

Pinchbeck Regulars? The Role and Organisation of the Territorial Army, 1919-1940.



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Abstract

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This thesis examines how Britain's government and military establishment conceptualised the role of the voluntary Territorial Army (TA) between the World Wars, and explores the relationship with British defence policy during the period. It also evaluates whether or not the TA was capable of carrying out its ascribed role, through a balanced assessment of its organisation, training and military efficiency. It posits that the TA was integral to British defence planning and played a key part in the Army's mobilisation plans, although the priority given to its role shifted throughout the period in accordance with the direction of Britain's strategic focus. Additionally, this thesis will emphasise that the Territorial Army had not one purpose but several. Alongside its central function as the framework for a conscript National Army it held key responsibilities for both home and imperial defence.

This thesis examines the TA's role and organisation in a thematic and broadly chronological manner. Part I deals with the TA's expeditionary role and its function as the framework for all future military expansion, as well as its role as a voluntary imperial reserve for any medium scale wars conducted without resorting to conscription. Part II focuses on the Territorial Army's home defence responsibilities, in particular its domestic role in aiding the civil power and its contribution to Britain's increasingly important air defence capabilities.

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This thesis examines how Britain's government and military establishment conceptualised the role of the voluntary Territorial Army (TA) between the World Wars, and explores the relationship with British defence policy during the period. It also evaluates whether or not the TA was capable of carrying out its ascribed role, through a balanced assessment of its organisation, training and military efficiency. It posits that the TA was integral to British defence planning and played a key part in the Army's mobilisation plans, although the priority given to its role shifted throughout the period in accordance with the direction of Britain's strategic focus. Additionally, this thesis emphasises that the Territorial Army had not one purpose but several. Alongside its central function as the framework for a conscript National Army it held key responsibilities for both home and imperial defence.

Any examination of Britain's interwar military development remains incomplete without a clear understanding of the Territorial Army and its role and capabilities. Yet this is an area that has been mostly overlooked in the existing literature. Those studies that have been attempted tend to dismiss the force as inadequate, ineffective and largely irrelevant to Britain's strategic needs of the time. As a result it was neglected by the government and an ambivalent War Office, and remained the victim of a hostile General Staff that resented having to divert expenditure from the Regular Army into an organisation that fulfilled none of its reserve requirements.

Although some of these assertions may hold elements of truth, the existing literature fails to truly convey the importance of the TA to the Army's mobilisation and war planning processes, or its position as a vital component in Britain's military organisation. In fact, rather than acting with hostility the General Staff showed a consistent interest in the efficiency and utility of the Territorial Army, and made considerable efforts to organise it as a general-purpose reserve and integrate it as a fundamental part of the broader British Army.

This reflected the fact that the Territorial Army had more than one purpose, and provided the Army with a number of key capabilities throughout the period. First of all, the experience of the First World War had proved the necessity of having an expandable 'second line' organisational framework already established in peace, around which a wartime conscript national army could be raised. Reconstituted as the sole mechanism through which the Army could be expanded, the TA thus

provided a key contingency function in the event of another mass continental war, a role that had increasing relevance by the late 1930s.

At the same time, and contrary to assumptions that Territorials were only retained as an ‘insurance policy’ against another total war, the TA also provided an imperial defence role as the principal source of unit-level reinforcements to the expeditionary force. The Regular Army and its Reserve were only capable of conducting a limited intervention of short duration, and after this any further commitment relied on the availability of Territorial volunteers. Although restrictions in their terms of service made it difficult to utilise Territorials in a small war or as drafts without their consent, the General Staff continued to consider Territorial formations as an essential component in mobilisation planning for a medium-scale imperial campaign. As this was precisely the type of commitment the Army believed it would be involved in for most of the interwar period, the TA’s role in enabling such a capability should not be underplayed.

In addition to its expeditionary role, the TA also retained key responsibilities for home defence, but against two very different threats. Although ostensibly prohibited from doing so, Territorials remained instrumental in government plans to counter social unrest and potential revolution during the tumultuous 1920s and into the 1930s. At the same time, although fears of a conventional seaborne invasion had subsided after the First World War, new anxieties surrounding the aerial ‘knock out blow’ ensured that air defence was given an increasing level of priority throughout the interwar period. Indeed, by the late 1930s the Territorial Army’s anti-aircraft role had come to dominate the organisation, and the readiness and capabilities of the force were considered issues of vital importance.

In order to explore these aspects and examine whether the Territorial Army was capable of carrying out its ascribed functions this thesis focuses primarily on the TA’s purely military aspects. Treating the TA principally as a national body, this thesis seeks to ascertain its purpose and function during each of the periods under examination and assesses the efforts taken to get that role either sanctioned or successfully implemented. At the same time an assessment is made to determine its organisational capacity to perform its accorded functions, predominately through an examination of its terms and conditions of service, its training efficiency, its readiness to mobilise, and the state of its equipment and manning levels.

Researched largely at The National Archives, the evidence to support the thesis’ findings has been drawn primarily from the relevant War Office, Treasury and Cabinet documents, as well as from other non-official sources, such as the personal papers of politicians and senior military officers (both Regular and Territorial), as well as other commentators of that period. Contemporary books, articles

and other writing have also been consulted, notably the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* and the *Army Quarterly*, within the pages of which the Territorial Army remained a popular subject for discussion.

