has been 'converted' to the need for a British continental commitment.(4) Chamberlain had reluctantly acquiesced with these proposals. At long last he had little choice to accept these the view points of the S.S.W., the Foreign Secretary (F.S.), the C.O.S. and others, that the defence of Britain was inextricably tied to the protection of France and the Channel Ports. France now looked to Britain to provide a European F.F. which would help to counter balance the loss of the Czech Army. If the French Government perceived that her British ally was unwilling to provide a substantial continental commitment then France might sign a non aggression treaty with Germany. In these circumstances, Britain might face Germany with no other European ally. Such a nightmare senario compelled Chamberlain to jettison the policy of 'limited liability'.

This momentous decision became public knowledge when Hore-Belisha made his Army Estimates speech in the House on 8th March. In his usual flamboyant style,he capitalised on the occasion, but it must not be forgotten that only in December 1938, Hore-Belisha's position had, if only momentarily, appeared to be in jeopardy when three Junior Ministers had staged a' revolt'. (4)

1.Parkinson.p.104.
2&3 Pownall,p.188.
4.Pownall,p.189.
5.Minney.pp 161-166.

They blamed the S.S.W. for the apparent lack of urgency in remedying Britain's defence weakness, when the Prime Minister and Chancellor were the real culprits. Hore-Belisha now seized on an opportunity to safeguard his position by raising his stock, both in Parliament and in the country. During a wide ranging speech, the crucial issue was addressed -

> 'prudent minds should be ready for any eventuality. If we are involved in war, our contribution and the ways in which we can best make it, will not be half hearted nor upon any theory of 'limited liability' (1)

Tackling the central matter of our continental commitment Hore-Belisha stated -

> 'It would be composed of nineteen divisions, six Regular (two of them armoured), nine Territorial infantry divisions, three motorised and one armoured division and a number of unbrigaded units, ... This compared roughly with the Field Force of six Regular and one Cavalry division .... which was the size of the "Contemptible Little Army" that crossed France in 1914 and acquitted itself so valiantly in Flanders'. 'Every fighting arm of the Service had been remodelled and would be supplied with modern weapons. The Territorial Army would be on the same basis...' (2)

At the report stage of the Army estimates on 14th March the S.S.W. was pressed to give greater details on the despatch of the F.F. He replied -

> 'that he could not give exact times as in Bradshaw (the British railway timetables), because that would be a guide to interested countries, but he made it clear that the expedition would not be an operation in fits and starts, but a steady process, worked out in orderly sequence'. (3)

Hore-Belisha was well received by the Conservatives in the Commons and in particular Duff Cooper, his predecessor at the W.O. and Churchill were most complimentary. No protests were made by the Labour opposition, whilst the Evening Standard and Daily Sketch questioned the wisdom and

1. Dennis I, p.238.
2. Minney, p.176.
3. Minney, p.178.

necessity of sending a field force to France, the Press in general welcomed the change of policy. However only the correspondent of the Observer appeared astute enough to read beyond the lines of Hore-Belisha's speech. The Sunday newspaper commented that 'many of Hore-Belisha's statements were couched in the future tense and would not be realised if "the day" were to supervene say, tomorrow.'(1) There was realisation that the S.S.W. was optimistic when he talked of nineteen divisions for the continent, as several of these existed only on paper. Pownall commented-

> 'It is amusing to see the political capital that Hore-Belisha has made of his "nineteen divisions" and the kudos he gets from it' and 'He has again mortgaged the future, a dangerous trick he is always playing'. However he is 'as artful as a fox and is now thoroughly interested in the game of squeezing millions out of the Treasury.'(2)

What was the French reaction to the news of Britain's abandonment of the policy of 'limited liability'?.

The Daily Telegraph's Paris correspondent reported that Hore- Belisha's speech had made -

> 'a deep impression on political and military circles' in France and had forcefully demonstrated Britain's 'manifest determination not to fight on the basis of "limited liability."(3)

Le Temps and Jour-Echo de Paris were representative of the positive reception given. Peter Dennis recognised 'the psychological impact (in France) of the announcement of unlimited liability was considerable'(4) and both he and Brian Bond rightly point out, on reflection, the new policy did not do enough to reassure the French. They wanted Britain to provide, at an early stage of the hostilities, a continental field force roughly equivalent to that of the France's former Little Entente ally Czechoslovakia; approximately 35 divisions. Such an

1. Parkinson, p. 106.
2. Pownall. p. 191
3&4.. Dennis, p. 238.

expeditionary force would require Britain to introduce conscription and establish a Ministry of Supply; both before the outbreak of war. Hore-Belisha had carefully avoided any mention of conscription in his speech because of the percieved strength of opposition, both from within Parliament, and outside amongst Trade Unions and the general public. Despite repeated attempts in Cabinet, the S.S.W. also failed to convince Chamberlain of the need to establish a Ministry of Supply (M.of S.)in peacetime, to ensure the field force was adequately equipped.
Before the Anglo-French Staff talks, arranged to begin at the end of March commenced, Hitler dramatically intervened. A greater sense of urgency would now grip British Military Policy and preparations.

President Hacha of Czechoslovakia was summoned to Berlin on 14th March to discuss the problem posed by the Slovakian independence movement, led by the pro Nazis Father Tiso. After bullying from Hitler, Goring and Ribbentrop, Hacha signed away the independence of his country in the early hours of 15th March 1939. That day German forces occupied the Czech provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, turning them into a German Protectorate. Slovakia now became a separate vassal state which Germany's armed forces could enter at will.

Hitler had blantantly abrogated the Munich Treaty and had swung the European balance of power to his favour, by the siezure of considerable equipment from the Czechoslovakian Army, but also by gaining direct control of substantial Skoda armaments plant at Pilsen, the Ceskomoravska Kolben Danet (C.K.D.) tank factory at Prague and the impressive small arms works at Bruno.
However, Chamberlain's initial reaction to all this was almost to apologise for Hitler's aggression. Shortly after the Germans coup, the Prime Minister laid blame of the

Slovak Diet, (Assembly), which had just previously declared Slovakia,'a separate state and precipitated the crisis.' (1) He observed that Czechoslovakia had been broken up because of internal forces and the weight of German 'moral pressure' and the Prime Minister dubiously claimed that this released Britain from any obligation to guarantee the post Munich borders of Czechoslovakia. (2) Public opinion in Britain hardened against Germany, with far reaching consequences. Hitler's aggression had received a unanimously hostile reaction in the British press. Until now The Times had been a leading supporter of appeasement, but the newspaper's editorial column on 16th March declared,' No defence of any kind, no pretext of the slightest possibility, can be offered for the violent extinction of Czech independance', whilst the same column in the next days issue attacked Hitler's action as ' more and more revealed as sheer aggrandisment - the brutal domination of other countries for the sole purpose of increasing the power of the Reich.' (3) Other newspapers were equally damning in their judgement of the Nazi coup against Czechoslovakia. (4)

Andrew Roberts rightly claims that Halifax's reactions to the German occupation of Prague were much more openly hostile than that of the Prime Minister. This is confirmed in 'The Cadogan Diaries' which quotes the Foreign Secretary telling the German Ambassador on 15th March -

> 'The conclusion which everybody in this country and far outside would draw, must be that (the German Government) had no desire to establish good relations with this country, that they were prepared to disregard world opinion and were

1. Colvin, p. 186.
2. Colvin, p. 187.
3. The Times, 16th Mar. 1939, p. 17, Ist Leader.
4. The Times, 17th March1939, p. 17, Ist Leader.
5. F. R. Gannon: 'The British Press and Germany 1936-1939 (Oxford, 1971), Chapt. 5, hereafter Gannon.

seeking to establish a position in which they could, by force, dominate Europe and if possible the world. (1)

On 16th March, the Conservative Party's Foreign Affairs Committee called for national service, all party government and a Russian alliance. Chamberlain made a major speech in Birmingham during the evening of 17th March (his 70th birthday), having called the Foreign Secretary earlier that day for assistance and the latter seized the opportunity to attack the German aggression. Halifax was concerned that international opinion and in particular the Dominions and the United States would turn against us if we did not strongly condemn what Germany had done. If war came we would need, more than ever, the support of these friendly countries as well as that of France to face the possible menance from Italy and Japan, as well as that from Germany.
The Foreign Minister received another important visitor on 17th March, the Roumanian Minister (Ambassador) Virgil Tilea, who called to inform Halifax 'of an ultimatum for a monopoly of Roumanian exports (oil and grain were most crucial) and of his expectations of further developments within days'. (2) This visitation was seen by Roberts 'to stiffen Chamberlain's Birmingham speech' (3) The Prime Minister made some reference to this at the Cabinet meeting on the following day. (4)
What is significant about the German occupation of Prague and the 'Tilea episode' is that they led to a reappraisal of British policy in respect of Nazi Germany.

At the Cabinet meeting on 18th March, Halifax gave details of the German ultimatum to Roumania, stating that whilst

1. Cadogan, p. 157.
2. Gibbs, p. 694.
3. Roberts, p. 47.
4. CAB 23/98, p. 43

Gregori Gafencu, the Roumanian Foreign Minister had denied there was any truth in reports of the German demands of his country, never the less the Cabinet should discuss such a possibility. Chatfield agreed with Halifax disclosing that the C.O.S. had advised him that if Hitler gained the monopoly of Roumanian oil and grain, this would nullify a British naval blockade of Germany. (1)

Germany's occupation of Prague had lead the Prime Minister 'to the conclusion that Hitler's attitude made it impossible to continue to negotiate on the old basis with the Nazi regime...No reliance could be placed on any of the assurance given by the Nazi leaders'..(2) Diplomatic overtures began to determine if Poland, Turkey and the Soviet Union would join the Anglo-French alliance. (3) A chain of events had begun which were to lead to the British Guarantee to Poland. Halifax rather than Chamberlain could claim credit for this.

Brian Bond, Dr.Simon Newman and Professor R Parker, all rightly point out that the occupation of Prague and the British reaction did not amount to a complete change of direction as far as Chamberlain's grand strategy of appeasement was concerned, but rather a change of emphasis. (4) The Prime Minister, whilst writing his weekly letter to his sister records on the weekend after the Prague coup,'As always, I want to gain time, for I never accept the view that war is inevitable.' (5) What he really meant was ' a new emphasis on armed strength and firmness by Britain and France would help avert a Second World War. (6)

1.2 & 3. Colvin.p.188.

4. Dr,Simon Newman: 'March 1939:The British Guarantee to Poland (Oxford,1976),pp.88-106, hereafter Newman. and R.A.C.Parker:Chamberlain and Appeasement-British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War. (London,1993),Chapts.9&10 hereafter Parker Chamberlain

5. Feiling.p.401.

6. Bond,BMP.p.304.

Hore-Belisha was one of the few Cabinet Ministers who realised as quickly as the Foreign Secretary that Germany's Czechoslovakian coup, had tilted the European balance of power in Hitler's favour. At Cabinet on 18th March, the S.S.W. argued for 'frank and open alliances with Poland and Russia' and steps 'vastly to increase our military strength' because 'Germany had just seized in Czechoslovakia the complete equipment of 38 infantry and 8 mobile divisions'.(1) Unfortunately he received little support at this meeting. He also proposed the introduction of conscription and the establishment of a Ministry of Supply. These measures were necessary to provide enough manpower and munitions production for a British field force sufficient to offset the loss to the French, of their Czechoslovakian ally. Unfortunately the Cabinet deferred any decisions on these two significant subjects. Obstinately the Prime Minister clung to the belief that the N.S.A. would supply enough recruits to provide for the enlarged field force. Events would show otherwise.
With regard to the Minister of Supply, the Prime Minister still believed the existing machinery of government was adequate to secure raw materials, acquire machine tools and develop our war potential. However the Cabinet did agree to establish a committee to consider Acceleration of Defence Programmes. The 'Gaps Committee' which had been hastily established after the Munich Crisis was now reborn.(2) Since the Treasury had only made allowance for a field force of 10 divisions, Hore-Belisha found it difficult to make any headway on his proposals for the Army.

1. Colvin.p.189.
2. CAB 27/657 and Colvin Chapt.18.

Pownall's diary indicates his frustration with the Committee's discussion of proposals for the Army -

> 'Meanwhile we struggle to get more things done for the Army. A quite fatuous meeting on Thursday(25th March) in the W.O. with Chatfield in the Chair and Barlow from the Treasury. Practicallly everything was referred to the Treasury to examine and we are no further on. Unless the P.M. or Simon say 'yes' nothing counts at all and its a waste of time having meetings with other ministers.'(1)

Sadly Pownall concluded-

> 'A vast struggle to get a second battalion from Palestine back to Malta. There had to be a meeting with the P.M. in the chair before it could be settled. Fancy the P.M. being necessary to move one battalion which could well be spared on military grounds.'(2)

This hopelessness and desperation voiced by Pownall had some justification. For example when he asked for an end to the policy of 'business as usual' to accelerate munitions production, he found himself up against an impenetrable barrier. Hore-Belisha had forcefully put his case stating -

> 'it is quite obvious that priority over normal orders, at least for machine tools will be necessary to obtain acceleration...Priority could be applied by legislation over all industry or in regard to certain trades', and
> 'that deliveries for machine tools were now being quoted at from 50 to 60 weeks, and the delays were attributed to interference by private orders'(3)

Unfortunately, Hore-Belisha's eloquence was in vain and he had to make do with an offer from the Minister for Co-Ordination of Defence (M.for Co.of D.),Lord Chatfield), that he would 'ask the Prime Minister to make a public appeal to all industry to give priority for all authorised orders for the rearmament programme over normal trade'. (4) The issue was eventually resolved in April 1939, with the decision to establish a Ministry of Supply.

1&2. Pownall,p.194.
3. CAB 27/657 pp.17 & 18.
4. CAB 27/657,p.18.

Ian Colvin got to the heart of the matter when he stated that-

> The War Office proposals.....required a whole series of enlarged Treasury permissions. On munitions production, on continuation orders, on earmarking metals, redisposition of British units overseas, on storing war reserves at ports abroad. Mediterrean and Middle East defence measures and increased personnel demands. Cabinet and Treasury approval was obtained by 23rd April (1939). There was also a increase from 15,000 to 25,000 approved in the numbers of the National Defence Companies, the embryo Home Guard.' (1).

Chamberlain's obsession with a German 'knock out blow' again Britain resurfaced to give the Army a much needed 'shot in the arm'. A week after the Nazi coup against Prague, the Germans also seized the Lithuanian port of Memel. The P.M. became decidedly jumpy and thought Hitler might launch the Luftwaffe to make a 'bolt out of the blue' attack against London. He now declared to the Cabinet-

> 'From the point of view of a sudden air attack without warning , the position is very disturbing.' (2)

At the same time propaganda from Germany directed against the general public in France was renewing fears that 'the British would fight to the last Frenchman', and the French Government was pressing London for more concrete measures to demonstrate her commitment to sending a sizeable force to the Continent. (3) Germany was also persuing a sinister game of threats, intrigue and machiavellian manoeuvres in Eastern Europe. On the 24th March, Oliver Harvey, Private Secretary to Lord Halifax, recorded -

> 'We heard last night that Roumania has signed her trade agreement with Germany-giving away, as it appears, almost all her economic freedom. (4)

1. Colvin, p.222.
2. Parkinson, p.121.
3. Dennis 1, p.239.
4. John Harvey: The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey 1937-1940. (London, 1970), p.267, hereafter Harvey.

As a consequence Halifax had a long meeting on Foreign Policy with his officials and Harvey recorded on 25th March -

> 'H. feels adherence of Poland is essential to any effective scheme to hold up Germany in event of aggression...What we want to secure is the certainty from Germany of a war on two fronts-East and West-in the event of any aggression from her.'(1)

Events had taken such a turn that-

> 'On 27th March Sir Eric Phipps(B.A.to France) reported from Paris that the French regarded national service as the "touchstone" of British policy towards Germany, and a Foreign Office official minuted - " All our telegrams from Paris tell the same story."(2)

There was also growing pressure within the Conservative party. Criticism had been levelled at the N.S.A., in that it had given too much emphasis on the needs of Civil Defence, whilst playing down the value of the Territorials and the Regular Army. (3) Prior to a meeting of the influencial Conservative back bench 1922 Committee on 28th March, it had become common knowledge in Parliament, that there had been such a dramatic increase in recruits to the T.A.following the German occupation of Prague, that many units were now full and they had to turn men away. Anticipating critism from his back bench on this matter the P.M. sent his advisor, Sir Horace Wilson to discuss with Hore-Belisha ways of utilising all suitable recruits within the T.A.. Subsequently Hore-Belisha saw Chamberlain at the House on the afternoon of the 28th March and in the course of their discussion, whilst the P.M. rejected arguments for conscription on political grounds he stated-

> 'Halifax was insistent that some forthright action should be taken as immediate evidence that we meant business on 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.'(4)

1. Harvey,p.268.
2. Bond,BMP.,p.308.
3. Dennis,TA.,p.248.
4. Minney,p.187.

When the S.S.W. suggested that the T.A. could be doubled in size, Chamberlain jumped at the idea and said in order-

> ' to secure the maximum effect abroad, he would announce the proposal next day(March 29th) in the House. Under Hore-Belisha's plan the peace time strength of 130,000 of the T.A. was raised to war strength of 170,000 and then doubled to 340,000. This was achieved by over recruitment in each unit so as to form a cadre from which a duplicate unit could then be built.'(1)

When the 340,000 had been recruited Britain would eventually be able to send a F.F. of 32 Divisions to the Continent instead of 19 Divisions that Hore-Belisha had earlier proposed in his estimates speech . Unfortunately for the Gevernment, no one, including much of the French and British public opinion, seemed in favour of this decision. The Daily Mail succinctly commented -

> 'By still letting every citizen choose whether or not to help, the Government conveys both to friends and potential foes that British leaders still have not reached the point of meaning business.'(2)

Peter Dennis grasped the military implications by concluding -

> 'Few, at least of all the French, thought that the doubling of the T.A. was anything but a hastily devised scheme that would bear results in the distant, rather than the immediate future. In the short term, it meant that equipment would be even in shorter supply, while perhaps more important, the available instruction would be spread so thinly as to be virtually useless.'(3)

Pownall conceded that vast problems had to be overcome in the provision of instructors, accommodation and equipment. Nevertheless events had forced Chamberlain to concede that limited liability could not remain as the dominant philosophy of the British Army. Two other events on 29th March, were to oblige the P.M. to raise the Army within the priorities of British rearmament.

1. Minney.p.187.
2 & 3.Dennis.TA.,p.242.

Staff talks began in London with the French, to establish a common strategic policy in the event of war. (1) A European Appreciation for 1939-1940 had been prepared by our C.O.S. as to be the main subject for discussion. Whilst this appreciation had been overtaken by Germany's annexation of Bohemia and Moravia, its main thrust was still valid. Anglo French deliberations agreed that the numerical superiority of the German army and the advanced position of Germany's rearmament meant that the opening phase of a European conflict would be a defensive holding operation.

What implications did all this have for the British Army? Both in the Appreciation and its discussion it became evident that Germany would seek to counter the effect of the Maginot Line by an attack through Belgium. France would expect a repeat of 1914 when Britain had dispatched six infantry and one cavalry division to Europe. During the first phase the Allies would seek to maxinise their war potential drawing support from the Dominions, whilst using their naval superiority to keep their arteries of communication and supply open, whilst closing those of the German Italian alliance. Italy was seen as the weaker enemy, as she had a smaller industrial base than Germany and had not persued Hitler's policy of autarky and was thus, more vulnerable to a naval blockade.

During the discussion of the Appreciation, the French delegation to the staff talks did display some occasional signs of vigour. They 'did envisage for early on in the war, some offensive operations against her(Italy's) colonial possession's' (2) e.g. Libya, Ethopia, Eritrea and Italian Somaliland. However Britain's troops in Egypt were only sufficient to protect the Suez Canal and therefore

1. Gibbs, pp 667-684 details these and subsequent staff talks in 1939.
2. Gibbs, p.663.

'we should not be able to undertake at the outset a major offensive into Libya'.(1) Both French and British delegations agreed that during the second phrase of warfare they would hold Germany whilst delivering the coup de grace to Italy. During the third and final phase of the war, whenever this was reached, the Allies would finally defeat the Nazi regime, presumably through a massive land and air offensive. Most of the Appreciation was concentrated on how the first phase of the grand strategy whould be executed and it reiterated the fears of a year before; that Japan might seize the opportunity and attack Britain and French possessions in the Far East. Britain's C.O.S. stated -

> 'In these circumstance the despatch of a British Fleet to Singapore would be imperative.'(2)

However this senario was not as alarming as it might have been during the spring of 1938. President Roosevelt of the United States had been informed, through diplomatic channels, by Halifax on 19th March 1939 that if Britain were involved in a European war we might find it extremely difficult to send a large naval force to the Far East. Roosevelt was alarmed by Germany's aggresiveness since the Munich Agreement and reacted a few days later by asking Joseph Kennedy (U.S. Ambassador to Britain) to tell Halifax 'that Roosevelt would announce in Mid April that the US Fleet would return to the Pacific in May'.(3) In the light of this statement the British Foreign Secretary might have shared the up-beat conclusion of the C.O.S.-

> 'Once we had been able to develop the full fighting strengths of the British and French Empires, we should regard the outcome of the war with confidence'.(4)

British aircraft production was rapidly overhauling that of Germany and in late 1939, outpassed that of Germany.(5)

1 & 4. CAB 16/209, British Strategical Memorandum, Part 1, p.35.
2. CAB 16/209, Strategic Appreciation Committee Paper.
3. Parker, p.303.
5. Postan, p.22, p.471 & p.484. Parker, pp.302-306.4.

Whilst Canada was developing aircraft and armaments production to assist Britain and the Commonwealth, President Roosevelt was doing his utmost to supply Britain and France with material by circumventing the United States Neutrality Act.(1)What became apparent from the Staff talks is that Britain would have to reinforce its presence in Egypt if we wished to launch an offensive against the Italians in Libya, and France expected Britain to send a substantial field force to the Continent. Our C.O.S. could only repeat their warning given earlier to the F.P.C., that unless we showed a willingness to send a much larger field force to Europe, France might seek separate peace with Germany so undermining our whole security.

Another major event that had significant implications to the role of the British Army was the Anglo French Guarantee to Poland. The flurry of diplomatic activity following the German annexation of Bohemia and Moravia came to a crescendo on 29th March. Oliver Harvey recalled in his diary for that day-

> 'Colvin, Berlin correspondent of the News Chronicle called on Halifax today and made a great impression. He said he was convinced Hitler would attack Poland very shortly unless it was made quite certain that we would then attack him. There would then be a good chance that German generals would stop him or revolt. Generals had been prepared to revolt in September if we stood up to Hitler'(2)

The Foreign Secretary was impressed with the disclosures of the News Chronicle correspondent who had flown that day from Berlin for the sole purpose of delivering that warning. Halifax took Colvin with him on a speedy visit to the Chamberlain's office and the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary immediately agreed on the need for the Polish Guarantee and that they would secure the Cabinet approval the following day. Professor Parker is largely

1. Parker, p.305.
2. Harvey, p.271 and Colvin, p.194.

correct in his interpretation that-

> 'The guarantee to Poland....warned Germany that armed attack eastwards would cause war with the British Empire. It was made clear that the line German force must not cross lay somewhere close to the Polish German Frontier.It did not seem that the British authorities had worked out any mechanism for holding such a line if Germany went to war.'(1)
> This measure was 'greeted with cheers from every side.'(2)

Brian Bond goes as far as to say -

> 'it seems clear that professional military advice was deliberately suppressed until after the political decision had been made.' (3)

It does not appear that the Chiefs of Staff advice that Britain should not automatically declare war in the event of a German attack on Poland or that the Soviet Union was the only country that could give practical assistance to Poland was explained clearly by Chatfield, Minister for Co-Ordination of Defence, to the Cabinet before the latter had agreed to support the Polish Guarantee and Chamberlain made his announcement of 31st March.
Whether the Cabinet would have witheld support had they known the C.O.S.'s misgivings is questionable, as Chamberlain had decided the Polish Guarantee would prevent war by deterring Germany and he still dominated the Cabinet. Whether or not Hitler thought the Guarantee was just a bluff, there would be an impact on the British Army. France would expect us either to assist in holding any German western attack or possibly assisting with an operation across the Franco-German border. Pownall at least had grasped that the declaration in support of Poland was 'a continental commitment with vengance !..I am sure it is the right policy.The only way to stop Hitler is to show a firm front.'(4).