Established in two parts, the thesis first addresses the Territorial Army's expeditionary role in support of continental and imperial defence, before the second part deals with the force's home defence function against both internal and external threats. Each chapter of Part I is arranged in chronological order, although a further sub-division has been made to show the extent to which the TA's role was influenced by the specific direction of strategic policy at any one time. By contrast Part II consists of two thematic chapters addressing not only the TA's internal security function but also its central role in anti-aircraft defence measures.

Chapter one examines the wartime and immediate post-war perceptions regarding the TA's role, and shows the development of thought regarding how a voluntary reserve framework fitted in with the plans for the post-war British Army. Attention is directed specifically to the debate during the TA's reconstitution over its terms and conditions of service, which represented a wider dispute over whether the Territorials should be re-formed with their pre-1914 organisation and liabilities or should accept far broader formal responsibilities. These related in particular to its position as the framework for a future conscript 'National Army,' and whether or not Territorial manpower could be utilised to support the Regular expeditionary force overseas. Chapter two thereafter reviews the TA's formal re-establishment in 1921, and assesses whether it was successfully re-organised into a modern second-line reserve army. It argues that the General Staff did not push to abolish the force or reduce it arbitrarily, despite this being a period of deep financial retrenchment, and in fact pushed to preserve the TA's capabilities as far as possible, given the circumstances.

Chapter three moves away from the immediate post-war focus on its function as the framework for military expansion and charts the attempts to shift the TA towards a dual role, incorporating a clear imperial defence obligation to enable Territorial formations to reinforce the expeditionary force in the event of a medium scale campaign within the Empire. With conscription not considered an option, this relied on the Territorial Army's ability to raise some six to eight formations on a voluntary and composite basis. Yet the ability to do so depended on removing some of the restrictions on the use of Territorial manpower, such as 'the pledge' on unit integrity, and this realisation led to considerable efforts to identify and remove these obstructions, and thus free up Territorials to support the Regular Army in a whole range of possible overseas commitments.

Before it managed to do so, however, the War Office had to shift its strategic focus back towards the continent. The growing threat of a rearming Germany and the subsequent debate in Britain as to the

direction of its own rearmament policy highlights how advocates for a ‘limited liability’ or a ‘continental commitment’ were in practical terms arguing over the extent to which the TA should be made ready. Concentrating on the initial deficiency phase of the mid 1930s, chapter four emphasises the TA’s centrality in these debates, and traces how the relative importance of the TA developed in parallel with the changing direction of British strategic policy. It shows how the War Office sought to protect Territorial Army capabilities from further cuts and modernise it in line with the Regular Army. However, it also illustrates how the General Staff could not agree on how best to improve the TA, as the differing views of the two incumbent Chiefs of the Imperial General Staff, Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd and Cyril Deverell, duly illustrate. When coupled with Cabinet’s reluctance to commit to a firm policy on the TA’s role, such disagreements further undermined the TA’s rearmament, as well as the Army’s broader ability to deploy a sizeable expeditionary force in the increasingly likely event of a general European war.

With Territorial efficiency at this juncture being a major point of discussion, chapter five examines the organisation, direction and standard of training in the Territorial Field Army, in order to assess how efficient the force actually was. Subdivided into three sections, the first reviews the TA’s overall training policy and whether the force was appropriately organised to implement it. The second assesses training at the individual and collective level, especially amongst the key personnel that made up the Territorial cadres. Thirdly, an examination is made of the level of assistance offered to the TA by the Regular Army and the degree of integration between the two. Taken together, these illustrate how the Territorial Army always struggled to reach a high standard of efficiency, but also that many of the reasons why were due to the inherent flaws in the voluntary Territorial system of recruitment and training.

Chapter six focuses initially on the influence of the ‘limited liability’ policy on Territorial rearmament, and argues that this amounted primarily to the government’s refusal to adequately prepare the TA for its primary role. Nevertheless, it shows how the General Staff never abandoned the possibility of having to deploy an expeditionary force to Europe, and proceeded with plans to re-organise and modernise the TA regardless. This was an advantage when the policy was reversed, although at this stage the need to perform a rushed expansion of the Territorial organisation seriously undermined its efficiency as war approached. Chapter seven continues this examination through the immediate run-up to war and into the subsequent embodiment, mobilisation and deployment of the Territorial Army over 1939/40. Focusing on its immediate post-mobilisation training, the professional standards of its commanders and instructors, and the efforts to raise its efficiency once deployed, the chapter shows how, although the preparation of Territorial units left a lot to be desired, the TA still made a vital contribution to British mobilisation and the build-up of the British Expeditionary Force in France.

Moving from the Territorial Army's expeditionary function, the remaining two chapters assess the force's home defence role. Chapter eight examines its responsibilities to aid the civil power in the maintenance of internal order. After clarifying the legal obligations of Territorial personnel, it looks at the relationship between the Territorial Army and the Defence Force of 1921 and the Civil Constabulary Reserve of 1926, as well as the efforts to establish a permanent responsibility to support the police throughout the 1930s. It also explores the TA's role as a disciplined civil/military reserve in the event of an aerial 'knock out blow,' and its responsibilities as an interim civil defence force as well as an armed body available to suppress a panicked population in the event of a breakdown in law and order. In the event, however, it shows how the General Staff and the Territorials themselves largely resisted these obligations, and that the War Office always sought to prioritise the Territorial Army's conventional military functions when negotiating its responsibilities to aid the civil power with the Home Office.

Concluding Part II, chapter nine charts the development of the TA's increasingly important anti-aircraft role, from the era of the French 'Continental Air Menace' to the rise of Germany and the fear of a sudden and cataclysmic 'knock out blow.' The chapter also examines its capabilities, focusing on questions of manpower, efficiency and readiness. It concludes that, although there were several key advantages in presenting home air defence duties as a Territorial responsibility, there were still clear flaws in relying on part-time amateurs for this task. The voluntary Territorial system proved incapable of raising sufficient personnel, and also struggled to train them to a high enough standard or ensure they were available within the narrow deployment window considered necessary. Nevertheless, it points out that Territorial anti-aircraft troops only really failed to perform their role once the requirement had shifted away from being one appropriate for a part-time reserve force, and yet it was still Territorials who were manning the air defences when war was declared.

The thesis concludes by noting that, throughout the interwar years and on the outbreak of war, the Territorial Army was an indispensable consideration in British military planning and made a key contribution to Britain's mobilisation in 1939. Contrary to assumptions, the War Office and General Staff did not view the TA as an impediment but an essential element of Britain's broader military capabilities. Although the importance of its roles varied according to the strategic focus at any one time, the TA provided a number of valuable functions that the Regular Army alone was simply incapable of fulfilling. Although in terms of efficiency the standard the Territorials achieved remained limited, many of the reasons for this were not due to the Territorial Army itself but to the inherent flaws in accepting a voluntary, part-time reserve system. As such this thesis provides a clearer appreciation of the role, organisation and capabilities of the interwar Territorial Army, and

thus contributes to a broader understanding of British military developments between the World Wars.

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Introduction.

In February 1920 the Liberal MP Sir Francis Acland rose in the Commons to oppose the principles behind the Territorial Force's reconstitution. A former Parliamentary Private Secretary to the father of the modern Territorial movement, R.B Haldane, Acland lamented that the intended proposals would put the organisation on 'an entirely new basis,' making it 'simply a reflex of the Regulars.' Arguing that the plans represented a fundamental departure from pre-war arrangements, he accused the authorities of seeking to re-model the force as a semi-professional, general-purpose reserve. If implemented Territorials would become available for a wide range of defence commitments, and 'instead of ... being a real civilian force depending upon the goodwill and patriotism of the masses of the citizens, they are going to become pinchbeck regulars dependent on money and organised purely on a military basis.'¹

Such reform was clearly at odds with what Acland believed Territorial service should entail. Yet, despite his rose-tinted retrospection, Acland's intercession does bring in to the open a number of key issues. Did the interwar Territorial Army really represent a fundamental break from the Territorial Force that preceded it? Was it indeed a force of 'pinchbeck regulars' rather than a 'real civilian force,' and to what extent was it organised as a modern reserve structure with a clear military role? Moreover, how did a voluntary auxiliary force contribute to Britain's broader defence requirements during the austere interwar years, and was the new Territorial Army sufficiently capable of fulfilling its responsibilities?

Any examination of Britain's military developments between the World Wars remains incomplete without a balanced understanding of the role, organisation and capabilities of the Territorial Army. Yet many of the details related to these aspects have been disregarded, misconstrued or have yet to be fully explored. Although the last few years have seen a number of key studies published on the development of the pre-1914 Territorial Force, no recent attempt has been made to extend such

¹ *Hansard*, HC Deb 23 Feb 1920 vol.125 c.1374-1376.

research beyond the First World War.² Consequently the central role that the Territorial Army played during the transitionary interwar era has been largely overlooked.

As a result, historians have tended to view the Territorial movement during this period in a rather dismissive light, and to regard it as both inadequate and ineffective. This judgment has been compounded by uncertainty over what role the Territorial Army actually performed, which has led to it being considered largely irrelevant, or of limited use, until the eve of the Second World War.³ For example, although he recognises its importance in a continental war, Brian Bond notes that before the late 1930s the Territorial Army was 'seriously neglected' and it was limited 'essentially for home defence ... since its members were not liable for overseas service,' an opinion echoed by Frederick Perry.⁴ Similarly, for David French the TA was little more than a 'shop window force,' and had 'but a single role, to form the basis of a greatly expanded army in the event of a major national war,' to which it was expected to provide the manpower and structure while the Regular Army provided the leadership.⁵ Hew Strachan is nearer the mark in recognising that the interwar TA actually had several functions, noting that it was 'caught between three roles: the 'Hegelian' army, in which the Territorials were the link between the regular army and society; home defence; and the reserve for the regulars.'⁶ However, his analysis does not extend further than a few pages in a much broader focused essay.

² K.W. Mitchinson, *Gentlemen and Officers: The Impact and Experience of War on a Territorial Regiment*, (London, 1995); J. Knight, *The Civil Service Rifles in the Great War*, (Barnsley, 2004); H. McCartney, *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the Great War*, (Cambridge, 2005); K.W. Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army, 1908-1919*, (Basingstoke, 2005); *England's Last Hope: the Territorial Force, 1908-1914*, (Basingstoke, 2008); *The Territorial Force at War, 1914-1916*, (Basingstoke, 2014); I.F.W. Beckett, *The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945*, (Manchester, 1991); For a comprehensive review of the literature up to 2010, see I.F.W. Beckett, *Britain's Part-Time Soldiers: The Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945*, 2nd edn. (Barnsley, 2011).