1. Parker.p.214
2. Nigel Nicolson: Harold Nicolson:Diaries and Letters 1930-1939 (London,1966), p.393, hereafter Nicolson.
3. Bond,BMP,,p.307.
4. Pownall.p.197.

Britain's army had been reborn. Fear that Germany might occupy the Low Countries in a lightening attack, as a prelude to an aerial onslaught on Britain, obliged Chamberlain to withdraw his opposition to proposals to equip our army for a continental role. Growing pressure for a British commitment to Europe of a substantial field force had come from France, who feared Britain might fight to the last Frenchman. Support for a continental commitment was growing in Britain and received a considerable stimulus when Hitler broke the Munich Agreement. France now expected Britain to make good the loss to the Allies of Czechoslovakia's army of 35 divisions. In Parliament the Prime Minister made verbal commitment to support France and the S.S.W. had exploited this during the debate on the Army Estimates elliciting support for a field force of 19 Divisions, although he knew this would consist largely as a paper army for some time. Lord Halifax had applied pressure on the P.M. particulary after the German occupation of Prague, to act to counteract Germany's moves to turn the European balance of power decisively in favour of the Axis. The Foreign Secretary feared France might make a separate non aggression treaty with G ermany and that Hitler would negate a British naval blockade by securing for the Reich the monopoly of Roumanian oil and wheat. Hence Britain had made its Polish Guarantee and given support to Roumania. When the P.M. had disclosed to Hore-Belisha, the former's anxiety regarding growing unease on the Government back benches at the lack of progress in improving our defences, the S.S.W. capilalised on the situation by suggesting a doubling of the T.A. Chamberlain readily agreed to the measure. However the P.M. still opposed conscription, which might be the only means to provide the necessary manpower for an adequate British continental field force ,he also opposed a Ministry of Supply which was esential for the equipping of an enlarged army.

CHAPTER 5.

THE INTRODUCTION OF CONSCRIPTION.

This chapter gives a brief historical outline of the deep-seated opposition of the British to compulsory military service. Opposition to conscription in the 1930's within the Cabinet, was related to their shared memories of its introduction in 1916. Chamberlain had the unfortunate experience of being Minister for National Service in 1917. The reasoning behind this opposition is scrutinized and his alternative strategy examined. An explanation to is given to the failure of that strategy and the consequent ending of Chamberlain's opposition.

The Roots of Opposition.

Britain's insular position, her naval supremacy and the dominance of laissez-faire liberalism had led to the widespread acceptance by the British, during the 19th Century, of the 'voluntary principle' in respect of military service. Countries such as France, with lengthy land frontiers and potentially hostile neighbours could not afford such 'luxuries', and were obliged to introduce some form of compulsory military training or service. Twentieth century opposition in Britain to compulsory military service dates back even before the 1914-18 War, to the aftermath of the Boer War. As Peter Dennis so succinctly states-

> ' The traumatic experience of the South African war and the abysmal performance of the British Army there had exposed weaknesses that could no longer be ignored.' (1)

1. Dennis, p.5.

A debate took place between those who believed naval poweralone would protect Britain from invasion, and others, including the National Service League (N.S.L.), who advocated the need for a substantial army and compulsory military training . (1) On five occasions between 1908 and 1914 compulsory military service Bills were placed before Parliament, but they were all rejected -

> 'because of the violent prejudices which would be excited even if it were suspected that a Government contemplated the possibility anything of the kind.' (2)

As an alternative solution the Liberal Government of 1906 introduced the Territorial Army, a part time force based on voluntary service. (3) When the Great War began in 1914, the munitions industry was denied the expertise of numerous skilled engineers who had joined the flood of army recruits. This together with the horrific war of attrition compelled the British Government, in 1916, to introduce conscription. For those called up conscription and continental commitments became taboo, for both were regarded as synonymous with the killing grounds of the Western Front. This association on compulsory military service with mass warfare and appalling casulties dominated British thinking until 1939.

Sir John Simon resigned as Home Secretary in protest, almost wrecking his political career. Neville Chamberlain was given an impossible task as Minister of National Service. He quickly became depressed and frustrated, resigning his post within a year.

1. Dennis, p. 17.
2. Kathleen Burk: War and the State: The Transformation of the British Government 1914-1919. (London, 1982), p. 10. hereafter Burk.
3. Dennis, Chapts. 1&2.

1930's Debate.

Sharing the British perception that conscription was synonymous with the horrors of trench warfare, Chamberlain opposed its introduction in peacetime until April 1939. Whilst allegedly he was also opposed to conscription because he disliked too much compulsion (1) there was a much more crucial factor in the 1930's which also influenced the Prime Minister's outlook. On 6th October 1938 he restated his Government's opposition to introducing conscription in peacetime.(2) Ernest Brown encapsulated Chamberlains opposition to conscription, stating in 1936 that-

> ' the goodwill of the Trade Unions is of the highest importance to the smooth working and the ultimate success of the scheme', (3)

and Peter Dennis clarifies this further by commenting-

> 'Any step in the direction of military or industrial conscription would (be seen to) throw the entire armaments industry into chaos, which would have far more serious effects on the defence situation than would a temporary shortage of recruits (for the Army).' (4)

Many Trade Union leaders and activists feared industrial conscription would follow from compulsory military service. Prime Minister Chamberlain, sought also not to antagonise the Labour Party over the issue of conscription. After its shattering defeat in the General Election of 1931. Labour had, if anything, certainly drawn closer to the trade unions. Ernest Bevin, as General

1. J.H.Huizinga: Democracy and Compulsory Service. Fortnightly Review, May 1939. pp.527-533, hereafter Huizinga.
2. Statement by Neville Chamberlain, 6th Oct.38. Hansard. 5th Ser., CCCXXXIX.474.
3. Dennis, Decision, p.76.
4. Dennis, Decision. p.76.

Secretary of the Transport & General Workers Union (T&GWU), had played a major role in this process.(1) Whilst the Parliamentary Labour Party had opposed conscription there was a growing weight of evidence to demonstrate that it had abandoned pacifism and was adopting a more realistic stance to the threat from Nazi Germany. Since 1937, due mainly to the influence of Hugh Dalton, M.P. for Bishop Auckland, Shadow Foreign Secretary (2) and member of Labour's National Executive Committee, the party had abstained rather than vote against the Defence Estimates proposed by the Government. It was commendable that the Government should seek the co-operation of the trade unions and Opposition in carrying out its re-armament programme. However Chamberlain and his Cabinet colleagues exaggerated both the intention and the ability of the trade unions and the Labour Party to disrupt British pre-war rearmament. Whilst a strike at an Austin shadow factory in 1938 and a stoppage at a Rootes shadow aero plant in 1939, were statistically significant in the official annual returns of industrial disputes for those respective years, this must be treated with some caution. Both disputes lasted for only a few days; the Austin strike from August 29th to September 7th 1938 and the Rootes dispute from 13th to 16th June 1939. Each stoppage involving approximately 6,000 workers and both were confined to a single factory. Lost production would have soon been made up. Grievances over pay had triggered the Austin strike, whilst the dismissal of an engine fitter in a 'who does what' job dispute had sparked the stoppage at Rootes. Both strikes revolved around traditional trade union concerns, rather than political issues.

1. Henry Pelling: A History of British Trade Unionism. (London, 1987). hereafter Pelling.
2. Ben Pimlott: Hugh Dalton, (London, 1985), p.242. hereafter Pimlott.

Of the working days lost through industrial disputes in 1938 and 1939 two thirds involved the coalmining industry and therefore had little immediate impact on the tempo of rearmament. An old fear of trade unionists was that conscription would lead to industrial conscription or government direction of labour. (1) It should have been seen as highly unlikely under a peacetime Chamberlain government. In March 1938 Chamberlain had agreed that non interference with normal trade or 'business as usual' should not apply to orders for the Royal Air Force (R.A.F.)but with regard to the equipment of the Army, the Prime Minister and the Treasury were unwilling to introduce any element of compulsion until April 1939. (2) Baldwin's view of 1936 that ' The course of wisdom and truth is that the Government must at all costs avoid compulsion ' (3) was maintained by his successor until the pressure of events, eg Hitler's seizure of Prague and French claims for a British 'effort du sang', rendered futile the continuation of this policy.

Chamberlain could have possibly won Labour support (and consequently that of the Trade Unions) both for conscription and the rearmament programme by inviting its Parliament leaders to join a coalition government. Indeed Halifax had urged the Prime Minister to take this action on the latter's return from the Munich Conference. (4) The Foreign Secretary had also written to Chamberlain, 'listing the advantages of offering Labour, the Liberals and dissident Conservatives places in the Government', after talking with Anthony Eden an 11th October 1938. (5)

1. Pelling., p.199.
2. R.P.Shay: British Rearmament in the Thirties. Politics and Profits. (Princetown University Press, 1977), p.271. hereafter Shay.
3. Peden, p.38.
4. Roberts, p.123, and my Chapter 2.
5. Roberts, p. 125

Characteristically the Prime Minister rejected the advice of his Foreign Secretary because 'he did not want a long running fight of doubt in Cabinet, but more power for his policy (of selective rearmament and conciliation of the dictators)'. (1) As well as believing he was always right, Chamberlain displayed a more unfortunate weakness of character. Ian Macleod in his biography of Chamberlain states:

> ' Baldwin had begged him to remember that he was addressing a meeting of gentlemen."I gave him the impression, he said, when I spoke in the House of Commons, that I looked on the Labour Party as dirt." This impression was shared by the Labour Party and they deeply resented it' (2)

Although Baldwin had made this remark in 1927, it equally applied throughout Chamberlain's years in Parliament, at least until his resignation from the premiership in May 1940. (3) It is unlikely that Clement Attlee and the other leading figures in the Parliamentary Labour Party would have accepted an invitation to join the Chamberlain Cabinet, as they refused to serve under Neville Chamberlain on 10th May 1940. Such an offer would have put the Opposition in an extremely difficult position and more importantly would have been interpreted by public opinion in Britain and abroad, both as a sign of strength and statesmanship. Instead the Prime Minister ignored the wise counsel of his Foreign Secretary and waited until the outbreak of war before even inviting Churchill and Eden into his Cabinet.

1. Feiling. p.386.
2. Ian Macloed: Neville Chamberlain. (London ,1961), p.203, hereafter Macleod.
3. Clement Attlee: As it Happened. (London ,1954), Chpt.13, hereafter Attlee

The National Service Appeal.

In an attempt to maintain the 'voluntary principle' as long as possible and in so doing, secure co-operation from the Trade Unions and Labour Party, Chamberlain launched the appeal. He hoped to build on the flood of volunteers that had come forward during the crisis in September 1938. As Prof. H. M. D. Parker shows-

> 'During the (Czechoslovakian) crisis weeks, over half a million enrolled in the Air Raid Precautions (A.R.P.) services and from the professional and scientific world so many offers of help were received that the Ministry of Labour was obliged to set up a special department - the future Central Register - to record the names and qualifications of applicants'. (1)

With regard to recruitment to the Territorial Army, Peter Dennis points out-

> 'The enormous surge in Territorial recruiting after the September (1938) crisis was evidence of the public's concern over defence matters. By 1st December the War Office was able to announce that the Territorials had reached a strength of 200,190 by far the highest level reached since the 1921 reconstitution but there were two drawbacks to this startling success. The first was that the sheer numbers of Territorials would overwhelm the meagre supplies of equipment . The second problem was that the Territorial Army was undoubtedly recruiting men who in wartime would be in restricted occupations. Unless some sort of manpower register was established in peacetime, the chaos that had disrupted Britain's war effort in the Great War would inevitably recur. (2)

A Ministry of Supply would have helped to resolve the first problem but Chamberlain remained opposed to such a solution. On 26th October 1938 the Cabinet had before them a paper from the Cabinet Committee: The Control of Manpower. (3). This committee had come-

> 'to the conclusion that there would be no value in establishing a compulsory national service register unless

1. H. M. D. Parker: Manpower-A study of War-time Policy and Administration. (H. M. S. O., 1957), p. 51, hereafter Parker:Man.
2. Dennis, pp. 234-235.
3. CAB 24/281, C. P. 235(38).

it was a precursor to compulsory national service. Halifax, however, who had urged Chamberlain on his return from Munich to introduce conscription, thought that there was a good case for establishing a compulsory register that would tabulate the nation's resources, but which could still be linked to a voluntary system. Colville, Sec.of State for Scotland, agreed, since the automatic adoption of compulsory service in wartime would be most efficiently carried out if preceded by a national register.'(1)

The Prime Minister was unmoved by these arguments. Instead he accepted the Sub-Committees' recommendation.
Their solution was a National Service Appeal, to be accompanied by the delivery to every household in the country of a National Service Appeal Handbook. This Handbook would explain what types of people were wanted for particular services and set out the principles upon which the Schedule of Reserved Occupations was compiled. Sir John Anderson was appointed at the end of October, as Lord Privy Seal with responsibility for all aspects of Civil Defence, national voluntary service and the voluntary national register.

As no compulsion was involved in the N.S.A. it received the support of the Trade Union Congress and all political parties. On 23rd January 1939 Chamberlain made a radio broadcast on behalf of the N.S.A. requesting those able, to volunteer for the Services or Civil Defence, depending on their ability. Despite an all-party rally in the Albert Hall the following day, this Appeal did not run smoothly. The delivery of Handbooks, planned to coincide with Chamberlain's broadcast were not completed until several days later. The impact was diminished.

Peter Dennis remarks about the handbooks that-

'Their design was uninspiring and the order of priorities

1. Dennis.p.236.

> set down by the Government hardly corresponded to the sense of urgency that was increasingly felt throughout the country. The needs of the Regular Army - still suffering a severe shortage of recruits - was dealt with very briefly and was not given the prominence that many felt the situation both in Britain and in France warranted' (1)

Criticism of the Appeal came on another score from the usually pro Conservative, Daily Telegraph, which carried reports on 13th & 14th February 1939 that 'many would-be recruits..... turned up at enlistment posts only to be told that their services were not needed at that time' (2) Hostile comments also came from the Labour Party through the Daily Herald. Many in the Labour movement perceived the outcome of the National Service appeal as a make or break for the voluntary system-

> 'As the campaign began to falter the threat of conscription, whether for the services or for industry, became ever more real, and some Labour supporters suggested that the Government had tricked Labour in supporting the appeal as a means of indentifying it with the failure of the voluntary system, thereby eventually leaving Labour no option but to support some sort of compulsion' (3)

Chamberlain had stated when launching the Appeal that the Government would wait two months before deciding whether further measures were necessary. British public opinion hardened against Hitler's regime following Germany's seizure of the rump state of Czechoslovakia on 15th March 1939. In desperation, the Prime Minister seized on the suggestion made by Hore-Belisha that the T.A. could be doubled in size. Without any prior discussion with the W.O. or C. of S.. Chamberlain announced to the House of Commons on 9th March that the Territorials were to be raised to 340,000.

1. Dennis. p. 236.
2 & 3. Dennis, p. 237

This measure received a mixed reaction. Both The Times and Daily Herald warmly welcomed the initiative; the latter saw it as an endorsement of the voluntary system, but the Daily Mail deplored the impression that -

> 'the Government conveys both to friends and to potential foes that Britain's leaders still have not reached the point of meaning business'. (1)

In France the newspaper Le Temps - 'noted tersely that the British Govenment was trying to maintain the voluntary principle while building up its forces as much as possible(but) ' Few, least of all the French, thought that the doubling of the Territorial Army was anything but a hastily devised scheme that would bear results in the distant, rather than the immediate future' (2)

French pressure on the British Government would be one of the two factors to persuade Chamberlain to introduce conscription in peacetime.

French Pressure On Britain.

The French Government had much more readily grasped tha strategic consequences of the Munich Agreement, than their British counterparts. Britain's ambassador in Paris- April 1937-November 1939-, Sir Eric Phipps had pointed out in November 1938 that as -

> 'a result of these various developments France finds herself in a position where her efforts of twenty years to assure her peace and security are in ruins. The League of Nations and her continental alliances have collapsed. Her one remaining standby is her entente with Great Britain. (3).

Whilst Czechoslovakia had been able to mobilise between 34

1 & 2. Dennis, p.242
3. F.O.371/216000, Phipps to Halifax, 16th. Nov. 1938

divisions (1) and approximately 600 front line aircraft during the Munich Crisis, Britain had merely offered to send 2 divisions and 150 aircraft to France, and those only after 21 days. At the height of the Crisis on 27th September 1938, the French sent a telegram asking point blank, if the British would introduce conscription, mobilise simultaneously and 'pool' economic and financial resources. (2) Compulsory military service was given such a negative response by the British that the French dropped the issue - but not for long.

French demands had however made some impact in Whitehall, for shortly after the Munich Agreement, on 3rd October 1938, Henry Pownall, D.M.O.& I., records in his diary 'The first main lesson is that we must expect to have to send troops to help the French.' (3)

Colonel William Fraser, British Military Attache in Paris confirmed this in a memorandum to the War Office on 18th October 1938. Fraser had recently had a conversation with General Dentz, Deputy Chief of the French General Staff, and Colonel Petibon, Chef de Cabinet to General G amelin, Chief of the French General Staff. Dentz had stated -

> 'there was a possibility that Hitler might try to separate the western allies by extending a guarantee to France in order to move against Britain. The danger was that if the impression was gained that Britain was willing to fight only to the last French soldier, the elements in France that were seeking an accommodation with Germany would be considerably strengthened. A strong German propaganda campaign was already playing on these sentiments in France.' (4)

Colonel Petibon added that -

> 'given the existing state of tension in Europe

1. Bond, BMP, p, 288 : quotes 34 Divs, but Hauner, Cz., pp. 194-222 quotes 42 Divs.
2. Pownall, p. 163.
3. Pownall, p. 164.
4. Dennis D., p. 154.

> Britain must be in a position to develop (its) effort on a really effective scale early and that could be only done if we introduce some form of military training on a large scale in peace.'(1)

Hore-Belisha stated in a paper to the C.D.P.A. dated 31st October that -

> 'Germany has added considerably to her strength by incorporating Austria and Sudetenland within the Reich and a powerful (Czech) army which would have assisted France, has been removed' and 'the enquiry made by the French during the (Munich) crisis whether in the event of war, we would impose conscription in this country, is an indication of the reliance which they are likely to place on our land forces and of the reluctance with which they are likely to embark upon a war without such assurance.'(2)

The General Staff went further saying -

> 'If Western Europe were to be invaded and enemy aerodromes were established in Northern France, the consequence for this country would be exceedingly grave. This danger so vital to our existence that we are accepting a great risk if we entrust the defence on land solely to an allied army (France). The moral support of our assistance on land is a matter on which the French lay great emphasis.' (3)

However the Cabinet had, on 7th November 1938, referred the matter to the C.I.D. Whenever the Secretary for War first decided to support conscription, the views of the French were uppermost in his mind, Hore-Belisha clearly indicated this both in his paper 'The Role of the Army', and during its subsequent discussion.(4)

During a visit to France over the Christmas holiday in 1938, Hore-Belisha met the French C.C., General Gamelin. His pessimism at the prospect of a joint threat to France by Italy as well as Germany, made its mark on the British Secretary for War. (5)

Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, was also impressed by the strength of the French argument. This lead him to support a compulsory National Service Register of

1. Dennis D., p.154.
2. CAB 27/648,(38)3, The Role of the Army in the light of Czech.crisis.pp 1&2.
3. CAB 27/648,(38)3, Appendix 1,p.13.
4. CAB 2/8.341st Meeting of the C.I.D., 15th Dec.1938.
5. Minney,pp.168-169.

manpower. (1) This would assist voluntary recruitment for the Regular Army, Territorials and Civil Defence and would greatly ease the future introduction of conscription. Halifax backed Hore-Belisha's proposal for a Ministry of Supply to assist the equipping of an enlarged British Field Force at the F.P.C. meeting on 14th November 1938, but was opposed by the Prime Minister, who held sway. When on 23rd and 24th November Chamberlain and Halifax had talks in Paris with their French counterparts, Daladier tried to use the occasion to request a larger continental commitment from the British. Chamberlain turned the argument around to press the French to accelerate the improvement of their Air Force, but Halifax had been more receptive to the views of Daladier. When the C.I.D., discussed Hore-Belisha's paper on the Role of the Army he stated -

> 'he was bound to point out that the time might come when the French would cease to be enthusiastic about their relations with Great Britain if they were left with the impression that it was they who would bear the brunt of the fighting and slaughter on land.' (2)

Continuing reports from our Military Attache in Paris, that the French were looking to Britain to introduce conscription to make up the loss of the Czechoslovakian Army, were making an impression in the Foreign Office. Frank Roberts, head of the Foreign Office Central Department, advised on 12th December that-

> 'some gesture was needed to boost French morale and that the introduction of some form of National Service was one possibility.' (3)

and on 22nd December 'what France demanded was an <u>'effort du sang.'</u> (4) The Foreign Secretary thought this paper was sufficiently important that he passed it to the Prime Minister, but nothing happened.

1. Roberts, p.127.
2. CAB 2/8.341st meeting.p.5, 15th Dec, 1938.
3. F.O. 371/21597, Min.of 12th Dec, 1938.
4. CAB 21/555.

Events began to move in January 1939. On 26th January Hore-Belisha used a meeting of the C.I.D. to advocate ending the policy of 'limited liability' and the need to establish a Ministry of Supply. Halifax supported the Minister of War on both matters.(1) After the German seizure of Prague Hore-Belisha's diary for the 28th March 1939 recalls a conversation with the Prime Minister in which -

> 'He (Chamberlain) told me Halifax was insistent that some forthright action should be taken as immediate evidence that we meant business in resisting aggression.'(2)

whilst the diary entry for 17th April reports -

> 'he(Halifax) had good reason to believe conscription was the only course that would have any effect on Germany.' (3)

However, Chamberlain still did not share this view, still fearing that opposition from the T.U.C. and Labour Party would seriously disrupt rearmament. But the Prime Minister was falling behind opinions in the Conservative Party and in the country, as was indicated in the debate in March 1939 regarding the Army Estimates. Hore-Belisha had used the occasion to announce the end of 'limited liability'. His speech was generally well received and some telling responses came from the Conservative backbenchers. Lieutenant Commander Fletcher, for example, remarked -

> 'that the French evaluated British assistance solely in terms of the number of British Troops on French soil.'(4)

Whilst Alfred Wise, M.P. (Conservative,Smethwick) stated-

> 'We have to devise some means of raising an immediate expeditionary force of at least fifteen divisions, before we can be really reliable as a help to our friends on the Continent of Europe.' (5).

1. CAB 27/654, 36th Meeting 26th Jan,1939.
2. Minney,p.187,
3. Minney,p.195.
4. Hansard,5th Ser.,CCXLIV,2289-90.
5. Hansard,5th Ser.,CCXLIV,2278.

Clearly a growing section of the Conservative Party sympathised with the growing unease in France, that the balance of power was shifting in favour of Germany. Sir Edward Grigg, (Cons.M.P. for Altrincham), writing in the National Review made a strong case stating-

> 'Conscription was the decisive test, and so long as the Government refused to establish compulsory nation-wide military training, Britain's potential allies would not rest assured, confident in the belief that Britain would be willing and able to intervene strongly on the Continent.' (1)

Even after the German seizure of Prague, and the Guarantee to Poland, Chamberlain still held out against conscription, doubling the Territorial Army as a poor substitute. But there existed an inherent contradiction within the Prime Ministers way of thinking, which eventually caught up with him. On the one hand he believed the measures involving compulsion and strong government intervention, such as introducing conscription, should wait until war had been declared. On the other he was adherent(as we saw at the time of the Czechoslovakian Crisis) of the 'knock out blow' school,which believed that the next war might well begin with suprise air attacks which might well weaken the nation's will to resist. If such dislocation to the machinery of government and weakening of civilian morale was going to occur at the outbreak of war, then surely conscription should be introduced beforehand. This line of thought does not seem to have been considered by Chamberlain until April 1939.