³ A. Converse, *Armies of Empire: The 9th Australian and 50th British Divisions in Battle, 1939-1945*, (Cambridge, 2011). Converse's chapter on the 1919 to 1940 period is tellingly entitled 'Playing at soldiers'; W.E. Walker, *Reserve Forces and the British Territorial Army*, (London, 1990) pp.16-18.

⁴ B. Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars*, (Oxford, 1980) p.27; B. Bond, 'The British Armed Force, 1918-39' in W. Murray and A. Millett, (eds.) *Military Effectiveness: Vol.2 The Interwar Period*, (London, 1990) p.114; F.W. Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and Organisation in two World Wars*, (Manchester, 1988) p.41.

⁵ D. French, 'Invading Europe: The British Army and its preparations for the Normandy Campaign, 1942-44,' *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol.14 No.2 (2003) p.272; D. French, 'Big Wars and Small Wars between the Wars 1919-39,' in H. Strachan, (ed.) *Big Wars and Small Wars: The British Army and the Lessons of War in the 20th Century*, (Abingdon, 2006) p.46; D. French, *Raising Churchill's Army: The British Army and the War against Germany, 1919-1945*, (Oxford, 2000) p.53.

⁶ H. Strachan, 'The Territorial Army and National Defence,' in K. Neilson and G. Kennedy, *The British Way in Warfare: Power and the International System, 1856-1956 – Essays in Honour of David French*, (Farnham, 2010) p.173.

The reason for the inconsistency in opinion is due largely to the fact that historians have only one authoritative source on which to rely, in the form of a 1987 monograph by Peter Dennis.⁷ Covering a wide period from Haldane's reforms to the outbreak of war in 1939, Dennis' account provides a reasonable overview of the main issues faced by the interwar TA, but there are still significant areas of his thesis that deserve re-assessment. For Dennis the Territorials' main achievement was that they 'kept alive a tradition of part-time soldiering,' and contributed to the maintenance of a 'reservoir of military power,' albeit one that was 'miserably inadequate,' on which the Army's wartime expansion could be at least be partly based.⁸ He argues in the main that the Territorials were the victims of a largely ambivalent War Office, and were subsequently ill-served throughout this period.⁹ Indeed, he concludes that they were 'often overlooked and sadly neglected,' and were 'not as central as they might have wished, or indeed as essential as they thought themselves to be.'¹⁰ Furthermore, he implies that the TA lacked a relevant role, at least until rearmament began in earnest in the mid 1930s. For these reasons he claims the General Staff remained hostile to the TA, as it fulfilled none of the Army's reserve requirements whilst simultaneously diverting expenditure away from the Regular Army.

Although some of these assertions may have a kernel of truth, Dennis' analysis oversimplifies the complex inter-relationship between the Regular and Territorial Armies during this period, and downplays the TA's central position in British military policy. Despite covering the main debates regarding the TA's position in rearmament policy, he often fails to relate its role to the Army's strategic priorities. In addition, he singularly fails to engage adequately with some of the TA's most significant functions, especially its role in the late 1920s as an imperial reserve, the extension into the 1930s of its responsibilities to aid the civil power, and most importantly its increasingly central role in Britain's air defence system. Furthermore he does not adequately assess the Territorial contribution to mobilisation, nor its participation in the early phases of the Second World War, both of which arguably constitute the 'acid test' for whether or not the TA actually performed its intended purpose.

⁷ P. Dennis, *The Territorial Army, 1907-1940*, (Woodbridge, 1987).

⁸ Ibid. p.3, 260-261.

⁹ Ibid. p.1.

¹⁰ Ibid. p.261.

As a result Dennis' account does not adequately explain how the role and function of the TA was conceptualised within broader military policy, nor does he really go into any detail in ascertaining its capabilities or the effectiveness of its organisation. This thesis aims to provide a corrective to these deficiencies, and enlarge upon Dennis' work by showing how the Territorial Army was actually an integral part of the Army's mobilisation and war planning process. By focusing on how the Territorial Army's role shifted alongside strategic priorities throughout the interwar period, it will show that, far from being hostile or disinterested, the War Office and General Staff both viewed the Territorial Army as a vital component in Britain's military organisation.

Furthermore, rather than showing hostility to the Territorials, the General Staff strove consistently to improve its popularity as well as its standard of efficiency, and actively sought to broaden the opportunities in which it could be used. This reflected the fact that any commitment above a minor imperial engagement largely depended on the availability of an effective Territorial Army. As a result, instead of having a role limited to one eventuality or function, the aspiration was always to organise the TA as general-purpose reserve and to integrate it as a fundamental part of the broader British Army.

In order to achieve this goal the Territorials were expected to fulfil three simultaneous priorities. The first was to establish the peacetime voluntary TA as an expandable 'second line' organisational framework, around which a future conscript national army could be raised should the need arise. Having already experienced the total demands of the First World War, the military authorities accepted the need to supplement voluntary recruitment with compulsory mobilisation in wartime and knew it was essential to have this framework established in advance. Although the Army was understandably keen to prioritise front-line capabilities, this principle was upheld throughout the interwar period. Indeed, the TA's role as the sole mechanism through which the Army could expand, and thus the main determinant in Britain's ability to make a large-scale commitment to the continent, came to dominate the policy debate by the late 1930s.

Secondly, and contrary to a common assumption that Territorials were only retained as ‘insurance’ against another war of mass, the TA also had an important role in imperial defence. Although they were never actually called upon to provide for this, the availability of Territorial troops was a central planning factor in the supply of unit-level reinforcements in support of the expeditionary force overseas. With an effective Militia or Special Reserve organisation largely absent throughout the interwar period, Territorials remained the only available source of military manpower once the Regular Army Reserve had been called out. Although restrictions in their terms of service made it admittedly difficult to utilise Territorials in a small war or as drafts, the General Staff continued to consider Territorial formations as an essential component in mobilisation planning. In fact, without the TA the Army would be incapable of conducting the type of medium-scale imperial campaign it was preparing for during the 1920s and early 1930s.

Thirdly, the TA retained an important role in home defence throughout the interwar period, although the threats they defended against were no longer the same as before 1914. The Territorials were expected to provide aid to the civil power, despite ostensibly being prohibited from doing so, and they remained instrumental in government plans to counter social unrest in the 1920s and into the 1930s. More importantly, however, was the TA’s responsibilities for coast and anti-aircraft defence. The latter role in particular dominated the Territorial Army by the 1930s, reflecting the influence of the perceived aerial ‘knock out blow’ as the greatest threat facing interwar Britain.

Scope

As the focus is on its role in defence policy and the efficacy of its organisation, this thesis is principally concerned with the Territorial Army’s purely military aspects. Accordingly two key questions will thread through the thesis. The first will seek to ascertain the purpose and function of the TA during each of the periods under examination: in essence, asking what it was for. In answering this, the focus will be on analysing the role envisaged for it by the General Staff, and the efforts taken by the War Office to either get that role sanctioned or successfully implemented. The

second question asks whether the TA was sufficiently well organised and prepared to fulfil that role once it had been given. Assessing this is more problematic, but there are several key determinants that can form a basis for discussion, and by which the TA's capacity to perform its functions can be measured. Prominent amongst these are its terms and conditions of service, evaluations of its training efficiency, assessments of its organisation and readiness to mobilise, and the state of its equipment and manning levels.

Regrettably, the need for brevity has necessitated the omission of certain germane aspects to the study. For example, although fully cognisant of its significance, this thesis will not cover in any great detail the relationship between the Territorials and wider society, apart from when this connection was deemed to infringe on the TA's military utility in some way. Likewise, the administrative functions of the County Associations and their interactions with Territorial units will only be discussed in passing, with the exceptions of those times when this led to a confrontation with the War Office or impacted on Territorial readiness and efficiency.

Furthermore, this examination will treat the TA primarily as a national body rather than attempt to take a distinctive regional approach, as, although a comparative case study of Territorial units from different areas would have great value, such a study would extend the thesis far beyond what could reasonably be achieved. Similarly a comparative study between the TA and another imperial or foreign reserve organisation was also rejected. Although similar attempts have been made in the past, direct comparisons with, for example, the militia forces in the Dominions, the US National Guard, or the territorial reserve system in the USSR would be either unfeasible or would be, given their differences to the British voluntary Territorial system, of only limited value.¹¹

¹¹ J.A. Mowbray, 'Militiaman: A Comparative Study of the Evolution of Organization in the Canadian and British Voluntary Citizen Military Forces, 1896-1939,' (Duke University, PhD thesis, 1975); A.D. Converse, 'Churchill's Armies at War: Morale and Combat Efficiency in the 50th (Northumbrian) and 9th Australian Divisions, 1939-45,' (Brandeis University, PhD thesis, 2007).

Sources

As this thesis is concerned primarily with the Territorial Army's military role and capabilities, and its relationship with broader military policy, the majority of the research was conducted at The National Archives, Kew, where the relevant War Office, Treasury and Cabinet papers are held. Research was, however, extended beyond these official sources. For example, the personal papers of the journalist and theorist Basil Liddell Hart, available at the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives (LHCMA), King's College London, provide a valuable further source of material. Liddell Hart remained close to many senior political and military figures, both Territorial and Regular, during the interwar years, and, even taking into account his polemical tendencies, his voluminous correspondence with them are especially useful. Furthermore he remained particularly interested the TA and visited a considerable number of Territorial camps, recording his observations both in his books and articles written in his capacity as a military correspondent, first for the *Daily Telegraph* and later for *The Times*. In addition a number of other papers archived at the LHCMA have been consulted, including those of the TA's Director General from 1936, Gen. Walter Kirke. The personal papers of several other figures involved with the interwar Territorials were also sought out, most notably those of Brig. J.K. Dunlop, held at the Imperial War Museum, and the Earl of Onslow, deposited at the Surrey History Centre.

During the interwar years there was surprisingly little material published specifically on the TA, with the exception of two editions of a book by Col. G.R. Codrington (intended to educate Regular officers before they took up a Territorial attachment), and a thoughtful appraisal on the TA's role and capabilities written by J.K. Dunlop in 1935.¹² Nevertheless, the Territorials were regularly mentioned in contemporary writing dealing with defence more broadly, especially those published by Liddell Hart, B.C. Denning and J.R. Kennedy.¹³ Furthermore, the Territorial Army remained a popular subject for articles submitted to the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* and the *Army Quarterly*, and these are particularly helpful aids in identifying contemporary problems and trends in thinking.