1. Edward Grigg: The importance of the Army,National Review CXII,March 1939,pp,307-316.

Fear of a 'Knock Out Blow'.

Having thought that he had overcome the danger of a 'knock out blow' through the signing of the Munich Agreement, the Prime Minister's old fear came back to haunt him less than three months later. On 15th December 1938 Sir Alexander Cadogan recorded in his diary that -

> 'Ivone K (Kirkpatrick, First Secretary at the British Embassy in Berlin)turned up from Berlin. He has been told by his friend K- that Hitler will bomb London in March!.... I then saw H (Halifax) and told him the 'K' story. He saw P.M. at 7 and later summoned a meeting of Ministers concerned for 10 a.m. tomorrow.'(1)

At that meeting on 16th December, although doubts were expressed regarding the validity of the story, caution prevailed and an Anti Aircraft regiment was moved from Lichfield, in the Midlands to Wellington Barracks in London, where they could be seen from the German Embassy, and on 22nd December the C.I.D.-

> 'decided to accelerate air raid precautions, the provision of anti-aircraft defences and preparations fro civil defence. All departments were told that their war plans were to be brought to a state of readiness within three months, i.e. before the end of March 1939,'(2)

Following this news from Berlin and that gathered on 17th January 1939, when Chamberlain returned from his visit to Rome, Cadogan received a flow of information from secret sources in Germany suggesting Hitler was seriously considering attacks against Britain and France.
Consequently Cadogan produced a paper 'Possibility of a German Attack on the West' suggesting Britain would be the chief object of attack. In the 26th January the F.P.C. agreed we should go to war if Germany atacked Holland.(3)

1. Cadogan, p.130 and Pownall, p.174 and Roberts, p.127.
2. Cadogan, p.131 and Pownall, p.174.
3. see earlier chapt. Debate Strategic Priorities.

The war of nerves grew after Hitler's occupation of Prague on 15th March(1939) with Pownall recording in his diary for 21st March 1939 that-

> 'All Tuesday they've been playing round a partial deployment of A.D.G.B .Why partial ? If any is need it all is. It can't be partially done anyway and they seem quite hurt if they can't. It is one of the handicaps of having it on a T.A. basis but quite unavoidable.' (1)

On 29th March, Chamberlain whilst discussing conscription with the full Cabinet for the first time, admitted it would have a positive effect on opinion abroad but rejected its introduction reiterating his old fear it would lead to strikes thereby undermining armaments production. However, it was feared the Guarantee to Poland announced on 30th March might provoke Hitler into a sudden air attack on London. Problems arose with proving a permanent cover of A.A.guns for the capital. As Pownall noted -

> They are mucking round now not "playing with"but "hedging round" conscription. P.M. won't stand for it in spite of good Conservative pressure and much from abroad, especially France. The only thing the P.M. worries about is the A.D.G.B. All sorts of fatuous schemes to have men permanently hanging around gun positions....P.M. very snappy about it all, which is very stupid of him,'Regulars' will take twelve hours to deploy just as Territorials. We have got 72 guns and 48 searchlights up in London now manned by Regulars. They are hanging about doing no good for its a force quite inadequate to defend London.' (2)

On 7th April 1939 tension rose further with the Italian invasion of Albania. By 15th April, the Secretary for War received a paper on Anti-Aircraft Defences from his advisors. They concluded that firstly the only method of providing immediate anti-aircraft defence was to declare a state of emergency and call up A.A.units of the Territorials. Secondly to maintain these A.A.units on a

1. Pownall,p.193.
2. Pownall,p.195.

continuous state of readiness, it would be necessary to call up reservists, since regular troops were required elsewhere. Finally whilst the reservists are called up, they should receive the necessary training in anti-aircraft duties.(1)

But two days later Chamberlain still rejected these proposals and said Hore-Belisha should find some way that the Territorials could man the guns at night, whilst staying with their civilian employment during their normal working hours !. In desperation the Secretary for War showed the paper to Halifax, who said he had come to the conclusion conscription was unavoidable. Hore-Belisha was even more relieved when, on 18th April, Sir John Simon, the Chancellor, who had resigned from the Cabinet in 1916 in opposition to conscription, admitted that -

> 'the case.... presented was unanswerable and that he (Simon)was in agreement about conscription.' (2)

Next day, forty-six M.P.'s., mainly Conservatives tabled a resoloution 'in favour of the compulsory mobilization of the man, munition and money power of the nation.'(3)
On 19th April Chamberlain softened a little and allowed Hore-Belisha to brief a Cabinet on the Anti-Aircraft Defence paper. That very day the T.A.Advisory Committee -

> 'rejected out of hand the proposal to use Territorial troops for extended periods on anti-aircraft duties. It would have a "very disast rous effect " on recruiting and would be regarded by both employers and men as a "breach of faith." Halifax too was unenthusiastic.He stressed to the Cabinet that foreigh opinion, especially in France would not be impressed if conscription were limited to providing men for anti-aircraft units in Britain.'(4).

1. Minney,p.194.
2. Minney,p.197.
3. Dennis D,p.213.
4. Dennis,p.245.

This telling point was followed the next day by a forceful appeal from the French Premier that Britain must introduce conscription immediately. This finally convinced the Prime Minister and the next few days were spent devising a workable scheme which would also have wide support, both at home and with our allies.

On 26th April, Chamberlain announced that the Government proposed to introduce two bills; one the Reserve and Auxiliary Services Bill which would simplify the procedure to call up any description of reserve and auxiliary force. The second, a Military Training Bill which proposed compulsory military training for men aged 20, about 200,000 after allowing for medical exemptions. The Prime Minister emphasised this latter step had been take because of -

> 'the new liabilities which they [the Government] have incurred in Europe' and 'nothing would so impress the world with the determination of the country to offer a firm resistance to any attempt at general domination, as its acceptance.....of compulsory military service which is the universal rule on the Continent.' (1)

Of the 200,000 trainees or militiamen, as they were euphemistically to be known, 80,000 would be attached to A.D.G.B.(Anti-Aircraft) Units of the Territorials, so that after training they could assist permenent manning of our anti-aircraft defences, whilst the remainder would be with Regular Units. Generous provision was made for conscientious objectors and 'conscription of wealth' by way of taxing excess profits from rearmament. However the Bill was

1. The Times.27th April 1939.

savagely attacked by the Labour Party as a breach of the Premier's pledge, which had been restated when the T.A. had been doubled in size in March 1939, that there would be no conscription in peace time. Clement Attlee, Leader of the Labour Party, still had faith in the voluntary system, but it had become clear to the Government that the Regular Army was far too small to man overseas garrisons, form a cadre for the Field Force and help provide a permanent nucleus for anti aircraft defences. (1) Both Labour and Liberals voted against the Military Training Bill, but the Government had a large majority. Attlee admitted in his memoirs that in hindsight Labour's opposition to conscription was a mistake. (2)

Chamberlain had outlined his plan for limited conscription to leaders of the T.U.C. on 25th April, but they were very hostile, as expected. However neither the Labour Party or the Trade Unions encouraged any strikes against the Military Training Bill and its passage into statute was comparatively smooth. Indeed at the Durham Miner's Gala in July 1939, the President of the Mineworkers Frederation, Will Lawther demanded that Chamberlain 'must not entertain any ideas of more Munich sell-outs.' (3) Opposition had been expressed to conscription by the pro Labour, Daily Herald, radical News Chronicle and Manchester Guardian but other national newspapers supported the measure.

More significantly Chamberlain's action was supported

1. Minney.p.193
2. Attlee.p.103.
3. The Times.24th July 1939.

by the French and their press. Le Temps 'hailed it as a strong and courageous step that would make an important contribution to the maintenance of peace' (1) whilst Paris Soir noted 'Germany will no longer be able to say "England makes war with other countries soldiers".' (2) Leon Blum, leader of the French Socialists chided his British counterparts; writing in Le Populaire that 'I do not hesitate to state to my Labour comrades my deepest conviction....conscription in England is one of the capital acts upon which the peace of the world hangs' (3).

Hitler reacted to Chamberlain's announcements, on the 28th April , by denouncing the German Polish Treaty and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. (4) However of more significance was Pownall's conclusion that the Military Training Bill was 'a proper Granny's knitting' and savaged the Cabinet by stating -

> 'What an unholy mess our politicians have made of the rebirth of the Army through shortsighted, unwillingness to face facts and prejudice against the Army', he concluded 'There is but one alleviating feature. I have no doubt that these things, or something equivalent, would have been chucked at our heads to do immediately on the outbreak of war. It is better therefore that we should have them on us in advance, since every day, week and month is so much gained'. (5)

Conclusion

Before 1916, most people in Britain believed that her military needs could be met through the voluntary system, with. from 1906, the T. A. providing an initial reserve if war should come. Our insular

1. Dennis D, p.223.
2 &3. Dennis D. p.224.
4. Pownall, p.200.
5. Pownall, p.201-202.

position and strong navy had fostered the idea conscription was both undemocratic and unnecessary. The need for a large continental Army was to force the British, within less than two years of war, to introduce conscription. Thereafter in many British minds conscription became synonymous with the killing fields of France and Belgium. This factor alone, even after after the rise of Hitler and his threat to European security, had both Stanley Baldwin and from 1937, his successor, Neville Chamberlain too repeatedly state they would not introduce conscription in peace time. Labour and Trade Unions opposed compulsory military service in peace time. because they also believed it would lead to complete state direction of the working population. Maintaining the co-operation of the trade unions in the drive for rearmament was the major factor in Chamberlain's major opposition to peacetime conscription.

However the loss of Czechoslovakia's substantial armed forces as an ally of France, with the signing of the Munich Agreement, had lead the French to look to Britain to make up this deficit, and do it quickly through conscription. Hore-Belisha and Halifax had certainly recognised the French case by March 1939. Chamberlain still remained opposed. The Prime Minister had tried to placate the Labour Party and Trade Unions through the National Service Appeal, but when this faltered the Territorial Army was hastily doubled.

Chamberlain posed the chief stumbling block to any cross party initiative to present a clear united stand against German aggression, because the Premier was

percieved to treat the opposition with contempt and they reciprocated.

The demand for a permanent couverture of anti-aircraft guns to meet the growing fear of a German surprise air attack, together with mounting pressure from the French and support for conscription from the Secretary for War, the Foreign Secretary, and a growing number of Conservative back benchers, combined to overturn Chamberlain's opposition in April 1939, but how was the greatly expanded Army to be adequately trained and equipped for continental warfare?.

CHAPTER 6.

THE CREATION OF A MINISTRY OF SUPPLY IN PEACETIME.

Debates in the 1930's about whether a Ministry of Supply should be established before hostilities began focused around the capabilities of the exisiting supply machinery of the Armed Services, and whether the defence contractors could meet the requirements of the rearmament programme without interference by the Government.

Proponents of a Ministry of Supply, such as Winston Churchill, rightly drew a comparison between the slow progress of rearmement in the 1930's and the acute shortages of munitions that had occured in the 1914-1918 War before the inception of the Ministry of Munitions. Opponents, led by Chamberlain, stated that such a Ministry was now counter productive since they held that co-operation rather than compulsory powers would evoke the best response from industrialists and the trade unions. Furthermore the policy of limited liability, it was argued, eliminated the need for Britain to have a large continental commitment and that consequently the existing supply machinery of the War Office could adequately cater for the British Army.

I argue that within the Government, Hore-Belisha was the first to grasp that one of the consequences of the Munich Agreement was the need for Britain to provide a much larger field force to aid France, and subsequently the equipment of the expeditionary force could only be met by creating a Ministry of Supply before war broke out. It was Hore-Belisha, with growing support from Cabinet colleagues, such as Lord Halifax and Oliver Stanley, who played a major role in persuading the Prime Minister to face up to reality and change his opinion.

Lessons of the 1914-1918 War.

British rearmament in the 1930's started a long debate on the desirability of a Ministry of Supply. This debate revolved around whether the Ministry should be created before the outbreak of hostilities and whether it should have compulsory powers. It was inevitable some speakers would draw on the experiences of the Ministry of Munitions in the Great War.

In 1914 the supply organisation of the War Office was geared to cater for a small army whose chief role was to police the British Empire. When the conflict in Europe developed into one which would last years rather than months, in which citzen armies were deployed in trench warfare, serious supply problems arose for the British. The most apparent problem was the shortage of shells. Lloyd George later claimed that -

> 'By the 29th May 1915, out of 5,797,274 shell bodies ordered by the War Office by or before that date, only 1,968,252 had actually been delivered - this after ten months of war.' (1)

In March 1915 Field Marshall Sir John French claimed that the British attack, commanded by him, at Neuve Chapelle had had to be abandoned after three days because of the lack of shells. He was contradicted by the War Office, who claimed that shells had been wasted. (2)

As Kathleen Burk states -

> 'the real fault of the War Office was a failure to vigorously attempt to secure labour, machinery and other scarce resources from its outside suppliers in order to ensure that they had a reasonable chance of delivering munitions punctually'. (3)

1. Burk, p.38,
2. Frank Owen: Tempestuous Journey- Lloyd George, His Life and Times(London, 1954), p.283, hereafter Owen.)
3. Burk, p. 38.

Lloyd George was appointed Minister of Munitions in May 1915. Subsequently he initiated the constructions of purpose built massive National Projectile and National (Shell) Filling Factories and led the dilution (allowing previously skilled jobs to be performed now by semi-skilled or unskilled operatives) campaign to secure the workforce for them . In October 1915 large purchases of non-ferrous metals were made in the United States (1) and system of licensing key raw materials was introduced. Although Lloyd George left the Ministry of Munitions in July 1916, the impetus was maintained by his successors, in particular Winston Churchill.

The Ministry controlled the steel industry, large sectors of the engineering trades, maintained supplies to the Army and Air Force and by the Armistice, it had a Headquarters staff of 25,000. This illustrates how the Government had abandoned laissez-faire policies for state direction of industry in persuit of victory. The Ministry was renamed the Ministry of Supply in January 1919. This was wound up in March 1921, it having been decided that the functions taken over by the Ministry of Munitions/Supply from the armed services could safely be relinquished to their respective Principal Supply Officers.
In 1922 the C.I.D. established a Sub Committee on the Production of Warlike Stores to review the situation. Its recommendations were received and accepted by the C.I.D. in January 1924. These were -

> 'that a Co-Ordinating Committee consisting of the three Fighting Services, together with a representative of the Board of Trade should be formed.....
> This Committee was to be responsible for.

1. R. Hurstfield: The Control of Raw Materials. (London, H.M.S.O. 1953), p.426. hereafter Hurstfield

a) Ascertaining and maintaining a watch over the National stocks of raw materials required in the manufacture of articles required for the three services and the civilian popluation.

b. Preparing a list of all articles, the total supply of which might be required in war time and....prohibiting the export of such articles on the outbreak of war.

c. Preparing plans for increasing supplies in emergency whether by special purchase arrangements at home or abroad or by opening up new sources of supply ....

d. Maintaining list of contractors additional to those employed by the Services who could be called upon during emergency....' (1)

Thus the Principal Supply Officers Committee (P.S.O.C.) was created as part of the machinery of the C.I.D. Changes were made in 1927, with the President of the Board of Trade appointed as chairman and additional civil servants were provided. The P.S.O.C. dealt with major issues of policy, whilst below it was the Supply Board and the Board of Trade Supply Organisation. This Supply Board -

'was charged with estimating the quantities and types of warlike items required, assessing the capacity of industry to satisfy these requirements, and supervising preliminary measures for industrial mobilisation in war.' (2)

With regard to the Board of Trade Supply Organisation it 'was concerned with raw materials together with plans for their conservation or increase in an emergency.' (3)

In the peaceful days of the 1920's it was thought that in the event of war it was sufficient that each Service Department should retain responsibility for its own supply, helped by co-ordinating machinery of a Ministry of Material Resources and by the continuation of the peace

1. Gibbs.p.777.
2. Gibbs.p.778.
3. Gibbs.p.778.

time committee system described above. International events however were not moving in favour of the continuation of peace.

First Debates on a Ministry of Supply.

Japan's expansionism in the Far East and German rearmament in violation of the Versailles Treaty under the Nazi regime led Britain to undertake a limited programme of rearmament, (as we saw in previous chapters). This also led to many debates concerning the desirability of a Ministry of Supply.

In November 1934, Dr (later Lord) Addison, who had been a Minister for Munitions during the 1914-1918 war, asked for the equivalent of a Ministry of Supply to be established in peacetime, 'as a measure of reasonable efficiency and co-ordination.' (1)

Instead the Government established an 'Advisory Panel....to locate manufacturing capacity for the type and quantitites of armaments not normally manufactured by the trade, but which will be required in quantity in war, and also to help with developing a "shadow" armaments industry' (2). In April 1935 the C.I.D. approved the appointment of both each whole time Chairman and Secretary for the Supply Board. When the Ministry for Co-ordination of Defence was created in 1936, the incumbent of its portfolio, Sir Thomas Inskip, was made chairman of the P.S.O.C. However this did not indicate that the Government regarded that rearmament programmes faced any serious supply problems which merited any compulsory powers by the state over defence contractors.

1. J.D.Scott & R Hughes: The Administration of War Production, (London, HMSO,1955),p. 72, hereafter Scott & Hughes
2. Gibbs.p.778.

Indeed when Winston Churchill put forward an eloquent case in 1935 and again in 1936 for the early establishment of a Ministry of Supply this was met with a very negative response. Churchill, who had been a Minister for Munitions in the Great War argued for a Ministry of Supply on the grounds -

> '(a) It will avoid overlapping and avoid conflicts of priority.
> (b) It will ensure the supply of raw materials to service needs;
> (c) It will quicken production deliveries and use all available firms to the best advantage, and divert both firms and labour to munitions production.' (1).

But the Government had no serious intention of forcing firms and labour to divert to munitions production. Lord Weir, advisor on aircraft production at the Air Ministry since May 1935, put both the Government and Industrialists views succinctly stating-

> 'interference in peacetime would produce entirely novel difficulties and dangers gravely affecting the financial and economic stability of the country' (2).

These comments made in 1936, reflected the Treasury's doctrine, which was only abandoned by the Government in 1939, that Britain's fourth arm of defence was her financial strength, but this would be dissipated if companies were obliged to put defence orders before normal trade. This could lose export orders, which might lead to a possible adverse balance on our overseas trade, which in turn would trigger a run on the pound in the currency markets. There were those in the Government, Chamberlain in particular, who feared a repetition of the financial crisis of 1931, which had brought down the minority Labour

1. PRO Ref.CAB 64/31. Undated Memo headed 'Ministry Of Supply'.
2. Shay,,p.129.

Government. However the Government which followed had a large majority, and from 1934 the country's economy was rapidly strengthening.

Inskip speaking to the Cabinet in October 1936 added a further note to the opposition to a peacetime Ministry of Supply-

> 'He pointed out that even if controls were implemented to compel industries to turn over to defence work, it would be more than a year before those industries actually began production. If controls were implemented only over defence related firms and not over firms in the civil sector, it " would produce such grave discontent and indeed such a feeling of injustice that it could only be resorted to in situations of extreme necessity." Such selective controls would constitute a form of taxation of the affected firms, which would have to forego some of their profits, while firms not connected with defence would be allowed to profit by the boom resulting from the increased defence spending' (1)

Lord Swinton, S.A., who with Duff Cooper were the only supporters within the Cabinet before Munich, of a peacetime Ministry of Supply, put a constructive counter view to that of Inskip's. Swinton believed that many of the delays in the rearmament programme resulted from sub-contractors refusing to accept orders to the specifications required by the Government contractors. As a way out, Swinton suggested -

> ' It would..... simplify and accelerate production if there was power to order Firm A to work for Firm B, and order Firm B to accept the work from Firm A. Nor is this limited form of control unreasonable, because all the firms would be affected in this way and are anxious to get our Government orders; and it is reasonable that the Government which is giving them the bulk of their work, should get out of them exactly what it wants..... Our acute problem,..., is not so much turning over firms to munitions, but getting the existing plans implemented and accelerated. I come to the conclusion that a (Ministry of Supply that had) control of selected firms, which are or desire to be largely munition firms, would help.' (2)

1. Shay. p. 130, who draws on CAB 24/265. 30th Oct. 1936.
2. CAB 64/31 - Paper on 'Ministry of Supply' and Shay p. 131.

But Chamberlain prevailed, He was the author of the policy of 'no interference with normal trade' by rearmament, and had only conceded air rearmament must have priority over usual business in February 1938, as a consequence of Hitler's seizure of Austria.
Hore-Belisha in his diary entry for 18th May 1938 recorded-

> 'The question of a Ministry of Supply was raised at the Cabinet this morning. I [Hore Belisha] said I hoped the P.M. would not close the door to that possibility even in the time of peace.'(1)

That same month, Lord Mottistone, who had been the second in command at the Ministry of Munitions, was successful in seeking the support of the House of Lords for a peace time M.O.S.. Hugh Dalton, opposition spokesman on Defence, indicated that Labour supported a Ministry of Supply which had powers over industry,over all shortages of manufacture, design, inspection, testing and delivery. However Dalton's view was not shared by the Labour party members and Trade Unionists. They would not support a Ministry of Supply, which had powers over the workforce. This confirmed the Opposition did not support an entirely realistic policy. (2)

Hore-Belisha's hope that the door would not be closed to a peace-time Ministry of Supply, was to be revived by the postmortems on Britain's defence weaknessess that took place after the Czechoslovakian Crisis.

Post Munich Debate.

In October 1938, Hore-Belisha came to the conclusion that the French would now expect Britain to provide a

1. Minney.p.156.
2. Minney,p.157.

Continential Commitment of far greater than the two divisions offered at present. However since our defence industries were struggling to supply sufficient Anti-Aircraft guns for home defence, the Secretary for War saw a Ministry of Supply was needed to ensure our field force had sufficient artillery tanks, and equipment. At a meeting of the C.I.D. on the 6th October (1938) Hore-Belisha made a plea for a Ministry of Supply, but this was over ruled by his colleagues who thought - ' it would dislocate "peacetime" economy and create trade union opposition.' (1) Instead the C.I.D. confined itself to requesting the Service departments for reports on the defects revealed in our defences by the September crisis and for remedies. When opening a new Drill Hall, in South Wales on 21st October, the Secretary for War made the most of this platform to state -

> 'from the (Munich) crisis lessons have to be learned and the problems must be stated with candour if they are to be solved with courage..... A Ministry of Munitions to be effective must have full powers to allot orders, to assign priorities, to control the supply of materials and to make arrangements for the diversion of skilled labour. These would be fundamental changes.' (2)

However when the Cabinet met on 26th October to discuss the Service reports on the lessons of the Czechoslovakian Crisis, Hore-Belisha's colleagues were not prepared to make such 'fundamental changes '. When the Secretary for War raised the matter of a Ministry of Supply, the Prime Minister carried the day stating -

> 'Trade Unions and employers would claim that the possibilities of voluntary co-operation were not exausted yet.' (3).