¹² Col. G.R. Codrington, *What is the Territorial Army?* (London, 1933) and *The Territorial Army*, 2nd edn. (London, 1938); J.K. Dunlop, *The Problems and Responsibilities of the Territorial Army*, (London, 1935).

¹³ For example, B.H. Liddell Hart, *When Britain Goes to War*, (London, 1935) pp.303-323 and *The Defence of Britain*, (London, 1939) pp.411-436; B.C. Denning, *The Future of the British Army: The problems of its duties, cost and composition*, (London, 1928) pp.173-182; J.R. Kennedy, *This, Our Army*, (London, 1935) pp.180-191 and *Modern War and Defence Reconstruction*, (London, 1936) pp.115-117.

However, a note has to be made of one resource that was not examined to any great degree. Although the archives of individual County Associations represent a useful source of information on the day-to-day administration of Territorial units, as they are not primarily concerned with the focus of this thesis they have not been widely consulted. They remain, nevertheless, a valuable and underutilised resource for historians aiming their research at a more local level.

Structure

In order to present its themes logically this thesis is organised into two inter-connecting parts dealing with the two main strands of the TA's role: firstly, its expeditionary function in support of continental and imperial defence, and, secondly, its home defence role against both internal and external threats.

Part I concerns itself, therefore, with the expeditionary role of the infantry-based Territorial Field Army, and deals with the aftermath of the First World War, the imperial defence focus of the late 1920s/early 1930s, and the rearmament years, before concluding with the experience of mobilisation and the initial campaigns of the Second World War. Each chapter is arranged in chronological order, although a further sub-division has been made to show the extent to which the TA's role was influenced by the specific direction of strategic policy at any one time. Following on, Part II consists of two thematic chapters addressing the TA's home defence function, assessing not only its internal security role but also its central role in anti-aircraft defence measures.

Accordingly, the first two chapters are concerned with developments between 1919 and 1926, and focus on the immediate legacy of the First World War and the resultant justifications for a reserve structure based around a conscript 'national army.' Chapter one will examine the wartime and immediate post-war perceptions regarding the TA's role, and aims to re-assess the postulation in the literature that Territorials had little relevance to British military requirements during this period. Initially the focus will be on how a voluntary reserve framework fitted in with the plans for the post-bellum army, before a closer analysis will be made of the debate over the Territorial Army's specific

terms and conditions of service. These arguments, centering on whether the force would be liable for general service overseas or remain limited to home defence, represent a wider dispute over whether the TA should be reconstituted in its pre-1914 form or should accept far broader formal responsibilities. In particular this related to its position as the framework for a future conscript 'National Army,' and the extent to which Territorial manpower could be utilised to support the Regular Army overseas, a liability deemed essential during the immediate post-war 'crisis of empire.'

Moving on from the initial reconstitution debate, chapter two will review the TA's formal re-establishment in 1921, and assess whether or not it was successfully re-organised, as was the intention, into a modern, balanced second-line reserve army. The existing literature suggests this period was one solely of 'reductions and recriminations,' with the TA starved of funding and neglected by both the War Office and the British public alike.¹⁴ This chapter will argue that, while it is certainly true that the Army's enduring imperial commitments and the pressure to reduce defence spending led the General Staff to oppose any preferential treatment for the TA, they did not, as has been suggested, push for its abolition or reduce it arbitrarily. In fact, with large-scale cuts inevitable across the military establishment, in the circumstances the authorities made commendable efforts to preserve the Territorial Army's capabilities as far as possible. To illustrate this, the chapter will examine the re-organisation programme planned for the TA in the 1920s, before addressing how the progressive cuts made to defence spending during this time influenced the way in which the TA's composition, readiness and role were perceived.

During the early 1920s military planning around the Territorial Army had been largely guided by the experience of First World War, but by the latter part of the decade the urge to prepare for a large-scale mobilisation had largely abated. In consequence the chapters covering the period between 1927 and 1933 are concerned with the Army's re-orientation towards imperial defence, and the parallel efforts to formalise the Territorial Army's role as a reserve for a small to medium scale war. Chapter three will therefore chart the attempt to shift the TA away from its function as a framework for expansion

¹⁴ P. Dennis, (1987) pp.100-123

and towards a dual role, through the incorporation of a clear and achievable imperial defence obligation. Mobilisation planning at this time increasingly focused on the demands of a medium scale campaign in an undeveloped country, most likely a clash with the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. These arrangements relied heavily on the availability of TA formations to reinforce the expeditionary force. Fighting a medium scale limited war therefore largely depended on the ability to raise some six to eight Territorial formations on a voluntary and composite basis, without resorting to conscription. However, achieving this aim depended on removing some of the restriction on the use of Territorial manpower, such as 'the pledge' on unit integrity. As a result considerable efforts were made to identify and remove these obstructions, and thus free up Territorials to support the Regular Army in a whole range of possible overseas commitments.

During the 1920s and early 1930s the War Office was constantly reviewing the TA's role in broader military policy, and actively sought to re-model it in accordance with shifting strategic priorities. However, after this point the growing threat of a rearming Germany meant that strategic policy again shifted back towards Europe. As a result, the remaining chapters in Part I will outline the importance of the Territorial Army to Britain's rearmament, and highlight how advocates for a 'limited liability' or a 'continental commitment' policy were in practical terms arguing over the extent to which the TA should be made ready. To illustrate this fact chapter four, focusing on the initial deficiency phase during the mid 1930s, will emphasise the Territorial Army's centrality in the debates over the direction of British rearmament. This is an aspect that has not been given sufficient emphasis in the existing literature. Beginning with the first defence deficiency report in 1933, the chapter will trace how the position of the TA and the importance in which it was perceived developed in parallel with the changing direction of strategic policy. Starting from initial deficiency measures, it will show how the War Office tried to obtain authorisation for a formal role for the TA as early as possible, as a reflection of its fundamental importance to preparations for a general European war.

In further recognition of this, the War Office sought to preserve the TA as far as possible from any further reductions, and begin modernising it so that it could meet its role in supporting the

expeditionary force against a first class enemy. How this was to be achieved, however, was far from clear. Under Montgomery-Massingberd the General Staff was keen to make tangible progress, and pushed for an expansion in the number of Territorial cadres and for the abandonment of a 'quality above quantity' principle in recruiting, as the TA's chronic deficiency in personnel was a considerable brake on its readiness for mobilisation. Montgomery-Massingberd was even willing to implement controversial measures previously considered impossible, such as nominating divisions to their wartime duties in peace. Believing that the first few months of war would be crucial, policy between 1933 and 1936 therefore prioritised the Territorial Army's role as the first reinforcement for the Field Force. Its function in a future European war was viewed from the perspective of the early to middle phases and, as a result, most of the discussion during Montgomery-Massingberd's tenure focused on the cohesion of the First Territorial Contingent and how fast it could be projected onto the continent.

On the other hand his successor, Deverell, seriously disagreed with this policy. He saw the Territorial Army not so much as a first reinforcement for the Field Force but as a self-contained second line and the future organisational basis for a national army. Challenging Montgomery-Massingberd's belief that it was possible to model the TA efficiently into both formations and cadres, he wanted to ensure it could function in its more important role as the structural framework for expansion, which relied on a careful management of Territorial identity and the integrity of its 'specialist' cadre organisation. Believing that Territorial readiness was mainly inhibited by a lack of equipment, for Deverell every effort in peace should be directed towards improving Territorial prestige and the quality of its personnel. Chapter four will conclude by illustrating how these disagreements over how to improve the TA, when coupled with the ongoing reluctance in Cabinet to commit to a firm policy on its role, seriously undermined the Army's rearmament programme, and also nullified its ability to sustain a sizeable ground force in the increasingly likely eventuality of a general European war.

It was always an established fact that the TA's ability to carry out its role largely depended on the efficacy of its training. Indeed, the correlation between the Territorial Army's efficiency and its readiness to mobilise remained a central discussion point throughout the period. Therefore, before

approaching the final efforts to ready the TA for war, chapter five will assess what standard of efficiency the Territorial Field Army was actually capable of achieving. Without reaching a high standard in peacetime the force would be incapable of mobilising within the necessary timeframe, and would certainly struggle to direct the training of a wartime national army. These reasons, as well as the introduction of modern tactics and equipment, made the instruction of Territorial leaders, instructors and specialists an essential task. Achieving this aim, however, remained fraught with difficulties. In order to explore how effective Territorial training was between the wars this chapter is subdivided into several key sections. The first concerns the TA's overall training policy and whether the force was appropriately organised to implement it. The second will assess how effective training was at the individual and collective level, especially amongst commanders, instructors and specialist personnel. The third will examine one of the key determinants of Territorial efficiency, specifically the level of assistance offered by the Regular Army and the degree of integration between the two forces. After these aspects have been studied it will be possible to assess whether the TA's standard of training and efficiency helped or hindered its ability to carry out its role.

By the late 1930s the strategic shift away from the continent would have serious ramifications on Territorial rearmament. Indeed, it can be argued that the policy of a 'limited liability' that emerged in 1937 manifested itself largely in the refusal to adequately prepare the Territorial Army for its primary role. Such a policy was, however, not to last. Once strategic policy swung again in favour of a continental commitment in 1939, readying the Territorial Field Army became a political and military imperative. Chapter six will trace the development of these opposing strategic approaches and their impact on the TA. It will show how the General Staff was unwilling to embrace the 'limited liability' policy and never foreswore the possibility of having to deploy the Field Force to Europe. This can be seen in the fact that they proceeded with plans to re-organise the TA in line with the Regular Army's modernisation programme and rejected attempts to reduce the scope of its role. Focusing on the further efforts to improve its administration, organisation and training, as well as its manpower and equipment levels, as war approached, the chapter will also assess whether it was realistically capable of carrying out its role.

Closing the first part of the thesis, chapter seven will serve as a concluding epilogue by assessing, firstly, how the role of the TA was viewed in the immediate run-up to war and, secondly, whether its subsequent embodiment, mobilisation and deployment was carried out efficiently and in the manner in which it was intended. Focusing on its immediate post-mobilisation training, the professional standards of its commanders and instructors, and the efforts to raise its efficiency once deployed, the chapter will provide a balanced examination of how effectively the TA carried out its wartime role on mobilisation.