1. Parkinson.p.71.
2. Minney,p.159.
3. Parkinson.p.75.

A Cabinet committee on 'Defence Programmes and Acceleration', under the chairmanship of Inskip was to discuss ways of accelerating the existing rearmament programmes, whilst a Ministry of Supply with voluntary powers was to be considered later. Chamberlain did his best to prempt any further discussion on this latter subject by stating in the House of Commons on 1st November -

> ' that since the Government was not "contemplating the equipment of an army on a continental scale," there was no need for a Ministry of Supply. What the country did need were "certain classes of specially skilled labour " and these could be obtained without the resort of compulsory powers.' (1)

At a Cabinet meeting on 2nd November, Inskip responded to the discussions of 26th October by presenting a memorandum suggesting a Parliamentary Secretary be appointed to his own office to deal with defence supply questions. Hore-Belisha was unhappy about this proposal stating -

> ' The right solution is the appointment of a Ministry of Supply with compulsory powers . Failing this, I think the right course is to appoint a Minister who would have responsibilities for supply work .' (2)

Both Inskip and Hore-Belisha were ignored and the Cabinet concluded -

> 'A Ministry of Supply with compulsory powers was undesirable and one without compulsory powers was also undesirable.' (3

Outside the confines of the Cabinet, there was a growing unease at the perceived slowness with which the Government was tackling the deficiencies in Britain's defences revealed by the Munich crisis. During a House of Commons debate (10th Nov, 1938) criticism of the Government and a

1. Dennis D, p. 149.
2 & 3 Parkinson, p. 75.

proposal for a Ministry of Supply came from a backbencher, Admiral Roger Keyes as well as from members of the Opposition.(1) Liberal M.P.'s announced that on 17th November they would table an amendment on the Kings Speech which questioned why ' no mention is made of a Ministry of Supply, both to secure efficiency and prevent waste and profitering.' (2) Sensing this opposition and anxious to avoid the Government imposing compulsory powers over the private sector, senior representatives of the employers organisation, the Federation of British Industries (F.B.I.), suggested a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss how they might assist the rearmament programme. At this meeting it was agreed that the Government should establish an Advisory Panel of Industrialists (3). Chamberlain decided he would announce details of the Panel on 17th November when the Liberal amendment was debated. During this debate Winston Churchill proposed a Bill in two parts to create a Ministry of Munitions Supply. The first part of this Bill would; firstly give the Minister powers to control the entire supplies of materials needed for national defence and assign priorities for distributing these materials; secondly, give the Minister powers to compel firms to divert part, or all of their commercial production to munitions; and thirdly employ the Minister full time on supply matters, aided by a council of leading manufacturers. The second part of the Bill would only come into effect if we were involved in a major war, and would give the Minister even more sweeping powers.(4)

1. Hansard 5th ser.CCCXL. 396-401.
2. Scott & Hughes.p.73
3. PRO. CAB.16/220,Min.of the Advisory Panel of Industrialists. 20th Dec.1938.p.1.
4. Randolph S Churchill: Into Battle-The Speeches by the Right Hon.Winston S Churchill M.P.(London,1941). pp. 72 & 73,hereafter R.Churchill'.

The Prime Minister then announced he was establishing an Advisory Panel of Industrialists -

> ' partly as a result of his talk with a deputation representing the F.B.I., and partly as a result of the expression of a widespread feeling in the House of Commons, that complaints and suggestions made to the Departments placing orders under the Rearmament Programme were not always given a kindly reception by those Departments.' (1)

Unfortunately on this issue, the Prime Minister's proposal of an Advisory Panel of Industrialists, rather than logical arguments of Winston Churchill, won the support of Conservative back benchers. When the vote was taken on the Liberal amendment the only Conservative supporters were Churchill and his close colleagues, Brendan Bracken and Robert Boothby. However since the advisory panel of industrialists was only 'advisory', i.e. it could only make suggestions and had no executive powers, it was difficult to see how it could be effective as opposed to a Ministry of Supply with compulsory powers. This issue would not however, lie down and Harold Nicolson, National Labour M.P. for West Leicester, recorded on 24th November 1938 that Austin Hopkinson, Conservative M.P. for Mossley Lancashire had told Nicolson -

> ' He (Hopkinson)had seen Kingsley Wood and the latter had admitted quite frankly that we can do little without a Ministry of Supply, but to appoint such a Minister would arouse the anger of Germany. That is a dreadful confession.' (2)

Dreadful confession or not, this reflected the Prime Minister's desire, in November 1938, not to provoke Hitler. However Chamberlain's tactics were to be overtaken by events.

1. PRO.CAB 16/220.
2. Nicolson.p.381.(3)

In January 1939, Hore-Belisha seized another opportunity to promote a Ministry of Supply. At the C.I.D. on 26th January the Minister for Co-Ordination of Defence gave a report on the general production situation. The Secretary for War intervened (as recorded in his diary) -

> 'if we were involved in war it would be a struggle for our very existence and not a war in which we could limit our liability.... The impact of the next war, I said, would be so overwhelming that if a Ministry of Supply were not already in being at the outset, there was a danger that the war would be lost before the organisation could be set up.' (1)

This drew support from other members of the C.I.D. as Pownall recorded -

> ' Hore-Belisha was strongly supported in his demands for a Ministry of Supply by Ernest Brown (Minister of Labour), Kingsley Wood (S.A.) and Stanley (President of the Board of Trade). The urge is partly political, they will have a lot of pressure next session on the subject but there are good arguments as well. They really think we are close to war, and in war we must have the Ministry, so set it up now if only to clear the ground and start the machinery ticking over.' (2)

Pownall fails to mention the support Halifax had given to the Secretary for War. The Foreign Secretary had stated -

> 'It appeared....we should be incapable of making a useful contribution (to help France), unless we pressed on with the our preparations and increased our industrial capacity...Therefore he thought it right that we should extend our industrial arrangements so that we could equip larger forces if required' (3)

Inskip had obviously taken note of these views for on 28th January he published a memorandum entitled ' The Establishment of a Ministry of Supply in Peace' (4).
Whilst sitting on the fence as much as possible, the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence conceded -

1. Minney, p.171
2. Pownall, p.184.
3. CAB 2/8;345th Meeting of the CID, p.4.
4. CAB 24/238, containing CP 33(39).

'There is.... an argument for setting up a Ministry of Supply at once on the political ground that it would be acceptable to some strong currents of opinion in the House of Commons and that it would have a steadying effect on public opinion here and also some effect on the public opinion abroad....There was also present (at the last meeting of the C.I.D.), I think, the feeling that the situation had so far changed for the worse since October (1938) that the decision then made does not hold good now. There was also the feeling that if we are anyhow to envisage a Ministry of Supply in war, its establishment in war conditions would be so difficult an operation as to make it most advisable that the outbreak of war should find it already established and running as a unit of administration'. (1)

Whilst avoiding any positive recommendations on whether a Ministry of Supply should cater for all three Services or if it should have responsibility for inspection, design and research, Inskip went on to state -

'I dismiss first as wholly impractical any idea that we could obtain compulsory powers over labour'
and further
'I should not myself think it requisite to apply compulsion to industry in peace '
and concluded
'The concession of complusory powers over industry is not of course essential to the establishment of a Ministry of Supply. Such a Ministry could be set up with a simple transfer of the exisiting powers of the Service Ministers to a new Minister. There would be some advantage in this, not least in the fact that if it could be got running, before the emergency is upon us, the transfer to war conditions would be easier.'(2)

Such a conclusion ran contrary to the Prime Minister's view which was that a Ministry of Supply in peace time would be perceived by the leaders of the trade unions as a first step to industrial conscription and compulsory military service whilst also antagonising employers in the armaments industries. Chamberlain persuaded the Cabinet to defer any decision. Before the end of January 1939, the

1 & 2. CAB 24/238 & CP.33 (39).

Prime Minister announced he had transferred Inskip to the Secretaryship for the Dominions. Chamberlain had taken this measure because he believed Inskip was no longer supporting the Prime Minister's policy of appeasement,(1) and Inskip's paper on the Ministry of Supply was the last straw.(2) The new Minister for Co-Ordination of Defence, Lord Ernle Chatfield, gave his immediate attention to the Prime Minister's viewpoint.

Chatfield, with assistance from W. S. Morrison. Chancellor for the Duchy of Lancaster, was quick to attack the central theme of Inskip's memorandum by producing a new paper, which whilst conceding there were some organisational benefits from creating a Ministry of Supply in peacetime, concluded these would be outweighed by the liabilities which arose. (3) One such liability was seen as the loss of direct contact between the Armed Services and their suppliers, and consequently a loss of control over the quality of goods received. This ignored the fact that any persons previously employed by a particular Service to inspect the quality of supplies received, could be transferred to the Ministry of Supply to perform the same work. Further support for the Chatfield/Morrison thesis came from the Advisory Panel of Industrialists who produced a paper on 1st March 1939, which stated -

> 'They believed it (a Ministry of Supply) would slow down the completion of the rearmament programme.. They also opposed its implementation on the outbreak of hostilities because it would add to the inevitable confusion inherent in the changeover from peace to war conditions. In their view it was best to wait until the war situation had stabilised before setting up the ministry in accordance with carefully pre-arranged plans.' (4)

1. Shay.p.267
2. Bond BMP.p.249.
3. Shay.p.269 & CAB 24/283,CP.48(39).
4. Shay,p.270 from CAB 16/228.

Taking into consideration the chaos that soon arose in the First World War because of the absence of the Ministry of Munitions, it was optimistic to believe that in a Second World War, the supply dimensions of the war situation' would ever stabilise if a Ministry of Supply was not already in operation. Both the industrialists and Chatfield and Morrison had based their papers on two implicit assumptions. Firstly it was assumed that the role of our Army would continue to be one of limited liability and that consequently the existing War Office supply organisation would suffice. Secondly they hoped that the policy of appeasement would, amongst other things, buy enough time to allow for the preparation of the the advanced plans for a Ministry of Supply before war caught us up. Events however were now to show that the first assumption was outdated and the second to have been optimistic.

I have described in an earlier chapter the pressures and events which compelled Chamberlain to abandon the policy of limited liability. Even before the Prime Minister took the step of increasing the manpower of the Army by doubling the number of the Territorials on 29th March 1939, the shortcomings of the existing supply arrangements of the Services, the Army in particular, were coming to light. For example, Hore-Belisha, revealed to a Cabinet Committee charged with accelerating our defence preparations following Germany's occupation of Czechoslovakia on 15th March 1939 -

> ' that deliveries for machine tools were now being quoted at from 50 to 60 weeks, and the delays were attributed to interference from private orders.' and that ' to secure maximum acceleration, priority for all authorised orders over normal trade would be necessary. If this cannot be accepted, at least priority for machine tools should be given at once.'(1)

1. CAB 27/657, p.17.

Machine tools, jigs and lathes were used by defence industries to produce guns, tanks and aircraft needed by our Armed Services. However, machine tools were also required throughout our manufacturing industries to produce articles for civilian use. Responding, Sir Arthur Robinson *, Chairman of the Supply Board, reported that -

> 'He had discussed with the Panel(the Advisory Panel of Industrialists) the question of whether a Government Statement regarding priority, whilst not interferring with firms' obligations would put them in a better position. The panel agreed.' (1)

In the light of this the Cabinet Committee concluded-

> 'That, in order to ensure the maximum acceleration the minister for Co-ordination of Defence should ask the Prime Minister to make a public appeal to all industry to give priority to all authorised orders for the re-armament programme over normal trade.' (2)

However optimistic the Committee might hope the reaction of the industrialists would be to such an appeal, the matter would not rest there.

Robert Shay rightly indentifies the lack of co-operation that the Government had received from the machine tool industry in the execution of the re-armament programme.(3)Despite widespread concern that the machine tool firms were profiteering from re-armament, the industry refused to open its books to Treasury Officials. Moreover, George Peden shows that in 1939 British output of machine tools was less that one fifth of Germany's and that Britain was a net importer of machine tools!.(4) Peden also reveals that Sir Arthur Robinson had quickly grasped Hore-Belisha's expanded role for the Army, which had been reluctantly conceded in February 1939. It would require twice the annual output of Britain's machine tool industry, even if all exports were stopped.(5) A Ministry

1. CAB 27/657.p.18.
2. CAB 27/657.p.19.
3. Shay,pp,248-249.
4. Peden,p.180.
5. Peden,p.177.

of Supply could facilitate both new capacity in our tool industry and bulk buying from the United States. (1) Chamberlain could not ignore these facts. Commonsense prevailed and on 11th April 1939 the Prime Minister informed the Secretary for War that he was considering the question of a peacetime Ministry of Supply. Chamberlain asked Chatfield and Morrison -

> ' to prepare for consideration by the Cabinet.. a fresh paper with their recommendations to meet the needs of the new situations....and consider the scope of the Ministry.'(2.)

At the Cabinet meeting on 19th April the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence now recommended the immediate establishment of a Ministry of Supply to takeover Army supply, and stores used in common by all the three services. (3)

This recommendation was accepted. Parliament warmly received the announcement on 20th April, until the Prime Minister announced that Leslie Burgin *was to be appointed Minister of Supply. (4) As Burgin's experience within the Cabinet was restricted to Minister of Transport since 1937, his appointment, rather than say Churchill, or Eden suggests that Chamberlain was unwilling to face up to the full extent of the serious problems posed for the Minister of Supply or to grasp that the holder of the portfolio required strength of character and singlemindedness well in excess of his appointee. Further cause for concern arose with the publication, in May 1939, of the Ministry of Supply Bill. Although the intransigence of the machine tool industry had obliged the Government to take action, the Bill contained the minimum of powers over industry that the Government could get away with (5) and the terms

1. H Duncan Hall: North American Supply, (London, 1955), p. 114, hereafter Duncan Hall.
2. Minney, p. 190.
3. Gibbs, p. 781, Shay, p. 273 & CAB 23/98, CP, 21(39)
4. Parkinson, p. 139 & Nicolson, p. 392.
5. Shay, p. 274.

of reference the Ministry were restricted to the supply of the Army and stores of common use by all the services (1) Advocates of a Ministry of Supply, such as Winston Churchill had first raised the issue because of their concern over the slow progress in expanding the RAF, but Chamberlain deferred to the Air Ministry's and Admiralty's desires to control their own supplies. Within his terms of reference, the Minister for Supply was to have power to enforce priority for Government orders over civilian work, and to compel contractors to open their books and submit to binding arbitration on prices. A few days later the Government announced it was to levy a tax on excessive profits, called the Armaments Profits Duty.

A lack of urgency was shown in the Government's time table. Although the Prime Minster had made his announcement on 20th April the Ministry only came into being on 1st August 1939, just one month before hostilities commenced. Whilst Chamberlain had always maintained the necessity of a Ministry of Supply in war, slow progress was made with the essential contingency plans.

The C.I.D. instructed the Supply Board back in 1928, to prepare a detailed plan for supply requirements in the event of war commencing in the autumn of 1939; this date being based on the assumption a war would not occur for ten years (the Ten Year Rule.) and not on any act of prophecy. This plan had five stages, but the Supply Board admitted in July 1939, that it was still working on the third stage.

Chamberlain clung on as long as possible to the policy of 'business as usual' or co-operation rather than

1. Gibbs, p.781.

compulsion, but the creation in peacetime of the Ministry of Supply was a significant and positive measure. Supply requirements of the Army were based on the 1936 proposals of a field force of five divisions and it is hardly surprising that the Ministry of Supply had a mammoth task in coping with the thirty two divisions proposed in 1939. It was decided that new equipment was first to be deployed in the training of Britain's greatly expanded Army. Almost inevitably shortages were suffered by the ten infantry divisions and one tank brigade Britain had stationed in France by March 1940 (1)

Nevertheless having the Ministry in place before hostilities began enabled a smoother transfer of production from civilian contracts to munitions, a quicker resolution of conflicts of priorities and an early start had been made to ensure adequate supplies of those new raw materials that were crucial to the war effort. By January 1940, Burgin was drawing up plans to purchase $720 million of supplies from the United States, including machine tools valued at $124 million and Army equipment amounting to $52 Million. (2).

Conclusion

Winston Churchill, Lord Mottistone, etal advocated a Ministry of Supply in 1930's because they wished to avoid a repetition of the 'shells scandal' and chaos that had occured early in the Great War, before the creation of the Ministry of Munition. These proponents were alarmed by the slow progress of the Government's rearmament programme. They believed a Ministry of Supply would greatly improve

1. J.R.M.Butler: Grand Strategy. Vol II. Sept. 1939-June 1941. (London, 1957.), p.153, hereafter J Butler.
2. Duncan Hall, p.114.

the situation, firstly by avoidance of overlapping and resolving conflicts of priority; secondly by ensuring the supply of raw materials to service needs; and most significantly it would quicken production deliveries and use all available firms to the best advantage, by both diverting firms and labour to armaments production.

Chamberlain and some close allies argued that the existing supply machinery , e.g. The Supply Board and Principal Supply Officers Committee was adequate in peacetime for the rearmament programme. They believed a Ministry of Supply would be a hindrance because any exercise of compulsion over employers and the workforce would lose the co-operation of these interest groups. Chamberlain's persuance of 'business as usual' was founded on the belief that most sectors of industry had sufficient spare capacity to accommodate Government orders without any problems, but where this was not the case the Government should not directly intervene for fear of losing export orders and undermining Britain's recovery from the Depression of 1929-1932.

In the Spring of 1938, after Hitler's annexation of Austria the expansion of the R.A.F. was given priority over normal trade. Munich revived the debate over a peacetime Ministry of Supply. Chamberlain argued the policy of limited liability enabled the Army's supply needs to be adequately met by the existing machinery. Reluctant acceptance, in the Spring of 1939, that Britain would now need a substantial European field force obliged Chamberlian to create a Ministy of Supply. Even now this Ministry was given minimal powers. This, together with the choice of Leslie Burgin as the new Minister, and the comparatively leisurely timetable, displayed that Chamberlain's policy of deferrence to interest groups over the needs for defence, was slow to die. However the new

Ministry ensured in September 1939 that there was no repetition of the supply chaos that had dogged the early months of the Great War. Soldiers of the B.E.F. of 1939-1940 suffered shortages of equipment, partly because it was decided that the training needs of the newer recruits still based in Britain should take higher priority.

Shortages also arose because it took one year before a new factory could manufacture supplies.

CHAPTER 7.

REARMAMENT AFTER MUNICH

The Contrast of the RAF and the Army.

Air Rearmament 1938-1939.

Fear of a 'knock out blow' by the G.A.F. against Britain in the 1930's had ensured expansion of the RAF ,received the highest priority in Britain's pre-war rearmament. Even before Munich however, public concern at the perceived lack of progress of Britain's rearmament, heightened by Hitler's seizure of Austria and his overtures towards Czechoslovakia, had culminated on May 12th 1938, with debates on critical opposition motions in both Houses of Parliament. The debate in the House of Commons was seen to go badly for the Government. Consequently Chamberlain sacked the Secretary for Air, Lord Swinton on 16th May. An historian records that :

> 'from 1935 to 1938, as the Air Minister (Lord Swinton).... more than any other ensured that the RAF was prepared for the exigencies of war' (1)

In order to understand the difficult situation that faced the Government in 1938, and the remedies taken which dramatically improved the position of the RAF by the outbreak of war in September 1939, we need to briefly examine the background to Britain's air rearmament in the 1930's.The Air Ministry followed three principles, conversion, concentration and organisation. (2) As early as 1927 they realised the British aircraft industry, on its own, would not be able to meet the RAF's demands,if

1. J A Cross: Lord Swinton.(Oxford.1982),p.212, hereafter Cross
2. Sebastian Richie: Mil.His.Seminar, on British Air Rearmament 1934-1940. Inst. Historical Research. 27thApril 1993.

war ever came again. Shortages of Air Ministry orders, through successive Government policies of low defence expenditure and the Great Depression, had reduced the core of the aircraft industry by 1934, to small 'family' companies with 27,000 employees. (1)
In 1934, Lord Weir, industrial advisor to the Supply Board, recommended to the C.I.D., it was ' essential to create a shadow arrangement industry capable of expansion to meet war requirements.' (2) The C.I.D. agreed.

When Lord Swinton became Secretary for Air in 1935, he employed Lord Weir as his chief advisor and between them, they saw the motor vehicle industry, with its experience of large scale production, as provider of considerable additional airframe and aero engine production. The aircraft shadow factory schemes conceived in 1935 were launched in 1936. (3)

> ' But conception had to modified with the further expansion of the air programmes."Shadow" factories now had to be reckoned as additions to peace-time capacity, and still further capacity had to be laid down.' (4)

By the second principle 'concentration' was meant that the expansion programme should concentrate on providing a small range of aircraft . However in 1935 the current aircraft of the RAF were obsolete biplanes such as the Hawker Hart, Hawker Hind and Fairey Gordon. (5)
At that time the aircraft industry and aircraft design were experiencing a technological revolution, changing from fabric covered biplanes with open cockpits and fixed undercarriages, to metal skinned monoplanes, enclosed cockpits and retractable landing gear. (6)

1. Postan.pp.14-23 & Cross.Ch.4.
2. Shay.p.93.
3. Postan.p.19 & Cross,pp 159-168.
4. Postan.p.19.
5. Cross.p.158.
6. Cross.p.160.

Quantity production of new aircraft was further delayed by a lengthy five stage process. When Swinton sought to quicken this the aircraft companies and Air Ministry were not always co-operative. Swinton complained bitterly 'few people realise (or did then) how heartbreaking are the delays in getting out a new type.' (1)
Wisely in February 1936 he persuaded the Cabinet the RAF needed the newest bombers, Handley Page Hampdens and Bristol Blenheims. In June 1936 approval was given to order 600 Hawker Hurricanes and 310 Supermarine Spitfires, practically from the drawing board. These far sighted actions took time to implement. The Secretary for Air was unable to exercise power of compulsion towards to Aircraft companies and Swinton had little to show for his hard work by May 1938.

Organisation of this expansion involved the Air Ministry in developing an effective structure which would monitor aircraft production and, if necessary control the industry if war came. In December 1934 a separate department responsible for Research and Development was established. Then in March 1936 a department of aeronautical production, under H. A. P. Disney was created. Weekly progress meetings, monitering the RAF expansion were convened from 25th June 1935 until 1940. (2) However Swinton quickly realised that rapid expansion could only be achieved by means of compulsion, but the Cabinet were not prepared to take this step in peace time.
With this approach of 'business as usual' applying, the Secretary for Air found himself arbitrating between claims by the Air Ministry officials such as -

1. Peden. p. 154.
2. PRO/AIR 6.

> ' Bad organisation...There was so much finished and partly finished work in the shops that unless aircraft began to come out very shortly there would be not space left in which to work.' (1)

This referred to Fairey's new Stockport factory in 1937. There was a counter claim by the aircraft firms such as -

> ' the chief difficulty arises owing to what the firms feel to be a persistent habit on the part of quite a large number of individuals in the Air Ministry to come down to the works and give directions to quite minor changes to be made to planes that are under construction' (2)

Swinton found himself in an unenviable situation, defusing a potentially explosive relationship, developing by the end of 1937, between the Air Minstry and aircraft industry who were represented by the Society of British Aircraft Constructors. (SABC)
Between them, Swinton, Weir and Chamberlain persuaded the SBAC to appoint an independant executive chairman, Charles Bruce-Gardner who was an industrial advisor to the Bank of England. As J A Cross succintly stated -

> 'Taking up his post in January (1938), Bruce-Gardner was soon playing a key role in investigating the viability of the volume of aircraft production demanded by Scheme L. (approved April 1938), and in the general industrial discussions on the voluntary diversion of labour from civilian industry'. (3)

Swinton and Weir between them, in carrying out their three principle of expansion had 'conceived and supervised the conversion of the British aircraft industry to large scale production involving the most advanced aircraft technology, often in the face of staunch resistance from the industry itself.' (4)

1. Peden. p. 155.
2. Peden. p. 155.
3. Cross. p. 206.
4. Shay. p. 222.

Hitler's annexation of Austria in February 1938 persuaded Chamberlain to abandon the policy of 'business as usual'. Before 1938, the RAF expansion schmes had been based on achieving particular targets of first line strengths of aircraft, which it hoped would both placate public opinion in Britain and deter Germany from attacking us. Scheme 'L', adopted in April 1938, differed from previous plans in that it set a production target of 12,000 aircraft in two years. Now Britain was developing the war potential of its aircraft industry. (1)

However before this objective could be achieved, obstacles had to be surmounted, the most serious being the shortage of skilled workers, whilst financing the scheme 'L' led to lengthy Cabinet debates and compromises. Swinton before he was sacked had indentified labour shortages as a brake on further expansion of aircraft production, having informed the Cabinet on 14th March 1938, that 70,000 additional workers would be required to carry out the plan for 12,000 aircraft over 2 years.' (2)

This mammoth problem had still not been satisfactorily resolved by September 1938, when, during the Czechoslovakian Crisis, Ernest Lemon, appointed in June to the new post of Director of General Production (DGP/AM) at the Air Ministry, informed his colleagues on the Air Council that-

> 'To enable it (the aircraft industry) to complete the current programme in time its labour force would have to rise from just over 60,000 in September 1938 to a peak figure of well over 180,000 in January 1939. This would present a monthly figure of 30,000 or 50% of its labour force in September. Contrary to its own hopes the aircraft firms had proved unable, and could not be expected to assimilate new labour at a rate higher than 8%.' (3)

1 & 2. Gibbs.p.314, & Shay.p.206.
3. Postan.p.21.

What was to be done?.. Would not greater co-operation between employers and trade unions in the engineering industry help speed rearmament? Sadly the precedents were unhopeful. On March 23rd 1938 the Prime Minister had already met the General Council of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in order to appeal for ' the goodwill of the Trade Unions,' (1) in plans to accelerate rearmament, but little came of this meeting as the General Council appears to have had a low opinion both of Chamberlain and his Government.-

> ' The Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence seems to have had little more to add in follow-up discussions with the engineering unions: as one unionist complained, he "appeared to be treating us as a lot of children, waving a little flag and asking us to support the Government"'.(2)

Discussions since 1936, between the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) had been equally negative. The EEF proposed that where skilled workers were in short supply, less skilled workers should be engaged. The AEU said it had plenty of unemployed members who should be engaged, but the employers were concerned these long term unemployed would not adapt to modern machines nor be able to use a micrometer.(3)

Unfortunately at a conference on 25th May union representatives, including the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, failed to reach agreement on 'interchange between skilled trades, dilution,the employment of women and more overtime'. (4)J C Little,President AEU refused concessions because of the bad experiences members felt they suffered when concessions were made during 1914 and 1923. (5).

1. R.M.Martin:T.U.C. Growth of a Pressure Group.1868-1976, (Oxford,1980),p.245, hereafter Martin.
2. Martin.p.245.
3. R.A.C.Parker:British Rearmament 1936-9.Treasury,Trade Unions and Skilled Labour. (London,1981),p.330, hereafter Parker Rearm.

4 & 5. Parker 2.p.338.

Memories were still strong of the long and bitter disputes in shipbuilding in 1922 and throughout engineering in 1923.(1) Arthur Deakin, Dept.Gen.Sec.of the Transport & General Workers Union (T&GWU), which had over 50,000 members in engineering, complained at the Annual Conference of TUC in September 1938, of the failure to create a tri-partite body.(Employers, Unions and the Government) in engineering - 'At that same meeting, Mr Little attacked the General Council (of the TUC) for suggesting such a body " for the purpose of doing nothing I suppose, if not for the purpose of introducing dilution"' (2) Dilution was eventually conceded by the AEU in late August 1939, by which time war looked probable and union members fear of future employment had been allayed.(3)

In the meantime, Ernest Lemon, a prominent railway engineer appointed as DGP/AM, took an alternative route. Work must now be taken to the labour. He discovered many smaller engineering firms not working to full capacity and asked the larger 'parent' firms to sub contract at least 35% of their work to the smaller organisations. A letter was sent to Bruce-Gardner on 13th September 1938 who promptly replied that-

> ' I am to assure the Air Council of the Industry's full co-operation and that every effort will be made to avoid any possible failure in the execution of the orders in the delivery programme' (4).

Other factors gave a boost to aircraft production.
Britain was hit by a world recession at the end of 1937,

1. C.L.Mowatt: Britain between the Wars,1918-1940.(Metheun University,1978),p.124., hereafter Mowat.
2. Parker Rearm.p:339.
3. Parker Rearm.p.342.
4. AIR 8/254/ Letter 14.9.38 to Col.Sir D.Banks.

which led to higher unemployment, with workers being laid off in non defence industries. e.g. motor vehicles. Amongst members of the AEU - ' employment rose from November 1937 (1.88%) to the end of 1938 (3.07%). In September 1938 a special enquiry found 11,232 unemployed skilled engineering workers (5,028 more the in May 1937) Of these 8,232 were thought suitable for immediate employment without retraining' (1)
Swinton had, before his dismissal, identified the introduction of night shifts in aircraft factories which enabled fuller use of equipment and increased output. The engagement of these skilled engineering workers made this possible.

Another positive factor was the newly acquired co-operation of Lord Nuffield and his Morris and Wolsey motor companies. Following his appointment, in May 1938 as S.S.A., Kingsley Wood -

> ' quickly initiated talks with Lord Nuffield, the automobile manufacturer who had earlier refused to enter into the shadow scheme as the result of a conflict with Swinton (2) concerning the possibility that he would now agree to undertake to build airplanes for the Air Ministry. As the two approached an understanding on the subject, Chamberlain entered into the discussion and agreement was soon reached that Nuffield would construct a large plant to produce fighters. The Air Ministry was to give him an extraordinarily large initial order of 1,000 planes,a free hand in the location of the factory and the promise of no interference in his plans for production' (3)

In contrast to the conflict between the engineering employers and the AEU, the relationship between the National Frederation of Building Trade Employers (NFBTE) and the National Federation of Building Trade Operatives

1. Parker Chamberlain. p.283
2. Cross. pp.160-161 & 163-165.
3. Shay. p.222.

(NFBTO) the employers and workers organisations was good. (1) Both these federations, whose co-operation was vital to the speedy execution of the the rearmament programme, realised they had a mutual interest. If the Government could be persuaded to only employ federated firms, the employers would avoid paying more than the negotiated rates of pay, whilst the unions would ensure their members and not non -union labour would be employed. A joint consultative committee was established embracing employers, unions and the government for the construction industry in 1937. (2) Thanks to this co-operation, together with a decline in private housebuilding and the Treasury's liberal attitude to proposals for constructing aircraft factories. (3)-

> ' it has been estimated that floor space for aircraft production rose by about 60% between August 1938 and September 1939.' (4)

Whilst the Treasury had given higher priority to the claims of the Air Ministry compared with those of the War Office, it had to ensure expenditure did not exceed that approved. Treasury alarm concerning the overall costs of the rearmament programme led to Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister for Co-Ordination of Defence, reviewing expenditure in 1937. (5) Inskip questioned that Germany could only be deterred from a' knockout blow', if the RAF possessed a counter offensive bombing force of equal number, and suggested developing our fighter defences as cheaper and more easily attainable. (6) Consequently the Cabinet agreed Scheme 'L' in April 1938. This new plan marked a significant change of direction for it

1 & 2. Parker Rearm. p. 334.
3 & 4. Peden. p. 158.
5. Malcolm Smith. p. 180-197.
6. Malcolm Smith, p. 189.

reduced the provision of bombers to 73 squadrons, of which 47 were heavy bombers and 26 medium bombers, whilst the proposals for fighters remained at 38 squadrons.

We have already seen how the Munich post mortem led to key Cabinet decisions on 7th November 1938. Firstly they approved a programme of 3,700 additional fighters, half to be immediately ordered; secondly, that efforts should be made to secure maximum production by 31st March 1940; and finally orders for heavy bombers should only be sufficient 'to avoid substantial dismissals in the aircraft factories concerned ' (1) A new scheme 'M', proposed a heavy bomber force of 85 squadrons. However the Cabinets decision on 7th November, together with technical problems and the Churchill Cabinet's decisions during May 1940 to concentrate production on Spitfires, Hurricanes and the existing twin engined bomber types, (2) resulted in only 41 four engined bombers being delivered by the end of 1940. This lead to a saving for the Treasury.
Although the Treasury was more liberal in its dealings with the Air Ministry's programme than with the War Office both the Treasury and the majority of the Cabinet were very concerned by the astronomical costs of these Schemes agreed in 1937 & 38, which ultimately determined our air strategy. To finance the growing costs Simon, in his 1938 Budget raised standard rate income tax by 6d. (2½p) in the pound to 5s6d (27½p), together with an increase in oil duties and 2d on a pound of tea!. (3) The following year the Chancellor more than doubled car taxation, thereby accelerating the transfer of workers from the motor industry to the aircraft factories and other defence

1. AIR 8/250.
2. J.R.M.Butler: Grand Strategy.Vol II,September 1939-June1941. (London, 1957),p.252, hereafter Butler .
3. Parker Remarm.p.313.

industries. He also raised duty on tobacco and sugar. In February 1938, Simon announced an increase in borrowing, under the Defence Loans Act, from £400 to £800 millions. During the financial year 1938-39 the Government, through the Bank of England sold £242 millions worth of gold 'to secure dollars to be exchanged against sterling to hold up the exchange rate',(1) In April 1939, the Chancellor thought the recession ruled out an increase, but with the coming of war in September, he increased the standard rate by 1s6d (7½p) to 7s (35p) (2)

North American Supplies of Aircraft.

Frustration with the apparently slow progress of British aircraft companies to expand their production to the levels required by the RAF expansion schemes and the desire to secure a source of supply immune from a German 'knockout blow' led the Air Ministry to turn its eyes to North America in 1938 -

> ' In May (1938) an Air Ministry mission visited the United States of America and Canada. Its first task was to make a special purchase of aircraft, including trainers, from the United States. These were needed to fill the gap expected from war wastage in the first year of war. The second task of the Mission,,,,,was to explore " the possibilities of creating a war potential in Canada"' (3)

The most obvious restriction on purchasing aircraft, aircraft components or raw materials for aircraft production from North America, was its adverse effect on Britain's balance of payments. Increasing British exports to Canada and the USA to try to offset these purchases of aircraft would not be an easy task. (4)

1 & 2 Parker Rearm. p.314.
3,Duncan Hall,p,29
4,R,A,C,Parker;'The Pound Sterling;American Treasury and British preparations for War,1938-9',E.H.R.(1983)

However, Sir John Simon need not have been too alarmed about Britain purchasing American aircraft, as the Air Ministry mission quickly grasped that this trade would be greatly inhibited by -

> 'the backwardness of the United States from the point of view of military aircraft as compared with the high quality of American civil transport machines ' (1)

Another constraint was the restriction on the export of military equipment from America by the Unites States was its Neutrality Act. Britain's Air Attache in Washington had advised the Air Ministry of the restrictions of this leglislation when the latter, at the height of the Czechoslovakian Crisis on 27th September 1938 had asked how many aircraft could be bought in America for delivery to Britain within one month. (2)

The Munich Agreement eased the immediate problem. President Franklin Roosevelt was sympathetic to British and French needs to rearm against the threat of Nazi Germany and he was able eventually, to persuade Congress to lift the neutrality ban in November 1939. (3) Anglo - French weaknesses highlighted by their over eagerness to sign the Munich Agreement, had alerted President Roosevelt to the necessity for the United States to rearm . Moreover British and French orders for American aircraft would help develop U.S. war potential without any cost to the United States Treasury.

Before Munich, on 23rd June 1938, Britain had ordered 250 Lockheed Hudson aircraft and 200 North American Harvard

1. N.Duncan Hall.p.105.
2. N.Duncan Hall.p.106.
3. R.J.Overy: The Air War 1939-1945. (MacMillan,1987), p.28, hereafter Overy Air War.

trainer aircraft from the United States. (1) Subsequently the Air Ministry ordered 200 more Harvard planes and placed large orders for aero engines with the two principal American aircraft engine firms. (2) By the outbreak of war Britain had received 228 of these Harvard trainers and 50 Lockheed Hudsons from America. (3)

As the Canadian aircraft industry only employed 1,500 workers in 1938 (4) it was seen as a longer term source of war potential. However Canada was soon providing aluminum which was used in large quantities by the aircraft industry. GC Peden explains-

> 'on March 15 1939, the Air Ministry requested Treasury sanction, at twenty four hours' notice, of an agreement reached with the Aluminium Company of Canada for guaranteed purchase of Aluminium. Given the guarantee, the company would set up a factory at its own expense.... The Treasury refused to be rushed and consulted the Board of Trade, and it was not until 4th April that agreement was reached, on the basis of another alternative scheme whereby a shadow factory for the British Government would be set up in Canada. This factory would be operated by the Canadian company, but equipment would be sent out from Britain so as to reduce the drain on foreign exchange'. (5)

This is just one example of sound administration helping Britain's balance of payments. Protection against air attack became to rank higher than economics in Britain's defence strategy, and in November 1938 orders were placed in Canada for 80 Hampden bombers and 40 Hurricane fighters. Canada had the advantage of a reserve of skilled labour and access to American machine tools, (6) as well as immunity from German air attacks. These

1. N Duncan Hall.p.105.
2. N Duncan Hall.p.107.
3. Parker.p.306.
4. N Duncan Hall.p.30.
5. Peden.p.153.
6. N Duncan Hall.p.7.

factors led to the establishment in Canada in November 1939 of the Empire Air Training Scheme for the instruction of British and Commonwealth aircrews. Thus the Canadian aircraft companies became an important supplier to the Training scheme as well as the R.A.F. and the R.C.A.F. (1)

Professor Parker discloses that -

> 'During the whole course of the Second World War.... the United States and the British Dominions produced nearly one third of the munitions used by the British Commonwealth forces, most of it financed by loan or gifts.' (2)

With regard to the financing of supplies from the United States, Professor Parker is optimistic since Britain had to sell overseas investment to pay for these before the introduction of lend-lease in February 1941.
Professor Gibbs however indentified another restriction stating -

> 'any immediate big increase in the size of the RAF was still blocked by the long-standing problems of aircrew recruiting and training, problems which the introduction of compulsory service in the spring of 1939 came too late to solve before the outbreak of war'. (3)

Progress In Air Rearmament: From Munich to War.

Despite the limits to the expansion of the RAF in the 1930's considerable progress was made in Britain's air rearmament between the Munich Conference and the outbreak of war; particularly with Fighter Command. Marked improvements were made in Britain's aircraft production

1. N Duncan Hall.p.32.
2. Parker.p.306 & N.Duncan Hall pp.3,9,35,39 & 67.
3. Gibbs.p.589.

after Munich. Appendix 8(a) shows that deliveries outstripped the programme. Appendix 8(b) draws a comparison between Britain's annual output of aircraft and that of the other Great Powers, whilst the main groups of deliveries of these planes to the R.A.F.can been seen in Appendix 8(c).The outstanding increase in Britain's output was because:

a. the sound roots planted by Swinton. e.g. shadow factories, improved Air Ministry organisation and the ending of 'business as usual'.
b. Ernest Lemon's directive to sub-contract more than 35% of work.
c. the Air Council agreeing to initiate group schemes (whereby firms co-operated in producing complete aircraft.)
d. the recession 1938 and 1939 within civilian industries.(encouraging the transfer of workers from motor to aircraft industries.) (1)

This initial wave of acceleration in Britain's defence preparations followed the Munich post mortem . A second wave begun in mid-December 1938 after -

> 'Kirkpatrick (First Secretary, British Embassy in Berlin 1933-1938) had been told by a retired German official close to General Beck, of preparations for a sudden air attack on London. These plans were supposed to be completed in three weeks.' (2)

As a consequence three special meetings of the C.I.D. were held between 16th and 22nd December 1938 .(3) At the third meeting it was -

> 'decided to accelerate air raid precautions, the provision of anti-aircraft defences and preparations for civil defence. All departments were to ensure that their war plans were brought to a state of readiness within three months, i.e. before the end of March 1939.' (4)

1. AIR 8/254.146th Prog.meeting 6th Dec.1938.
2, Cadogan.p.130. Diary for 15th Dec.1938.
3. Cadogan.p.131.
4. Cadogan.p.131 & CAB 2/8,CID meeting 22nd Dec.1938.

A third wave of acceleration was induced by German seizure of Prague on 15th March 1939. (1)

What had all this achieved by the outbreak of War ?..

First if we refer to Appendix 1 showing R.A.F. mobilizable squadrons at the time of Munich and compared with a year later we can see, not only improvement in the numerial position of aircraft but a marked advance in the quality of the planes that could be deployed. Equally promising was that twenty of the planned twenty two 'Home Chain' radar stations had been completed.

> 'These were established along the coast from the Isle of Wight to the Firth of Tay and there were also two in the far north. Twenty eight out of the thirty two proposed Observer Corps districts for tracing aircraft inland had been organised'. (2)

London had 450 barrage balloons for its defence, but none were available elsewhere. Despite the shortage of anti-aircraft guns, Britain's defences against air attacks had shown a significant improvement since the Czechoslovakian Crisis.

Bomber Command had advanced too as we can see from Appendix 1. Wellingtons and Hampdens had been gained since Munich and as J.M.Spaight succinctly comments-

> 'All these except the Harrow could be accounted modern types, though Battles were now obsolete; and in any case it was not altogether satisfactory to find the medium bombers representing over 50% of the total.' (3)

The night bombing of Germany began in 1940 and Whitleys, Wellingtons and Hampdens had to bear the brunt of the campaign as only 41 four engined heavy bombers had been delivered

1. CAB 27/657.Committee on Defence Programmes...Acceleration.
2. Butler.p.35.
3. AIR 41/8,p.79.

by the end of 1940 and a further 498 by the end of 1941. (1)

In a note to the Air Council, entitled 'Priorites In Air Requirements', the Chief of Air Staff pessimistically concluded at the end of July 1939 that -

> firstly ' air defence is still our greatest problem and our greatest deficiency:'
> seondly ' we must not continue to work to an inadequate programme of expansion.'
> thirdly 'while making reasonable concessions to the vital air requirements of the Army, and Navy, we should do our uttermost to resist any dangerous weakening of the Metropolitan Force. (2)

Air Chief Marshall Sir Cyril Newall was right to fear that the needs of the B.E.F. in France and the air protection of coastal waters would leave insufficient aircraft in Britain for home defence. However Newall was too gloomy in his assessment of our air defences, which had greatly improved since 1938. The C.A.S. was over estimating German front line air strength at 4,210, whilst it was actually 2,847 on 1st August 1939. (3) Another 'worst case' assessment, and it appears to have been discounted, by the reports from our Air Attache in Berlin and Desmond Morton, head of Britain's Industrial Intelligence Centre that -

> 'German aircraft production appeared to be reaching its peak, that British production was fast catching up and would be running "neck and neck" with German output by the end of the year (1939), and that the situation looked "very much brighter" than previously supposed possible.' (4)

It was Britain's Army not the RAF, which was her greatest problem and deficiency.

1. Postan.p.471.
2. AIR 6/58,AIR 20/393,pp.87 & 88.
3. Postan.p.471.
4. Wark.p.72.& FO 371/22956.

Progress of the Army: Munich to War

Much has been made of the deficiencies in September 1938 of the Army in its Anti-Aircraft or Air Defence of Gt. Britain rôle. However Britain's army suffered serious other defects at that time.

A 'War Office' Progress Report, Number 24, of 24th October 1938 revealed an alarming shortage of tanks and artillery.(1) Whilst orders for 630 Medium or Cruiser tanks had been approved, orders had only been placed for 336. None had been delivered and only 40 were forecast to be delivered by 31st March 1939 as 'Further orders await trials of pilot models to new design.' (2). Similarly with Infantry tanks, 367 had been approved, orders were placed for 340, but only 16 had been delivered by 1st October 1938 and only 70 expected by the end of March 1939. In respect of artillery the situation was no better, of 380 approved 25 pounder guns, 183 were ordered but none received. They had been ' Deferred on account of priority of other work. Capacity allocated.'(3) Why was this so ?

Whilst Britain's General Staff had accepted in 1934 that a Field Force would be needed to protect Belgium and Holland in order to deny Germany the Channel Ports and airfields in the Low Countries , the Government lacked the political will to provide the necessary resources. Chamberlain, then the Chancellor of the Exchequer had cut the Army's deficiency programme of 1934 from £40 to £20 million.(4)Obsessed by the fear of a 'knock out blow' by

1. Appendix 9.
2. CAB 27/657.p.7.
3. CAB 27/657.p.9.
4. Pownall.p.45.

the Luftwaffe, the Cabinet had eagerly agreed in December 1937 to Sir John Inskip's proposal to cut the Army's five year programme by £81 millions. Now defence against air attack was the Army's first priority whilst 'assistance to an ally ' was relegated to fourth place. As a consequence of this change of direction -

> 'in the year ending March 1938 some £8 millions went to the ADGB and some £13 millions to the material and ammunition of the Regular field force out of a total of some £44 millions for the Army as a whole. Comparable figures for the year ending March 1939 were £13 millions for ADGB and £22 millions for the field force out of a total of £67 millions.From the purely technical and industrial points of view the principal victims of these priorities were the field artillery and the medium artillery, but indirectly, through the overriding financial claims of ADGB, the entire army programme was held back.' (1)

The Impact of Munich:.

The crisis over Czechoslovakia in September 1938 had a profound influence on Hore-Belisha -

> 'He was appalled at the thought of what would have happened to the Field Force had it been dispatched to France during the Munich Crisis. Quite apart from lack of tanks, guns and ammunition reserves, the troops would have had no winter clothing. This was a state of neglect almost comparable with the condition in which the army had been sent to the Crimea.' (2)

Like it or not the French would expect us to send a field force to their aid now that the Czechoslovakia Army of 35-40 divisions ceased to be an ally, and Germany was no longer faced with the danger of a war on two fronts. The Secretary for War realised that in order to adequately

1. Postan.p.33.
2. Bond.p.290.

equip a field force for continental warfare, Britain would have to end the policy of 'business as usual' and introduce a Ministry of Supply. This could compel firms to give defence contracts priority over civilian work. Hore-Belisha tried without success to persuade the C.I.D. on 6th October 1938 of the immediate need for such a Ministry. (1) Whilst the policy of 'limited liability' had held back theArmy programme before Munich, there were one or two glimmers of hope arising from the appointment in 1936 of Sir Harold Brown, D.G.M.P. He realised that the lean years before rearmament had lead to an alarming decline in the armaments industries. The Government maintained only three Royal Ordinance Factories (ROF's) in business, , whilst a fourth had been 'Mothballed'. Vickers-Armstrongs survived as the only large scale private arms manufacturer. (2)

The D.G.M.P. also realised that the small programme for the Regular Army was insufficient to create adequate industrial capacity to supply the Army's needs. However even with limited liability, the Territorial Army was expected to provide a contingent for the field force, and subsequently was permitted the same equipment as the regulars to train for this role. Provision of training equipment was thus used by the D.G.M.P. to justify some provision of new R.O.F's and ' in this way by spring of 1939,..... a specialised industry .... came into existence .' (3) In the private sector, Lord Nuffield had established in 1937, Nuffield Mechanisations and Aero, as a weapons subsidiary of his Morris Motors empire. (4)

1. Parkinson. p.71.
2. Postan. p.8.
3. Postan. p.47.
4. David Fletcher : The Great Tank Scandal: British Armour in the Second World War. (London 1989.), p.5, hereafter Fletcher.

Both these arms makers were well short of supplying the war needs of a large continental commitment, but a start had been made. Another significant long term development had been the appointment of a Director of Industrial Planning (D.I.P.) responsible for surveying the 'industrial capacity of the country and its preparation for the production of army weapons in war.' (1) In addition the D.I.P. and his 'Directorate' had to compile a more detailed register for Army use indicating what army stores could be produced by individual firms and what degrees of re-organisation would be required.

Achievements After Munich:

The Defence Programmes and Acceleration committee placed its final report before Cabinet on 7th November 1938 and apart from accelerating orders for anti aircraft guns and other equipment for A.D.G.B., the other effect on the Army programme was the placing of further orders for munitions to keep firms in production until 31st March 1940. (2) With the Cabinet decisions of February 1939 to equip the Army for a continental role, and the German seizure of Prague on 15th March 1939, a new impetus was given to improving the equipment of all three Services and the C.D.P.A. was re- established on 20th March 1939.

Hore-Belisha reminded this Cabinet Committee they were now planning for a Field Force of 19 Divisions, and indeed with the doubling of the Territorials on 30th March 1939 this became 32 Divisions. The most significant 'short term' proposals (those which would take effect within three months), included -

1. Postan.p.42.
2. AIR 8/250.

A. First instalment of the additional £65 million for equipping Territorial units of the Field Force.
B. Continuation orders for £3 millions for shells, fuzes and munitions to keep firms in production.
C. Accumulation of stocks of raw and semi-wrought materials such as steel forgings and cloth, to the value of approximately £3 million;
D. An increase in the Regular Army from 185,700 to 225,000.
E. To increase the National Defence Companies, an embryo Home Guard to protect vunerable points, from 15,000 to 25,000.

All these proposals had only been agreed after negotiations with either senior members of the Treasury or the Chancellor of the Exchequer. (1)

Treasury approval was also given to the most significant of the 'long Term ' proposals viz., to spend £5 millions on orders for a reserve of machine tools, jigs , guages etc. to provide war potential in industrial capacity for the 19 Divisions. This was a piece of intelligent planning but was overtaken by the decision to enlarge to Field Force to 32 Divisions. In order to remedy this -

' On 4th May (1939) the War Office came to the Treasury Inter-Service Committee,with proposals to implement a Cabinet decision of 19th April to provide war equipment and reserves for 10 Territorial Army divisions, at a total cost of £19 million in addition to expenditure already authorised.' (2)

At that meeting Treasury officials stated that until the War Office could produce estimates of the new industrial capacity needed to produce this equipment, only continuation orders could be placed with existing contractors. Full sanction was only given to the Treasury on 26th June. (3) Thus tight Treasury control was still being exercised over the Army programme despite Cabinet

1. CAB 27/657. War Office Proposals.
2. Peden.p.177.
3. Peden.p.177

approvals for expanding the Army. Treasury officials were aware of the lack of industrial capacity and shortages of the necessary machine tools for the Army programme. They were concerned that serious competition for resources could arise between the War Office and other Services. Indeed Hore-Belisha had taken up with the C.D.P.A. that the War Office was being quoted a 50 to 60 week delay for machine tools. (1)

The solution was an end to the rule of ' no interference with normal trade' and the establishment of a Ministry of Supply which could determine priorities. It took until the 19th April 1939 for Chamberlain to concede this and until 1st August 1939 before it was operative. These measures did have beneficial effect but it took time to make up the years of neglect and indecision. However Britain was running desperately short of time. A private letter of 2nd June 1939 by Laurance Carr, the Director of Staff Duties at the W.O., illustrates the dilemma arising from rapid changes in the Government's policy for the Army -

> 'The main difficulty has been the gradual broadening of the basis of calculation. If only it had been possible to go large from the start all would have been well now. You will recall that in April 1938 we received a charter to prepare for a F.F. of 4 div and a mobile division to be rearmed for war in the Middle East, the rearmament to be spread over 5 years.... With this mill stone of 5 years in which to rearm the provision departments could not develop a very large increase in armament factories. As a basis of our readiness for war had been progressively increased the original layout has proved quite inadequate. For heavy armaments like Cruiser and 'I'Tanks and medium gums no new factory can start production in much under a year. In October 1938 our charter was changed to a continental war with a second Mobil Div and 4 T.A. divs added to the F.F.....Then in February 1939 the Cabinet in order to save money reduced the rate of despatch of the above mentioned F.F. knowing that by doing so there would not be so many reserves to be held in peace.' (2)

This meant another re-calculation.

1.CAB 27/657.p.18.
2. Bond B.M.P.pp.327 & 328.

'At the end of March 1939 the P.M....doubling the T.A....and at the same time stated that the necessary equipment and war potential for the 32 divs regular and T.A.....This has meant a complete new conspectus involving a mass of work.....required to meet this charter.... working night shifts these factories can only make minor improvements on our output. So new factories have to be found, and we know roughly speaking that will produce nothing for a year.' (1)

The Tank Shambles:

Indecision by both the Government and the General Staff in the 1930's manifested itself most seriously in Britain's lack of suitable armoured fighting vehicles. As the D.G.M.P. explained to the Advisory Panel of Industrialists on 23rd January 1939 -

'the difficulty about the Tank has really been, to be quite candid, to make up our minds exactly what we want..... Directly you begin to consider a war on a Western basis your Tanks become a different business altogether from a war in Egypt let us say' (2)

Bond expands on this, stating-

' An army organised for imperial defence was simply no longer suitable for the demands of modern continental war. This was the central dilemma to which the soldiers found no clear answer in the 1930s and which the Government avoided until its hand was finally forced in the spring of 1939.
Thus military conservatism and the predominance of the imperial defence mission clearly played a significant part in determining form, doctrine, and size of Britain's armoured forces.' (3)

J.D.Scott etal also clearly indentified the failing of Britain's General Staff -

'There was , it will be apparent, no overall statement of

1. Bond B.M.P. p.327.
2. CAB 16/221.Appendix p.4 & 5.
3. Bond B.M.P. p.188

> tank policy in this period by the General Staff, beyond the brief indication of types. The many meetings which were held during 1937,1938 & 1939 to define the 'Tank Programme' as a whole were concerned almost entirely with numbers and with the broad categories of 'cruisers' and 'infantry'. (1)

The General Staff made a further rod for their own backs. Instead of developing a general purpose tank suitable for any theatre of war, they spread their risks by developing designs for 'light','cruiser' and 'infantry' tanks. Light tanks with 14mm armour and only two machine guns were ordered in large numbers for the former cavalry regiments to act in a reconnaissance role. They were to be deployed mainly in Egypt against possible Italian invasion from Libya. (2) Light tanks deployed by the B.E.F. in May 1940 were massacred by superior German armour and anti-tank guns.

Cruiser tanks, with 30mm armour and a 2 pounder gun as well as machine guns, were developed for the Tank Brigade to act against enemy armoured units. Infantry or assault tanks, which were slower but more heavily armoured than 'cruisers', were intended to assault enemy fortifications, such as Germany's Siegfried Line. In the heat of combat however, it was unlikely that tank units were able to select their 'appropriate' enemy target but would have to cope with whatever opposition they faced.

David Fletcher explains that before the rescinding of the rule of 'business as usual', outside Vickers-Armstrong and Nuffield Mechanisation, the W.O. had only been able to place tank orders with -

> a) agricultural engineers John Fowler & Co of Leeds.
> b) locomotive manufacturers, the Vulcan Foundry at Newton le Willows; and
> c) shipbuilders, Harland and Wolff of Belfast. (3)

1. J.D.Scott etal.Design,p.310.
2. Pownall.p.121.
3. Fletcher, P5.

None of these firms were geared to the then modern technology of welding armourplate, but employed the traditional and slower technique of riveting. To make matters worse, whilst Nuffield boasted a new factory in Birmingham-'the nucleus of its design and production staff was drawn from a sister company, Morris Commercial Motors, which at that time produced nothing larger than a 8 ton lorry'.(1) Not surprisingly they had a few problems producing cruiser tanks with 14-30mm armour plate and a weight of 19 tons. With the ending of 'business as usual' and the establishment of a Ministry of Supply, the D.G.M.P.was able, in April 1939 to place tank production with railway workshops, notably the London Midland and Scottish workshop at Crewe. (2) Armstrongs-Whitworths was the only organisation, at that time, with any experience of tank production and progress was painfully slow, with only 60 infantry tanks available in August 1939.(3) This is illustrated by my Appendix 9(b). This shows that manufacture of cruiser and infantry tank only began to get into its stride in the summer of 1940.

The Ministry of Supply began operations on 1st August 1939, giving a boost to the re-equipement of the Army. Dr. Burgin,Minister of Supply, explained to the House of Commons on 21st September 1939 that thanks to the survey by the D.I.P.-

> 'particulars are at the disposal of the supply organisation of 9,000 firms (who).....wherever possible, had been allocated either for immediate production of war material or for conversion and swing-over to war material at an early date...'

and referring to the Royal Ordance Factories-

1. Fletcher,p.5.
2. Peden,p,175.
3. Bond.p.328.

'Eighteen have been put in hand since (rearmament began) and six have been put in hand since the outbreak of war, making (with the original four) a total of 28 ordinance factories.' (1)

However, as Laurance Carr of the W.O. had revealed, with a new factory it would frequently take a year from the commencement of construction before anything was manufactured.

Army supplies covered a wide and diverse range of items, e.g. from boots to tanks, than aircraft production, and could involve many specialist skills (welding armour plate for example) which was lacking in smaller firms. Consequently the W.O. and later the Ministry of Supply, found it much more difficult to put out orders to sub-contractors than had the Air Ministry.

In view of these short comings, the W.O., like the Air Ministry, explored acquiring supplies in Canada and the USA.

North American Supplies:

Following on from discussions at the Imperial Conference of May 1937, Britain agreed in March 1938, to order 5,000 Bren guns from the Canadian firm of John Inglis Company, who were also to supply 7,000 of these weapons to the Canadian government. (2) However -

'During the remainder of 1938, while far reaching schemes were set in motion for the construction of aircraft in Canada, no comparable development took place in regard to munitions in the narrower sense. Indeed, the only further step taken was the provision by the W.O. of an order of

1. Penguin : Hansard:Vol.11-The National Effort.. (London,1940.)p.23. hereafter Penguin Vol.11
2. H Duncan Hall.p.7.

> 800,000 lb of T.N.T. in support of a Canadian Government project. In the spring of 1939,, however, the question of munitions supply was again revived. Canadian manufacturers were now informed that the U.K. would consider placing orders for a wide range of armaments, including anti-aircraft, anti-tank and field artillery, machine gun carriers, shells and machine tools'. (1)

Whilst the W.O. wished to develop a ' war potential' in Canada through educational orders, Treasury officials were more concerned with maintaining Britain's reserves of Canadian dollars and were reluctant to sanction spending on factory construction in Canada before the outbreak of war; and -

> 'thus....the Canadian munitions industry, outside the Dominion arsenal, still consisted of only one firm in actual production of British orders. This was the National Steel Car Corporation, which was turning out 3.7-inch shells at the rate of 3,000 rounds per week. ' (2)

Other factories were either nearing completion or still under construction. Britian was much too slow in developing the war potential of the Canadian industry, particularly its motor vehicle manufacturers (which in 1937 had produced 207,000 vehicles) (3). The latter would become a significant source of supply for British Commonwealth forces. Although not a major supplier of tanks -

> 'Relatively much more important was the Canadian output of minor armoured fighting vehicles, such as scout cars and (bren gun) carriers and also other military vehicles..The bulk of the Eighth Army's transport was made in Canada, and in the medium group (15 cwt to 3 ton) the Canadian contribution to Commonwealth supplies was only slightly less than that of the United Kingdom itself.' (4)

1. H Duncan Hall.p.8.
2. H Duncan Hall.p.9.
3. Overy, W&Ec.p.71.
4. H Duncan Hall.p.223.

Whilst serious consideration had been given by the British Government in 1938-39, to placing large orders for munitions in the United States, they were restricted by 'dollar shortage, production costs, time and American neutrality'. (1) In the year following Munich, Britain's only order for munitions in the Unites States was for 4½ million dollars of predictors and associated anti-aircraft equipment. Machine tools valued 124 millions dollars and raw materials amounting to 196 million dollars were scheduled from a total of 720 million dollars worth of equipment planned to be purchased by Britain from USA in the first twelve months of the war. Since the USA lacked any tank production facilities in 1939 importing armoured fighting vehicles from her, only became a possibility in 1941, after Britain had helped establish American production through educational orders. (2)

Conclusion:

Britain's aircraft output greatly improved in the months following the Munich crisis. This was due to the measure by Ernest Lemon, D.G.P. to raise sub-contracting to at least 35%; and by the Governments decision of February 1938 to end 'business as usual' in the aircraft industry; and through the greater supply of skilled workers made available by the recession in civilian industries. In September 1939, monthly deliveries of aircraft to the R.A.F. had equalled that of German output and soon overtook the Reich's production. The decision to maximise fighter output at the expense of the heavy bomber programme, was to greatly assist the R.A.F. in its victories in the Battle of Britain. However, this

1. H Duncan Hall.p.106.
2. Fletcher.Chapt.6.

decision, which had been made mainly on the grounds of finance, but also by Chamberlain as an ever optimistic wish not to provoke Hitler, gave Britain, no option but to follow a defensive strategy for the first two years of the War. Supplies of aircraft from Canada were too small to have an impact on the earlier hostilities, whilst those from the USA were chiefly deployed either training aircrews or by Coastal Command. (1)

By contrast -

> 'In the summer of 1939 the Army was in a profound state of disarray caused by the sudden changes which had been imposed upon its size, organisation and priorities and which had been introduced more in reaction to foreign and public pressure that in response to professional advice.' (2)

Thanks to the D.I.P. a small specialised armaments industry was in existence by March 1939 but it could only provide some of the Army's equipment. More R.O. factories were being built, but it took one year from the start of construction before any munitions were produced. The D.I.P. survey of industrial capacity would be valuable later in the War, as would the Ministry of Supply. Had the Ministry been introduced earlier and its portfolio held by someone with more initiative and vigour e.g. Winston Churchill, the British Expeditionary Force might have been better equipped and made a greater impact in 1940. Thanks to the General Staff's indecisive tank policy;, under-funding from the earlier policy of 'limited Liability ' ; the survival of 'business as usual'until the spring of 1939 and the lack of suitable tank production facilities; the B.E.F. was starved of cruiser and infantry tanks. The action by British armour outside

1. Parker, p.306.
2. Bond. p.326.

Arras on 21st May 1940 against Rommel's panzer divisions, demonstrates that with more tanks Britain could have helped to mount more effective counter attacks against the German rapid advance. As well as a shortage of tanks, in summer 1939 -

> 'the regular infantry divisions of the Field Force...(possessed) only 72 out of 240 heavy anti-aircraft guns and only 30% of the approved scale of ammunition; only 108 out of 226 light anti aircraft guns and 144 out of 240 anti-tank guns.' (1)

Whilst in 1938 no plans existed at the War Office for the transportation of the B..E.F to France, painstaking work by Brigadier L A Hawes and a small team of officers, for a year from mid 1938 ensured safe arrival of 160,000 soldiers and airmen, over 23,000 vehicles and a vast tonnage of supplies in France by September 1939. (2)

Shortages of industrial capacity for armaments in Canada and the USA; Treasury reluctance to use Britain's dollar reserves to create war potential and America's Neutrality Act, delayed significantly, military supplies from North America until 1941. American machine tools and raw materials did help Britain expand her own arms production and defend herself.

1. Bond.p.328.
2. Bond.p.333-335.

CHAPTER 8.
GERMAN PROGRESS IN REARMAMENT 1938-1939
and
THE IMPACT OF HER TERRITORIAL GAINS ON HER ECONOMY.

No assesment of Britain's progress in rearmament between the Munich Conference and the declaration of war, would be complete without the appraisal of the improvements achieved at the same time by her 'ultimate enemy', Nazi Germany. I have examined the economic impact, as well as direct military gains of German territorial expansion, since the outcome of the Second World War was determined as much on the respective 'home fronts',in the aircraft factories and on the farms, as in direct combat. Although the Anschluss occured in March 1938, I have included Germany's Austrian gains in my evaluation, as their impact influenced later developments, in addition to the consequences of the ceding of the Sudetenland and occupation of rump Czechoslovakia. In my evaluation of the developments of the economy of the new Greater Germany, is a brief examination of whether the territorial gains enabled a greater degree of self sufficiency within the Reich. Autarky would weaken the impact of Allied economic warfare. I reviewed the advance of each of the three armed services and the likely outcome for Britain, and where appropriate, for France as well.

Anschluss:

Although the Anschluss, the incorporation of Austria into Greater Germany, took place in March 1938, its impact was to influence Germany's policy during the Czechoslovakian crisis. Britain's C.O.S. estimated that -

'The old Federal Army of Austria consisted of approximately 9 divisions of a lower fighting value than the Germans'(1)

whilst Germany could also-

'count on some 100 aircraft from Ostmark (Austria) of which about 80 are heavy bombers of Italian design.'(2)

Edward Homze discloses that although Austria had no aircraft industry -

'The annual production of 1.8 million tons of iron ore, the large coal deposits which could be used to produce synthetic gas, and the untapped potential for electrical energy were extremely useful in overcoming shortages affecting the aircraft industry.'(3)

Wilhelm Diest reveals that Germany gained from Austria -

'a most efficient high quality basic industry and above all, a processing industry whose capacity... was insufficiently utilized and which, given the existence of roughly 400,000 unemployed (largely skilled workers), could be put to use relatively quickly.'(4)

However, Hitler's obsession with achieving economic self-sufficiency, particulary in food, believing the Allied blockade had contributed to Germany's surrender in the Great War, produced some negative consequences from annexing Austria. Austrian agriculture held out the prospect of reducing the level of foodstuff imports for the newly enlarged Greater Germany. However, plans to maximise agricultural production backfired as-

'the owners involved, in return for the sinking of their debts, were liable to the state with their farmholding, largely in the form of prescribed delivery quotas- which many farms were unable to meet- the measures immediately

1. CAB 27/627, C.O.S. 698, p.6.
2. CAB 27/627, C.O.S. 698, p.7.
3. Homze, p.232.
4. Wilhelm Deist: Germany and the Second World War, Vol.1., The Build-up of German Aggression, (Oxford, 1990), p.323. hereafter, 'Deist, Vol.1.

triggered a flight from the land, resulting in bottlenecks in food supply.(1)

Hitler looked to the conquest of Czechoslovakia to remedy what he perceived as the German problems of food supplies and 'living space'.

Acquisition of the Sudeten Regions:

Hitler desired to cease the whole of Czechoslovakia in September 1938, but signature of the Munich Agreement, had restricted his immediate gains to the predominantly German speaking Sudeten regions. Nevertheless Germany achieved substantial benefits. Whilst the only immediate military gain was the seizure of much of Czechoslovakia's border fortification -

'some important industries, often with spare capacity, fell into German hands, with a large number of unemployed in the region. In the raw-material sector the new territory had surpluses of timber as well as rich (and military useful) deposits of tungsten and uranium ores, which Germany had so far lacked. Added to these were high-grade lignite deposits. In terms of quality and quantity they made possible a considerable expansion of mineral oil, Buna and general chemical production, as well as power generation.'(2)

My Appendix 10 shows the major industries of the region which had passed to German control. These were rapidly tied into the German, Four Year Plan.(3) Despite these raw material and industrial gains, Hitler's continuing obsession with autarky and 'living space', led him as early as 21st October 1938 to call on his advisors to draw up plans for the conquest of rump Czechoslovakia.(4)

1 & 2. Deist, Vol.1,p.327.
3. Deist. Vol.1,p.330.
4. Deist. Vol.1,p.332.

A report dated 1st November 1938 from the Armed Forces High Command stated -

> 'the Sudetenland needed considerable supplies in all other areas of raw materials and in the food sector, so that this territorial gain resulted "for the moment"... in a deterioration of the overall economic situation for armaments purposes' (1)

Subsequently the German Institute of Cyclical Research calculated the Sudenten region could only supply 80% of its own food requirements. (2) Berlin was also concerned by a growing boycott of German goods in Britain, Belgium, Holland, the United States and South America arising from the growing opposition to Nazi expansion and the barbarity of her anti-semitism. (3)
The Munich Agreement, together with an absence of support from Britain and France and her geography, made rump Czechoslovakia vulnerable to Hitler's demands. Consequently the German Chancellor inspired 'unrest' in the province of Slovakia. He summoned to Berlin on 14th March 1939, the unhappy Czech President Dr. Emil Hacha, who in the early hours of the next day. was bullied into signing away the independence of his country.

Germany Annexes Bohemia and Moravia.

Germany's occupation of Bohemia and Moravia gave her an immediate improvement in her military strength. Army stores seized by the Germans were found sufficient to equip, or complete the equipment of twenty divisions. (4)

1. Deist. Vol. 1, p. 330.
2. Deist. Vol. 1, p. 353.
3. Deist. Vol. 1, p. 331.
4. See Appendix 11 for fuller details.

Following its entry into Czechoslovakia -

> 'The Wehrmacht promptly inspected all armament enterprises and thus gained a quick idea of articles manufactured and of productions capacities. At the same time over 200,000 technical drawings and patents fell into German hands. They often proved of considerable importance to the Wehrmacht and to the German armament industry: Czechoslovakia's industry had been extensive and highly developed.' (1)

The major organisations within this industry employed a workforce of 150,000 .

a) Skoda, with an impressive arsenal at Pilsen.
b) The Czechoslovakian Arms Works at Brno and
c) The partnership of C.K.D. and Praga in Prague.

In particular the Germans were keen to exploit the 35t Skoda Tank and the 38t C.K.D.Tank as these were superior to most of the German armoured fighting vehicles. One third of the Panzer divisions deployed against France in 1940 were equipped with Czech built tanks. (2) During the Second World War, Czechoslovakia would prove to be a significant supplier for the German Army, providing approximately 3,500 tanks and 2,800 self-propelled guns (3) in addition to small arms and other weapons. This obviously posed a significant drawback for the Allies, to which I will return.

With regard to the Czech aircraft industry-

> 'this was small but as well developed as the rest of the armament industry, with a monthly capacity of 60 aircraft and 150 engines and a work force of 10,500. The Czechs were producing a number of aircraft of their own design... to be used as trainers, glider tugs and transports.' (3)

1. Deist.pp.333-334.
2. H.C.Doyle & C.K.Kliment:Czechoslovak Armoured Fighting Vehicles.1918-1945.(Waterford,1979),p.58, hereafter Doyle & Kliment. and Deist.p.89.
3. Doyle & Kliment,pp.71-80.

Under German direction these factories were developed to produce training and reconnaisance aircraft, transport gliders, aircraft engines and spare parts.(1) This should have enabled German aircraft factories to concentrate a higher proportion of their facilities on producing fighter and bomber aircraft. However of greater importance to Germany's leaders was their aim -

> 'to get possession of Czechoslavak gold and currency reserves. In the summer of 1939, under pressure from the German military authorities, the Czechoslovak National Bank transferred 809,984 ounces of gold from London to Berlin, in disregard of the British embargo. A year later its gold reserves in Prague were taken "into safe keeping by the Reichsbank".' (2)

Berlin's plundering of Czechoslovakia's reserves gave Germany considerable relief from her foreign trade problems, consequently weakening the impact of the foreign boycott on German exports.
With the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, Germany also gained control of considerable stocks of metals, including 18,500 tons of copper; 3,000 tons of lead; 8,500 tons of zinc; 1,000 tons of nickel; 1,500 tons of aluminium and 320 tons of tin.(3)

Slovakia becomes a German Satellite.

In March 1939, Slovakia was transformed from a Czechoslovakian province into a satellite state of Nazi Germany. This feifdom was seen as an important source of natural gas and minerals such as iron ore, manganese and copper,(4)and it was also already 95% self-sufficient in

1. Homze.p.233.
2. Deist. Vol.1.pp.334/5
3. Deist. Vol.1.p.335.
4. Deist. Vol.1.p.339.

foodstuffs(1) and therefore its German master perceived its role-

> 'to help diminish the Greater German Reich's shortage of foodstuffs and animal feed'(2)

Hitler should have been pleased with his conquests of Austria and Czechoslovakia, for the new Greater Germany, with its dependencies and satellite states had moved nearer to autarky.

Military historian, John Keegan confirms that-

> ' In 1939... Germany was almost completely self-sufficient in food..She also produced all coal she consumed and a high proportion of her iron ore, except for armaments- grade ore which was supplied from Sweden. For rubber and oil-commidities for which coal based substitutes would be found during the war- she was wholly dependent on imports, as she was also for most non-ferrous metals.'(3)

Another daunting factor for the Allies was-

> 'As a result of the Third Reich's industrial accretions from the Protectorate (of Bohemia and Moravia) and from the incorporation of Austria and the Sudetenland, Germany's share of world industrial production in mid 1939 amounted to 15%. After the United States, the Reich therefore held second place in the league of the world's industrial countries.'(4)

How could the Allies remedy this situation? Earlier I described how Britain took steps to accelerate the programme of her armed services after the German occupation of Prague. Belatedly Britain turned to North America to develop her resources to produce aircraft and munitions, (5)

1. Deist Vol.1,p.339.
2. Deist Vol 1,p.338.
3. John Keegan: The Second World War., (London,1989),p.104. hereafter Keegan.
4. Deist Vol.1,p.336. & Richard J Overy: War and Economy In The Third Reich,(Oxford,1994),p.202. hereafter Overy War & Econ.
5. H DuncanHall,pp.5-14 and my Chapter 7.

but these were limited by Britain's dollar reserves and America's Neutrality Act. (1) France also placed large orders for aircraft in the United States, but looked to Britain to provide a greatly enlarged field force to replace that of the Czech Army. In April 1939 Britain announced Conscription and a Ministry of Supply, but unfortunately this Ministry was not in operation until 1st August 1939. (2) The German seizure of Czechoslovakia's gold and currency reserves limited the impact of any Anglo-French boycott of German goods. Britain had prepared plans for economic warfare, e.g. blockade against Germany in the event of hostilities, but-

> 'In April 1939, however it was considered that Germany's (supplies of foodstuffs and raw materials) position was somewhat stronger; it was known that she had been able to raise the level substantially during 1938, and was still doing so.'(3)

Consequently Britain would need to seriously consider strategic bombing as an alternative to a blockade, but only the R.A.F's small numbers of Whitleys, Wellingtons and Hampdens had the range to attack targets in Czechoslovakia. Heavier bombers, such as the Manchester and Stirling would not now be available until February 1941, thanks to a Cabinet resolution on 7th November 1938. No thought seems to have been given to rescind this decision. Moreover night operations would be necessary (4) which effectively reduced the accuracy of the bombing. Allies air power lacked capacity to do much damage in 1939 (or 1940) to the Czech arms industry.

1. H Duncan Hall, pp.39-59
2. See previous chapters 4,5 & 6.
3. W.N.Medlicott: The Economic Blockade, Vol.1. (London, 1952), pp.26-27, hereafter Medlicott.
4. AIR 16/254, 'The General Policy for Employment on the Bomber Force at the Onset of War.'

Germany now looked to bring South Eastern Europe, in particular Roumania with its oilfields, within its orbit.(1) Chamberlain responded positively, by attempting a policy of containment, giving British guarantees to Roumania and Greece (as well as the better known one to Poland.) (2)

How well had Germany used the 'breathing space' presented by the Munich Agreement, and her economic and territorial gains of 1938 and 1939 to expand her armed forces?.

The Luftwaffe and German Aircraft Production.

Whilst Hitler's bloodless victories over Austria and Czechoslovakia brought considerable gains for the Third Reich, its arms economy still suffered its share of problems. The aircraft industry was a good example.

> 'On October 14,1938 scarcely two weeks after the Munich conference, Goring announced Hitler's gigantic new armament programme, which would dwarf all previous programmes....but the greatest increase was reserved for the Luftwaffe. It was to be "immediately enlarged fivefold" and was given top priority'. (3)

However, this proposal was completely unrealistic. In defiance of the restrictions of the Versailles Treaty and the Paris Air Agreements of 1921, the National Socialist regime had dramatically expanded the output of the German aircraft industry (4), by the skilled deployment of sub-contractors (52) and a system of interest free loans for

1. Deist, War.Vol.1,pp.340-349.
2. Donald C Watt: How War Came-The Immediate Origins of the Second World War,1938-1939.(London,1989),pp.162-187, Hereafter Watt.
3. Homze.p.222.
4. Homze,pp.1-4.
5. Homze.p.77.

constructing or extending aircraft production facilities.(1) Production had stagnated in 1937 and 1938 in part as a consequence of the extensive re-tooling taking place in the industry as it phased out production of obsolescent aircraft. e.g. Heinkel He 51 and Dornier Do 23 in favour of modern planes.e.g. Messerschmitt Bf 109 and Dornier Do 17. Shortages of raw materials, budgetary difficulties and skilled labour contributed to this inertia of output.(2)

However Richard Overy indentifies a more fundamental cause for this problem, which was mainly self-inflicted -

> 'The German military leadership's whole strategy of "armament in depth" was a counsel of perfection,....but in many respects unrealisable at the optimum. The military planners insisted from the outset on the highest quality of equipment, and on the right...to interfere at every stage of the production process....Even in the most advanced sector, the aircraft industry, traditional work methods, excessive use of skilled labour, and wasteful material policies undermined the drive to greater output started by Hitler in 1938.' (3)

The prospect for the immediate future would not be much brighter. Whilst the Four Year Plan introduced in 1936 had played a significant role in Germany's pre-war rearmament, in August 1939, as Hitler prepared to attack Poland, no plans existed for mobilising the aircraft industry for war, nor had plans been prepared for other key industries. Mobilisation plans only existed for the iron and steel industries, mineral oil production and part of the chemical industry. Plans were only in preparation for coal mining, semi-finished metal goods and machine tools.(4)

Goring had unwittingly setback the development of the Luftwaffe by appointing Ernst Udet as head of its Technical Office in 1936. Udet had been a distinguished

1. Homze.p.88.
2. Homze.pp.148-149; Overy,W&E.,p.199; Deist War Vol.1.p.489.
3. Overy W&E.,p.199.
4. Overy,W&E.,pp.198-199.

fighter pilot and professional aviator, but he lacked the detailed knowledge required of his post. His obsession with dive-bombers lead to costly blunders which at first delayed and then prevented Germany developing effective long range heavy bombers. The Junkers Ju 88 had been designated for long range operations, such as attacking Britain, but Udet's insistence that this aircraft should operate as a dive-bomber, delayed its mass production until well into 1940. (1)

However caution must be exercised. In September 1939, the airforces and aircraft manufacturers of Poland and France faced far greater problems in respect of inadequate or obsolescent aircraft and poor levels of output than Germany, who had expanded their first line strength of its airforce from 2,847 in September 1938 to a formidable 3,609 aircraft a year later. (2) When the G.A.F was deployed as a tactical airforce against weaker opponents, e.g. Poland and France, the Luftwaffe played a major role in the defeat of those countries. Only when it was asked to assume the role of a strategic airforce against the R.A.F. did the deficiencies become apparent. Lack of strategic bombing aircraft, the short range of the Messerschmitt Bf 109 and the short comings of the Messerchmitt Bf 110 as an escort fighter, all contributed to the Luftwaffe's first major set back in the Battle of Britain.

<u>The German Army and its Equipment: 1938-1939</u>.

Richard Overy reveals-

> 'during the summer of 1938 the (German) army found it impossible to meet its scheduled expansion on time, and find all raw materials and labour to provide the weapons.' (3).

1. Deist, Wehrmacht, p.67.
2. Postan, p.471; Overy, Air War. p.23.
3. Overy, W&E. p.193.

However, as mentioned earlier, the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia presented Germany with the equipment of the Czech Army, enough for fifteen infantry divisions. (1) From the Czech tanks that were seized and from further output of the Skoda and C.K.D. factories -

> 'It was possible to equip three German armoured divisions with Czechoslovakia combat vehicles for a campaign against France'. (2)

The significant gains for the German Army between Munich and the outbreak of war were the improvement in quality and quantity of supplies and weaponry, coming to a large extent from the booty seized in Czechoslovakia. (3) The peacetime strength of the German Army remained at 52 divisions, 4 of motorized infantry, 4 light motorized armoured and 6 panzer divisions. (4) Whilst the balance had moved to Germany, the situation should not have been hopeless for the Allies. Overy indentifies -

> 'The reluctance of the army to mobilise the mass-production car industry in Germany either before or after 1939, in stark contrast to the practice in Britain and the United States...Prospects for economies of scale and long production runs, of which German industry was perfectly capable, were poor from the outset. The military preferred close links with small, specialised firms which were more responsive to individual requirements rather than with new mass-production industries.' (5)

Much progress had been achieved by the German Army in 1939, but it had not been prepared for a major war. Indeed Hitler hoped he could avoid a general war until 1943. (6)By May 1940 France could deploy 3000 tanks to the 2400

1 & 2. Deist, Wehrmacth, p.89.
3.. Wark. p.111, & Deist, Wehrmacht, p.89.
4. Wark, pp.111&248, & Deist, Wehrmacht, p.52.
5. Overy W&E., pp.199-200.
6. Overy W&E., p.196 & Diest, Wehrmacht, pp.78 & 88.

tanks of Germany. Britain was still forming its first armoured division in France, but two tank battalions had a small victory near Arras on 21st May, when they dented the advance of the German 7th Panzer Division, to the alarm of its commander, Erwin Rommel.(1) Clearly had Britain and France been able to attack the German armour earlier in the Battle of France, in greater numbers, the outcome would have been more favourable to the Allies.

German Navy Expansion to 1939.

Hitler had been born in Central Europe and displayed no enthusiasm for expanding the German Navy, until its Commander in Chief Admiral Erich Raeder, persuaded the Reich Chancellor in March 1934, that a strong navy was an essential component of Germany's aspiration to become a world power.(2) Authority was given for a Replacement Shipbuilding Programme of 8 battleships, 3 aircraft carriers, 18 cruisers, 48 destroyers and 72 submarines by 1949.(3) Not wishing to antagonise the British, Raeder played a leading role in the signing of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935, which permitted Germany to possess a navy of 35% of the British tonnage. However-

> 'The agreement of 1935 was..merely a concealment, a dipolmatic deception, and thus satisfied both Hitler's foreign policy requirements as well as Raeders's ideas on the future of the German Navy.' (4)

Parity with the French and protection of the Baltic had been Raeder's initial objectives, but by the summer of

1. Keegan, p.77, & Martin Gilbert: Second World War, (London, 1989), p.70, hereafter Gilbert.
2. Diest Wehrmacht, p.73 & Overy W&E., p.182.
3. Deist Wehrmacht, p.73.
4. Deist Wehrmacht, p.77

1937 he could no longer rely on Britain's neutrality. Leaders of the German Navy discussed the conduct of a naval war with Britain, on the basis of a study on the 'Tasks of Naval Warfare 1937/8'.(1) During the Czechoslovakian crisis Britain had joined France as a potential enemy of the Reich.-

> 'During 1938 the (German) navy worked out plans for a large battle fleet for war with Britain which formed the basis of the so-called Z-Plan, published in January 1939, for 6 battleships, 4 aircraft carriers, 8 heavy cruisers, 233 submarines and numerous destroyers and smaller craft' (2)

However-

> 'Only in very few cases had the possibility of building these new ships by 1942/3 been examined'(3)

Since Nazi Germany lacked the equivalent of a Ministry of Supply there was -

> 'excessive competition for resources and duplication of effort between the three services, who refused to co-ordinate their production',(4)
> 'However Raeder did manage to get Hitler on 27th January 1939 to give naval armament priority "over all other Reich and export orders ," so that naval armament received a tremendous boost in 1939. But the building of battleships which was from now on persued by all possible means, no longer corresponded to the concept,...of a naval war against Britain...It became apparent..that the directive...brought the Navy only short-term success in its competition for its share of raw materials.'(5)

The reality of German naval rearmament was more modest , see appendix 13.

Submarines and aircraft carriers could be needed to combat British naval superiority, but failure to produce the latter proved a serious long term mistake. Whilst the Royal Navy outnumbered their German opponents in September 1939-

1 & 2. Deist Wehrmacht,pp.77-78.
3. Overy W&E.,pp.191-192. & Deist Wehrmacht.pp.82-84.
4. Deist Wehrmacht,pp.83-84.
5. Overy W&E,p.199
6. Deist Wehrmacht,p.84.

'the British position with regard to the fleet air arm, anti-submarine warships, and convoy escorts was far from satisfactory..' (1)

In 1938, Fleet Commander, Admiral Carls had-

> 'demanded that the French, Dutch and Danish coasts be occupied in order to extend the (German)Navy's coastal operational base' (2)

When this was achieved in 1940 with the defeat of France and accompanied by Italy's entry into War, the worst case senario dreamed of in the 1930's, appeared as a grim reality, for the Royal Navy.

Conclusion

Annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia presented the German economy and its armaments industries with a considerable gain in resources. Austria's Army provided about 9 divisions and its Air Force comprised 100 aircraft. Munich presented Germany with the bulk of Czechoslovakia's border fortifications. Both had large numbers of unemployed workers, 400,000 in Austria, who were comparatively quickly employed in armament production. Their industrial resources followed by those of the Sudetenland were rapidly integrated into the economy of the new Greater Germany. These new territorial gains brought additional sources of raw materials, (iron ore, lignite and timber) to ease the acute shortages in Germany. Hopes that Austrian agriculture would provide greater self-sufficiency backfired, whilst annexation of the Sudetenland did not fulfil Hitler's drive for greater autarky.

1. Wark. pp152-153.
2. Deist Wehrmacht. p. 80.

Consequently the German Chancellor rapidly planned the annexation of rump Czechoslovakia. Hitler's coup had presented the Reich with enough military equipment for 15 divisions, solving the supply shortages. Exploitation of the Czech tank factories provided three additional armoured divisions for the invasion of France in 1940. Nazi seizure of the Czech gold and currency reserves enabled Germany to set off the overseas boycott of her exports and continue to import supplies that were vital.e.g.oil. Czechoslovakia's agriculture production and her natural resources enabled Greater Germany more self-sufficiency, blunting the Allied economic warfare. The Allies lacked the resources for a strategic bombing campaign against Czechoslovakia. With these additional resources, the Greater Reich was only second to the United States in the league, of industrial power. A significant shift in the balance had occured in Germany's favour. Chamberlain, prompted by his Foreign Secretary attempted to contain German expansionism by giving guarantees to Roumania,Greece and Poland. Hitler's demand for a five fold expansion of the Luftwaffe was hindered by traditional working methods,and over interference by military planners. Consequently Britain's monthly output of aircraft matched that of the Reich by September 1939 and greatly exceeded it in 1940.(Appendix 8b.) Only when it attempted mass daylight raids on London, did the shortcoming of the Luftwaffe become apparent.

Nazi failure to create an effective co-ordinating body, similar to Britain's M.O.S., led to excessive competition for resources and duplication of effort between their three armed services. They also lacked effective war plans to mobilise industrial output. Consequently Germany failed to realise the military use of her mass-production car industry until after 1939. Despite the exploitation of Czechoslovakia, Germany still have fewer tanks than France in 1940. The French outmoded strategy for armoured warfare

and the failure of her British ally to provide a full armoured division in support, assured Germany victory in the Battle of France.

Expansion of the German Navy was boosted by Hitler's directive in January 1939. However Raeder had given precedence to battleships at the expense of submarines and aircraft carriers which were needed to combat the Royal Navy. British naval power was still supreme in 1939, but cloaked shortcomings in the Fleet Air Arm, anti-submarine ships and escort vessels. German conquest of Denmark, the Low Countries and France in 1940, would begin a severe test for the Royal Navy.

CONCLUSION:

Neville Chamberlain, unlike Sir John Slessor and Basil Collier who had the benefit of hindsight, believed he had prevented, rather than postponed a war with Germany by accepting the Munich Agreement.

Only Duff Cooper resigned from the Cabinet in opposition to German annexation of Czechoslavakia's Sudeten regions which had been signed away at Munich. Cabinet colleagues acquiesced with his policy because they shared his exaggerated fears of German air attacks, the so-called'knock-out blow'. They were either dismayed by Britain's unpreparedness for war, or they accepted the C.O.S's. unfounded pessimism that nothing could be done to 'prevent Germany.. from inflicting a decisive defeat on the Czechoslovakian Army' (1) or the hasty assessment of the C.O.S. that 'it would be better to fight (Germany) in say 6 - 12 months time'.(2) Even if Chamberlain had known the Luftwaffe was incapable of ' a bolt from the blue' against London, and appreciated the strength of the Czech Army, or had Britain's defences been stronger, he would have still strived to reach a settlement with Hitler, rather than support Czechoslovakia and risk a war. (3)
Pownall astutely interpreted that 'the first and main lesson is that we must expect to have to send troops to help the French'.(4)
Chamberlain had no intention of ending the policy of 'limited liability' or providing a continental field force

1. CAB 27/627,C.O.S. 698 para.87.
2. CAB 21/544...Question re.Military Advantage To Fight Now.
3. Neville.pp.69-70 and Parker I/Chamberlain,Chap.8.
4. Pownall,Vol.1.,p164.

any larger than the two divisions offered in September 1938. Instead a Cabinet Committee was established to accelerate production of anti-aircraft guns, fighter aircraft, escort vessels, minesweepers, and hasten air raid precautions. These measures would help to allay public anxiety which had become apparent during the September crisis. He also hoped that because these proposals were purely defensive they would not alienate Hitler . However, when Hore-Belisha proposed (1) to reinstate a field force larger than the miserable two divisions, both the full Cabinet and their Committee shirked responsibility, concluding this was a change of policy that must be referred to the C.I.D.. Likewise, both the full Cabinet and their Committee agreed to the Secretary for Air's proposal to increase the programme of fighters by an additional 3,700 aircraft. His other intention, to concentrate bomber production on the new heavier aircraft was rejected purely on the grounds of cost. Henceforth, instead of Bomber Command deterring the Germans by fear of our counter attack, an expanded Fighter Command was in theory to dissuade the Luftwaffe, or if this failed, to so damage the attackers that they rapidly withdrew. Sadly postponing the heavy bomber programme must lengthen the War, since Britain was so denied strategic bombing as one of the few means available for countering Germany's military superiority.

Chamberlain only readily supported proposals that were unquestionably defensive measures. He acted as a brake on anything else which aimed to counter the growing menance of the Third Reich. Reluctantly the Prime Minister conceded the end of 'limited liability' when rumours of a German 'bolt from the blue' and the invasion of Holland had forced him to accept an attack on the Low Countries was a casus belli.

1. CAB 27/648.Role of the Army In Light of Czech.Crisis.

This momentous decision, inspired by the fear of the heavy onslaught Germany could mount against Britain if she seized ports and airfields in the Netherlands, lead to staff conversations with the French. It must not be forgotten that in September 1938, all the Dominions, except New Zealand, violently opposed any stand against Germany. These views rapidly changed, for on 26th Janurary 1939 the Dominions Secretary stated. 'If an invasion of Holland evoked no response from this country, the Dominions would conclude that our sun had set.' (1)

Lord Halifax realised Britain must do more to support the French, who looked to us as an ally, to compensate for their loss of the Czech Army's 35 divisions, but he was concerned that if Britain failed to make her support clear, France might make a non-aggression treaty with Hitler, leaving Britain to face Germany alone. Hore-Belisha consequently gained crucial support from the Foreign Secretary. When Chamberlain and Simon complained of the cost of the proposals for the field force, Halifax responded-

> 'he would sooner be bankrupt in peace than beaten in a war against Germany.' (2)

Eventually, the Prime Minister and Chancellor, conceded Hore-Belisha's case.

Chamberlain opposed peace time conscription because he believed the public thought it was synonymous with the horrors of trench warfare, and he feared that the trade unions would respond by withdrawing their co-operation with the rearmament programme. When the French showed they were not impressed by the doubling of the Territorial Army, (March, 1939), Hore-Belisha renewed his plea for conscription. Chamberlain's obsession of a surprise air attack weighed on his mind after the Guarantee to Poland. He reluctantly conceded the case for conscription only

1. CAB 27/624, p.5.
2. Pownall Vol. I, p.185.

after he was finally convinced, that the T.A. could not meet his demand for a permanent couverture of A.A.guns. Halifax and Simon had declared their support for this measure. Public opinion had swung behind such positive means of opposing Germany after Hitler had effectively torn up the Munich Agreement on 15th March 1939, by seizing rump Czechoslovakia. No wave of strikes followed the announcement of the Military Training Bill and opposition of the Parliamentary Labour Party was easily outvoted in the House of Commons.

The Prime Minister held out against a Ministry of Supply because he believed it would lose industrialist's support for rearmament and subsequently check Britain's economic recovery from the Great Depression. Chamberlain withdrew his opposition, when , after agreeing to the expansion of the Army, he was told that there was a waiting list of 50-60 weeks for machine tools. The appointment of Winston Churchill as Minister of Supply, would have given the new government department a vigourous and innovative leader, and I think, would have brought reconcilation in Parliament at a time of national crisis. However it appeared Chamberlain feared ' a long running fight of doubt in Cabinet'(1) more than anything else. Instead he appointed Leslie Burgin, a National Liberal, who had previously been Minister of Transport.'Not a dynamic appointment, rather another horse from Caligula's well-stocked stable.' (2) Burgin was appointed on the 20th April 1939. He could draw on the experience of the Ministry of Munition in the Great War and that of the C.I.D., which had supposedly been working for 10 years on plans for supply requirement in the event of war in 1939, but the new ministry did not come into full operation

1. Feiling,p.386.
2. A.J.P.Taylor:English History 1914-45.(Oxford,1965) p.444 hereafter Taylor1914-45.

until 1st August 1939,one month before the outbreak of war! Valuable time had been lost in which to equip the field force for European warfare. Burgin could not be blamed altogether, for the lack of tanks, but the Ministry of Supply should have harnessed the potential of the Canadian motor vehicle industry earlier, so enabling its British counterpart to devote more resources on armoured fighting vehicles.

On the positive side, British aircraft production matched that of Germany by September 1939 and at the outbreak of war radar covered most of Britain.But Germany had gained too; with raw materials and labour drawn from Austria and Czechoslovakia making Greater Germany second only to the United States in 1939, as a world industrial power. She had achieved a higher level of self sufficiency which weakened the impact of an allied naval blockade. The seizure of the Czech Army's weapons and supplies equipped an additional 15 infantry divisions, but even more alarming was the exploitation of Czechoslovakian armaments manufacturers which provided an additional 3 armoured divisions for the attack on France. First line strength of the Luftwaffe stood at a formidable 3,609 aircraft in September 1939, which enabled it in tactical air warfare to make a major contribution to the defeat of Poland and France. Luftwaffe weaknesses did not become apparent until Goring launched massed day-light attacks on London in September 1940.

Germany's Navy gained the Battlecruiser Scharnhorst in January 1939 and increased her submarine fleet to 57 vessels, although only 26 of these could operate in the Atlantic. Britain boasted the world's largest navy, but the aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm were obsolete, and the number of anti-submarine warships and escort vessels were far from satisfactory. Royal Navy planners could not have forecast the defeat of France or that this would present

Germany with ports advantageous for attacking Britain's supply routes. However from experience of the Great War they should have made more preparations for countering German submarine warfare. Allied airpower would play a crucial role in winning the long and hard fought Battle of the Atlantic. Fortunately for Britain, Germany failed to creat an effective equivalent of a Ministry of Supply before 1942. Had she done so German Navy plans to construct aircraft carriers might have borne fruit making the Royal Navy's burden even greater.

Slessor and Collier assumed that the Battle of Britain was inevitable in the summer of 1940. France could still deploy 3,000 tanks to the 2,400 German tanks,(1)but their failure to exploit this advantage lay mainly in her failure to develop a clear strategy for armoured warfare. Even so Charles de Gaulle had some temporary success with his 4th Armoured Division on 17th May 1940. Had he been able to launch an earlier counter attack he might have checked the German advance and brought greater resistance. The poor state of equipment of the B.E.F. points clearly to Britain having failed to fully exploit the 'respite' after Munich and also that given by the 'phoney war.'

The smooth transportation of the B.E.F. to France clearly demonstrated Britain's organisational skills.Localised success by two battalion's of British tanks near Arras on 21st May 1940 demonstrate what could have been achieved had Britain deployed her armour earlier or if more tanks had been available. German advances could have been checked, allowing France to bring in her new Deivoitine 520 fighter aircraft to battle and thus given time for Britain to mobilise support for her ally. Certainly the Battle of

1. Keegan, p.60.

Britain could have been postponed and circumstances made more favourable for the R.A.F.

I am of the opinion that Chamberlain must shoulder much of the blame for Britain's demise in 1940, for he put too much emphasis on 'hoping for the best' and not enough effort to 'prepare for the worst'.

Appendix 1.

RAF Mobilizable Squadrons ; Munich Sept.1938 compared with Sept 1939.

TYPE	OBSERVATIONS	1938	1939.
Fighter Command.		Sqdrns.	Sqdrns.
Supermarine Spitfire	1938-Partially equipped & untrained	1	10
Hawker Hurricane	1938-Guns unable to fire above 15,000ft.	5	16
Bristol Blenheim	Twin Engined Bomber with additional armament. Max Speed 260mph.	Nil	8
Gloster Gladiator	Biplane,Max.Speed 253mph.	6	4
Gloster Gauntlet	Biplane Max,Speed 230mph	9	Nil
Hawker Fury II	Obsolete Biplane,Max Speed 223mph	3	Nil
Westland Lysander	Army Co-operation Aircraft Max.Speed 222mph.	Nil	2
Hawker Hector	Army Co-operation Aircraft Obsolete Biplane. Max Speed 191mph.	Nil	1
Hawker Demon	Obsolete Biplane Max Speed 184 mph.	2	Nil
Bomber Command.			
Fairey Battle	Obsolescent,Max Speed 214 mph Bomb load 1,000lbs	17	10
Bristol Blenheim	Max Speed 260mph. Load 1,000lbs	16	10
Armstrong Whitworth Whitley	Max Speed 222mph Bomb load 7,000lbs	9	6
Hadley Page Harrow	Obsolescent,Max Speed 228mph Bomb load 3,000lbs.	5	1
Vickers Wellesley	Obsolescent,Max Speed 228mph Bomb load 2,000lbs.	2	Nil
Hadley Page Hampden	Max Speed 265 mph. Load 2,000lbs	Nil	6
Vickers Wellington	Max Speed 265 mph. Load 4,500lbs	Nil	5

Source; AIR 41/8, John Terraine; The Right of the Line.

Appendix 2.

STATEMENT OF AIR DEFICIENCIES. October 1938.

(a)	(b) Defence Requirement	(c) App. Prog.	(d) Available	(e) %Gap
1.	Long Range AA Guns.	4.5"-288) 640) 3.7"-352))960 3" -320*)	4.5"-Nil 3.7"- 44)334** 3" -290)	4.5"-100%) 3.7"- 88%)85% 3" - 9%
2.	Searchlights.	4,128ε	1,430	65
3.	Light AA Artillery.	1,112 barrelsψ	NIL	100%
4.	GPO Ring Main system decentralising telecommunications.	-	NIL	100%
5.	Duplication of Supply of electrical power to certain Aircraft factories.		NIL	100%
6.	Bombers	68 Squadrons (under Scheme F)	42 Squadrons	38%
7.	Fighters	30 Squadrons	29 Squadronsτ	3%
8.	General Reconnaisance.	15 Squadrons (under Scheme F)	12 Squadrons	20%
9.	War Reserve Bombers. (I.R.only.)	Heavy 108% Medium 200% (under Scheme F)	NIL	100%
10	War Reserve Fighters. (I.R.only.)	133% (under Scheme F)	NIL	100%

* Additional 40 Batteries 3" approved 23.6.38.

** Includes a proportion of Regular AA batteries.

ε Includes requirements for new lay out approved 23.6.38.

ψ Not approved until 27.7.38.

τ 24 Squadrons equipped with obsolescent types.

Source AIR6/55,Appendix 'A'.....Con't page 2.

11,War Reserve, Gen,Reconnaissance aircraft;I,R,only available,	83%	NIL	100%
12,R,D,F,Stations	18	5	72%
13,Fighter D/F Stations	48	17	65%
14,Underground Operation Room	11	0	100%
15,Balloon Barrage	1,455*	500	66%
16 Vickers 'K' light automatics	1,300	-	100%
17,Anti-gas Clothing	305,000 suits	25,000	92%
18,Satellite Aerodromes	63	16	75%
19,Observer Corps Groups	34	23	32%

Average % = 73% GAP,

*Extension of Barrage(1,005 Balloons) not approved until 27,7,38,

Source-AIR6/55,Appendix A,

Appendix 3.

Notes on the Growth of the A A Defence;

1. The genesis of the modern conception of the A.G.D.B. was the Brooke Popham report of April 1935. A long term project due for completion in 1950. Under its provisions we should have had about 136 3-inch guns and 1,000 searchlights by 1940.

2. Subsequent planning. (Dates are those when C.I.D. approval was given.)

	A.A.Guns.				Light A A.	Searchlights.
	3.7"	4.5"	3"	Total.	(barrels)	
Oct.1936	320	288	-	608	600*	2547
June 1937. (ideal scheme not implemented)	704	560		1264	1200*	4684
June 1938	352	288	320	960	1002	4128.

* Estimated requirements pending results of A.R.P.Inspectors reconnaisance of industry.

War Office.27th October 1938.

Source: CAB 27/648.,p.27.

APPENDIX 4

Recommendations of the Committee for Defence Programme and Acceleration.
Agreed in Cabinet: 7th November 1938.

A. ADMIRALTY PROGRAMME

Escort Vessels;

i) Authority for the immediate laying down of 10 escort vessels.*

ii) Provisional authority for a further 10 escort vessels, to be layed down by May 1940. Germany to be notified of measures i and ii in January 1939 under Naval Treaty obligations.

Mine Sweepers & Anti Submarines;

iii) Authority to obtain Treasury approval to construct 12 small mine sweepers and spend £150,000 on the purchase of 8-10 Commercial trawlers for anti submarine work and mine sweeping

New Minelayer;

iv) Restore the fourth fast minelayer to the 1938 New Construction Programme. **

Defence of Ports;

v) The Admiralty to take their proposals to the Joint Oversea & Home Defence Committee and subsequently to the C.I.D.

Dover & Rosyth Harbours;

vi) The Admiralty to have authority to put to hand forthwith the dredging of Dover & Rosyth Harbours. Consideration to be given to inviting the Southern Railway to contribute to the work at Dover Harbour.

Defensive Arming of Large Liners & Merchant Ships.

vii) The Scheme for Defensive arming of large liners and merchant ships to be submitted to the Treasury Inter Services Committee.

Passive Defence.

viii) The Admiralty to directly approach the Treasury for an additional £1½ million for passive defence Naval Establishments

Oil, Fuel & Ammunition Storage;

ix) Early consultation by the Admiralty and Treasury on the formers proposal to accelerate construction of underground storage for oil, fuel & ammunition.

Fleet Air Arm (F.A.A.);

x) The Admiralty and Air Ministry to jointly discuss the aircraft deficiencies of the Fleet Air Arm.

F.A.A. for Scapa Flow;

xi) Approval in principle for a wartime aerodrome for the Fleet Air Arm at Scapa Flow.

New signal School;

xii) Approval in principle for a new Naval Signal School *

Armour Plate ;

xiii) The Admiralty be authorised to order from Czechoslovakia 2,200 tons of armour plate.

Recruitment of Skilled Ratings;

xiv) The three Defence Services should consider the Recruitment of Skilled Ratings jointly in consultation with the Ministry of Labour.

B. War Office Programme.

Anti-aircraft Equipments:

i) The number of anti-aircraft equipments be increased to the number specified in the 'Ideal Scheme'(i.e. a total of 1264 of 3,7 inch and 4,5 inch guns- an increase of 686), plus a provision for defence of ports abroad.[see A(v)]

ii) The War Office be authorised to create the industrial capacity required for the new programme but only to place immediate orders for additional equipments(300 additional 3,7inch guns,) which were essential to the development of new capacity to reach the stage of production and delivery.‡‡

Light Anti Aircraft Equipments:

iii) To note the possibility of obtaining deliveries of 1,000 light anti aircraft equipments, from British and Foreign sources was still being examined by the War Office,

Searchlights:

iv) The War Office be authorised to order up to 600 additional Searchlights,(including approx.50 for ports abroad,-see A (v)

Predictors:

v) The War Office to contact the Treasury if it becomes necessary to order predictors from abroad

Heightfinders,Fuse setters & Mechanical Fuses:

vi) Orders for heightfinders, fuse setters and mechanical fuses should, if necessary by placed abroad.‡‡

Keeping firms in Production:

vii) In order to keep firms,which had converted to munitions work in production, additional orders to be placed to provide work until 31st March 1940.‡

Payment of Compensation in connection with Priorities:

viii) In order to secure priority for munitions production, the Treasury to consider on merit each case for compensation which had been referred to it by the Service Departments.

Role of the Army:

ix) The Secretary of State for War, Paper " The Role of the Army in the light of the Czechoslovakian Crisis" be referred to the Committee of Imperial Defence.

Review of Home Defence Arrangements:

x) The Minister for Co-Ordination of Defence, to arrange a comprehensive review of Home Defence Arrangements.

‡ ..... Subject to the usual approval by the T.I.S.C.
‡‡ ..... Treasury approval should be obtained in the ordinary way.
‡‡‡ ..... Detailed arrangements to be made with the Treasury before orders are placed.

C. AIR PROGRAMME:

Fighter Aircraft:

i) Approval in principle for the full programme of 3,700 extra fighters and orders to be placed for half of these,(i.e. 1,850 fighter aircraft)

ii) Maximum production of fighters be achieved by 31stMarch 1940.

Bomber Aircraft:

iii) The Secretary of State for Air to further consider the policy of concentrating bomber development entirely on heavy bombers (i.e. Stirlings,Halifaxes & Manchesters.)

iv) Subject to iii) sufficient orders to be given to avoid substantial dismissals in the aircraft factories concerned.

Overseas Squadrons:

v) The increase of overseas squadrons be reviewed by the Committee of Imperial Defence

Miscellaneous Aircraft:

vi) Proposals for the increase of miscellaneous aircraft,(e.g. trainers) be examined by the Chancellor of the Exchequer & Secretary of State for Air.

vii) When placing orders referred to above, the Air Ministry should consult the Treasury.

viii) Commitments beyond 1939/40, authorised by this acceleration programme, should be capable of termination on the least possible onerous terms.

ix) In case of orders placed under this programme which involve commitments in 1940-41 or later, which are prima facie beyond our resources, the matter should be brought to the Cabinet.

Jig Tools:

x) Obtaining jigs, tolls and materials to increase potential capacity should await further discussions between Chancellor of Secretary of State for Air.

xi) Ancillary matters e.g. the RAF Volunteer Reserve, be settled by the Treasury.

xii) The House of Commons statement on the cost of the air expansion be jointly devised by the Prime Minster, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Secretary and Secretary of State for Air.

D. AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS:

i) The duty of organising air raid precautions should be left to the Local Authorities.

ii) The substantial cadre of the A R P Service should be recruited and trained on the basis that in war time the cadre will be embodied wholetime, as a paid Home Secretary Force. Recruitment Policy must be on lines consistent with the Government's Man Power plans.

iii) A statutory duty should be put on employers with establishments over a certain size to train their work people in fire fighting, first aid and anti-gas measures.

iv) Provision should be made through the local authorities, of blast

D Air Raid Precautions:

i) The duty of organising air raid precautions should be left to Local Authorities.

ii) The substantial cadre of the ARP Service should be recruited and trained on the basis that in war time the cadre will be embodied wholetime, as a paid Home Secretary Force. Recruitment Policy must be on lines consistent with Government's Man Power plans.

iii) A statutory duty should be put on employers with establishments over a certain size to train their work people in fire fighting, first aid and anti-gas measures.

iv) Provision should be made through the local authoritie s, of blast proof shelters and refuge rooms in existing buildings. This is to follow from a survey of buildings in each local authority area.

v) The survey referred to in iv) should be undertaken by the local authorities under the guidance of expert advisers lent by the Home Office.

vi) The local authorities should be empowered to make bye-laws requiring new 'multiple' buildings to include ARP features. e.g underground shelters.

vii) Employers should be required to take such action as is reasonable to protect their workpeople.

viii) The trench system begun during the (Czechoslovakian) crisis should be completed and gradually extended, both in open spaces and in gardens.

ix) The Home Secretary, in consultation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Lord Privy Seal, the Minister of Labour and any other Ministers concerned would consider the practicability of giving work on trench digging to men in receipt of Unemployment Assistance.

Source: CAB PRO AIR 8/250.

Appendix 5.

Secretary of State for Air Proposals for RAF expansion.

The intended disposal of the aircraft was a follows:

(i) First Line Units:

a. Metropolitan	.....	2,381.	
b. New fighters	.....	160	
c. Overseas Units	.....	490	
d. Fleet Air Arm	.....	540	
	Total	3,535	
e. Full reserves	.....	7,475	
	Gross Total		11,000.

(ii) Training & Miscellaneous Units.

a. Initial Equipment	.....	2,750	
b. Reserves	.....	7,250	
	Gross Total		10,000

(iii) Wastage.

4 years at 2,000 per annum	8,000
GRAND TOTAL:	29,000.

Source: CAB 27/648,p.40.

Appendix 6.

Hore-Belisha's Memorandum;' Preparing the Army For Its Role.'

C.I.D.Paper No.1498-B.

1. To reorganise the Mobile Division into two smaller divisions.

   Estimated cost £5 million.

2. Equip the first two infantry divisions of the Field Force for counter offensive warfare by providing essential stores, reserves and units.

   Estimated cost £13 million.

3. Conversion of the second two infantry divisions of the Field Force to take both a defensive and counter offensive role (previously they have no counter offensive equipment and only half scale defensive ammunition) with full scale ammunition and stores.

4. Equip two "Colonial" divisions from the existing non-Field Force units.(18 Infantry battalions had been absorbed by operations in Palestine.)

5. Enable the Territorial Army Field Force to support the Regular Army by:
   a. the provision of war equipment and reserves for 4 Infantry divisions

   Estimated cost £30 million.

   b. the provision of the necessary training equipment for the remainder of the Territorial Field Army.

   Estimated cost £11 million.

Total cost £81 million.

C.I.D. Paper No.1498-B.

Appendix 7.

Foreign Policy Committee's Recommendation's of 27th January 1939.

1. '..We have, as we see it, no choice but to regard a German invasion of Holland as a direct challenge to our security.'
2. That if Germany should invade Holland, this country must go to war with Germany, assuming always that Holland resists invasion.
3. ..if, in our Concersations with the French Government...(they) should raise the parallel case of Switzerland and should enquire whether if Germany invaded Switzerland and France thereupon declared war.. we would come to the assistance of France...
4. That... the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs... should be authorised to initiate a diplomatic approach to the French Government on this matter.
5. That...simultaneous diplomatic enquiries in the same sense should be addressed to the Belgian Government.
6. ..No enquiry should be made of the Dutch Government over and above the informal approach to Dr Colijn which had already seen set o· feet.
7. The Staff conversations with the French(and Belgium) Government should proceed on the basis of war against Germany and Italy in combination.
8. That in consequence of (7) the scope of Staff conversations should be extended to include all likely fields of operation, especially the Mediterranean and the Middle East.
9. ..while the possibility of Japanese intervention against us should not be ignored, it should be assumed that Japan would be likely to be influenced by her exisiting commitments in China and by fear of Soviet Russia and the United States of America, and would therefore be likely to adopt a somewhat cautious attitude....
10. ,that the further Staff conversations with France and Belgium... would result in the formulation of specific joint plans as regards military operations and in the sphere of supplies...
11. That periodic liason of a regular nature with the French and Belgium Staff would be necessary to keep up to date the plans referred to in (10).
12. ..The Secretary of State for War should examine further what is the shortest time within which our Field Force contingent could arrive in France.
13. That the papers on 'State of Preparedness of the Army in relation to its Role', by the Secretary of State for War and the Chiefs of Staff should be considered at a Special Meeting of the Cabinet, to be held on Thursday 2nd February.
14. .....
15. That if the King approves this change of plan, it should be anounced as having been effected on account of the present inter-national situation.
16. ..the Admiralty to order double-shift work on H.M.S."Hood" and H.M.S."Royal Oak", in order to accelerate the dated on which these ships would become available...
17. ... the Secretary of State for War to move 2 Regular Anti-Aircraft Regiments.. from Lichfieldto London in order that they should be immediately available in the event of sudden attack.
18. That the Secretary of State for War should submit to the Chancellor of the Exchequer certain other proposals for acceleration, and that, subject to the Chancellor's approval, should be authorised to give effect to them.
19. That conclusions (1) to (3) and (6) to (12) should be submitted to the Cabinet for approval.

Source; CAB 27/624 pp.157-159.

APPENDIX 8 (a)

Numbers of aircraft programmed and delivered respectively;

January - June 1939.

1939	Programmed	Delivered.
January	425	445
February	452	579
March	504	712
April	543	634
May	594	702
June	637	681

Source; M.M.Postan; British War Production.

APPENDIX 8 (b)

Aircraft Production of the Major Powers 1933 - 1940.

	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940.
France	-	-	785	890	743	1382	3163	2112*
Germany	368	1968	3183	5112	5606	5235	8295	10247
Italy	-	-	-	-	-	1850	N/A	1800
Japan	766	688	952	1181	1511	3201	4467	4768
U.K.	633	740	1140	1877	2153	2827	7940	15049
U.S.A.	466	437	459	1141	949	1800	2195	12804
U.S.S.R.	2595	2595	3578	3578	3578	7500	10382	10565
Br.Commonwealth	-	-	-	-	-	-	250	1100

* 1st Jan to 31st May 1940.

Source; R.J.Overy; The Air War 1939-1945.

APPENDIX 8 (c) Source:N.M.Postan: British War Production.

Deliveries of New Aircraft in the United Kingdom by Main Groups,1938 - 1940.

1938:	Total	Heavy Bombers	Medium Bombers	Light Bombers	Fighters	General recon-naissance	Trans-ports & A,S,R,	Naval	Trainers & Misc,
Jan,	161	-	10	38	29	2	-	27	55
Feb,	140	-	9	43	15	2	-	27	44
March	210	-	10	48	36	2	-	32	82
April,	158	-	7	41	3	2	-	24	81
May	213	-	7	41	24	5	-	31	105
June	163	-	3	37	11	3	-	20	89
July	210	-	-	42	24	5	-	26	113
Aug,	202	-	2	36	47	3	-	21	93
Sept,	326	-	18	51	40	5	-	24	188
Oct,	348	-	26	51	43	4	-	23	211
Nov,	364	-	30	61	49	3	-	14	207
Dec,	332	-	38	49	50	2	-	17	176
Totals;	2827	-	160	538	371	38	-	286	1434,
1939;									
Jan,	445	-	54	59	78	2	-	12	240
Feb,	579	-	54	74	107	4	-	41	299
March	712	-	55	107	117	3	-	56	374
April	634	-	41	81	111	2	-	40	359
May	702	-	55	101	140	3	-	50	353
June	681	-	72	74	127	4	-	51	351
July	695	-	43	108	114	5	-	49	376
Aug,	568	-	51	81	83	2	-	45	306
Sept,	781	-	74	112	93	4	-	49	449
Oct,	748	-	91	100	106	3	-	56	392
Nov,	795	-	89	102	126	10	-	38	430
Dec,	600	-	79	80	122	19	-	22	278
Totals;	7940	-	758	1079	1324	61	-	509	4209
1940;									
Jan,	802	-	96	86	157	24	-	19	420
Feb,	719	-	66	65	143	29	-	20	296
March	860	-	91	75	177	31	-	25	461
April	1081	-	130	91	256	37	-	32	535
May	1279	1	183	124	325	52	-	33	561
June	1591	1	239	167	446	64	-	43	631
July	1665	4	242	173	496	34	-	47	669
Aug,	1601	1	214	177	476	41	-	56	636
Sept,	1341	3	163	112	467	22	-	43	531
Oct,	1419	4	167	154	469	18	-	54	553
Nov,	1461	14	169	163	458	18	-	60	579
Dec,	1230	13	166	134	413	17	-	44	443
Totals;	15049	41	1926	1521	4283	387	-	476	6415

APPENDIX 9(a).

COMPARISON OF APPROVED REQUIREMENTS WITH ORDERS PLACED (by items).
Progress at 1st October,1938.

Item	Programme require-ments.	Require-ments approved to date.	Orders placed for.	Forecast of deliveries 1939	Deliveries actually made on these orders			
					During 1938, July	August.	Sept.	Total
Armoured Fighting Vehicles:								
Light Tanks.	1268	1268	899	700	40	47	43	279
Med./BattleCruiser) Cruiser tanks)	630	630((	(b) 336	40				
Infantry tanks	367	367	340	70		16		16
Light dragons	73	73	68					68
Medium dragons	5	5	5					5
Armoured cars	168	168	(c) 98	98		7	7	14
Gun carriers 1671	1671	1671	1607	850	54	89	101	340
Guns:								
Guns (new)								
25-pdr.(3.45-inch)(r)	380	380	183					
2-pdr.(tank & anti-tank)	2,062	2,062	1,362	650	48	12	(s) 38	354
2-pdr.MarkVIII AA	240	240	240	122			41	(t)68
40-mm.A.A.	1,217	1,217	580	90		5		5
6-pdr.	122	122	(u) 72	40	8		5	28
3.7-inch A.A.	570	570	(x)568	350	23	31	(v) 14	143
4.5-inch A.A.	431	431	(x)427	100			(w) 3	3

(a) Plus 206 delivered outside the Deficiency Programme.
(b) Further orders await trials of pilot models to new design
(c) Further orders await decision on design.
(r) Deferred on accountof priority of other work. Capacity allocated.
(s) 32 under inspection. (t) From the Navy.
(u) Capacity exists for balance. (v) 78 under inspection.
(w) 6 under inspection. (x) Excludes 5 guns ordered for proof purposes.

Source: CAB 27/657.

APPENDIX 9(b).

DELIVERIES OF SOME WAR STORES DURING THE PERIOD:

October 1938-June 1940.

	1938	1939.				1940	
T A N K S :	Fourth quarter	First quarter	Second quarter	July-August, 2 months	Sept.,- Dec, 4 months	First quarter	Second quarter
Light	169	122	364	68	180	80	60
Cruiser and infantry	29	23	30	48	134	138	280
Armoured carriers	316	383	473	362	611	517	1445

Source: M.M.Postan, British War Production.

APPENDIX 10.

Major industries of the incorporated Sudetenland in 1939.

	Persons employed acquired by Germany	
	No.	% of Czech's work-force in the industry.
Mining	45,411	37.5
Iron,steel & metal goods	48,286	33.0
Mechanical engineering	26,484	19.8
Electrical engineering	10,582	23.7
Chemical Industry	13,106	32.3
Textile Industry	207,400	57.6
Glass Industry	41,304	65.0.

Source: Barthel,Politik,104.
Deist,Vol.1.,p.330.

APPENDIX 11.

Military Equipment seized in the invasion of Czechoslovakia.(1939)

According to :	Hitler.	Czechoslovak source.
Aircraft	1582	1231 + material for a further 240.
Anti-aircraft guns	501	
Anti-tank guns		1996
Field guns	2175	2253
Mortars	785	
Armoured vehicles	469	810
Machine guns	43876	57000
Rifles	1090000	630000
Pistols	114000	
Infantry ammunition	>1000mrounds	
Artillery and gas shells>	3m rounds	

Source : Deist War Vol.1, p.334.

APPENDIX 12.

Comparative naval strengths of Britain and Germany;
1933, 1938 and 1939.

	1933		1938		1939	
	Germany	Gt.Britain.	Germany	Gt.Britain.	Germany	Gt.Britain.
Battleships.	0*	12	3 pocket#	12	3 pocket	12
Battle cruisers	0	3	2	3	2	3
Cruisers	5 light	52	6 light 1 heavy(1)	59	6 light 2 heavy(2)	62
Aircraft carriers	0	6	0	6	0	7
Destroyers	14	150	22	161	22	159
Torpedo boats	12	0	12	11	12	11
Submarines	0	52	36	54	57+	54
Minelayers	0	1	0	1	0	1
Sloops and escort vessels	0	34	0	34	8	38

* Under provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany retained 4 pre-1914 dreadnoughts.

These were the Deutschland (11,700 tons),the Admiral Scheer (11,700 tons) and Graf Spee (12,100 tons).

1 .This was Gneisenau and (2) joined by Scharnhorst.

+ Only 26 of these were large enough for oceanic warfare.

Source; Wark.p.248. & Rear Adm.H.G.Thursfield, Brassey Naval Annual 1938.

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