Moving on from the Field Army's expeditionary function, Part II assesses the TA's home defence responsibilities and is split between two chapters, the first looking at its internal security role as an aid to the civil power and the second charting its importance in the development of air defence measures.

Chapter eight will therefore examine the Territorial Army's controversial role in aiding the civil power in the maintenance of internal order. Ostensibly the TA had no formal obligation to provide such assistance, but the availability of Territorials was in fact central to many domestic defence schemes. Existing research on this aspect has focused almost entirely on the Territorials' contribution to raising the Defence Force and the Civil Constabulary Reserve during the 1920s. By comparison little effort has been made to extend this area of study into the 1930s. This is remiss, as the nature of the Territorials Army's role in aiding the civil power shifted markedly over this period, in line with the perceived threats the authorities faced at different times. For example, during the 1920s this role was mainly conceptualised as being in the form of support to the police, as political and economic unrest was the main cause of instability. By the later 1930s, however, the rising fear of air attack altered the focus towards the maintenance of civil order in the event of mass panic and the collapse of social cohesion following a devastating aerial 'knock out blow.' Whether utilised as a controllable workforce available to help supply essential services or an armed body to forcibly re-instate centralised control, the Territorials were clearly identified as a viable and valuable source of disciplined manpower.

In order to explore these areas this chapter will focus on several key areas. The first will clarify the Territorials' legal liability to aid the civil power, as delineated during the reconstitution debate. The second will examine the Territorial involvement in the quasi-military Defence Force of 1921, followed by the later plans to establish a Civil Constabulary Reserve (CCR) around the Territorial organisation in 1926. This chapter will also extend this assessment beyond the existing literature by looking in detail at the intention to establish a permanent CCR structure throughout the 1930s. Furthermore, the chapter will explore the TA's new and significant responsibilities as a disciplined civil/military reserve, providing both an interim civil defence function in the event of an aerial 'knock out blow,' as well as a force of armed men available to suppress a panicked population if law and order were to break down. Finally it will be possible to assess how important the TA's internal order role was over the interwar period and how it was compared in priority and value to its functions as a military reserve.

During the interwar period anti-aircraft defence was regarded as a primary role for the Territorial Army, yet it remains an aspect largely neglected by historians. This is especially surprising given that by the 1930s the TA had effectively split into a dual organisation, with its field army and air defence elements serving under separate terms of service and performing very different functions. Neither was the anti-aircraft role a minor responsibility for the TA. In fact, by 1939 it had actually come to dominate the organisation, both in terms of the number of Territorials involved and in its prioritisation.

In order to emphasise the importance of this largely overlooked role chapter nine aims to chart the development of the TA's anti-aircraft responsibilities, and also examine its capabilities. The focus will be on three key criteria, all deemed essential for the establishment of an effective anti-aircraft defence. The first concerns manpower, and whether the voluntary Territorial system was capable of providing enough personnel to man the guns and searchlights. The second involves efficiency, and whether part-time amateurs could reach a sufficient technical standard in what was a highly intricate

role. The last area concerns readiness, and whether Territorials could be relied upon to mobilise quickly enough to guard against a surprise ‘knock out blow.’ By examining these determinants in turn it will be possible not only to re-balance the literature by emphasising the TA’s central role in Britain’s air defence system, but also to establish whether it did so effectively.

After reviewing all of these chapters as a whole, this thesis will clarify the importance of the Territorial Army between the World Wars. By delineating and expanding upon its various roles and functions it will be possible to chart how the organisation responded to the shifting strategic priorities Britain faced during this turbulent period. Additionally, by analysing how it was organised and the standard of efficiency it achieved it will also be possible to answer whether or not it was actually capable of fulfilling its roles successfully.

As a result, this thesis will offer an important contribution to the literature and provide a clearer appreciation of the role, organisation and capabilities of the interwar Territorial Army. Not only is this essential if we are to gain a balanced understanding of British military developments between the World Wars, but it also provides a useful case study on the advantages and limitations of a voluntary reserve system that has an enduring relevance.

Part I

Chapter One.

In Pursuit of Utility: The Debate over the Role and Organisation of the Reconstituted Territorial Army, 1917-1920.

Introduction

Contrary to common assumptions, the British Army did not dismiss its experiences between 1914 and 1918 as an aberration, nor did it disregard the war's hard-won lessons. Although imperial defence remained a priority in the immediate power vacuum of the post-war years, there was no unseemly rush to revert to 'real' soldiering within the Empire.¹⁵ Instead, the immediate aftermath of the war witnessed a rational and coherent debate over the broader role and future organisation of the post-bellum Army.¹⁶ This debate certainly did not exclude criticism of Britain's reserve framework, especially after the Army's expansion had exposed the pre-war voluntary system as being fundamentally flawed.

The decision to reconstitute the Territorial Force was not therefore a forgone conclusion, although the swift re-establishment of some form of effective reserve was considered essential. During this period the General Staff had to balance the Army's reorganisation against an ongoing variety of disparate commitments and priorities. The Army not only had to meet its responsibilities towards internal security and garrisoning a global Empire but it also had to retain the ability to mobilise for a medium-scale conflict, which remained its most likely type of commitment. Furthermore, the recent experience of fighting a continental war had demonstrated the enduring requirement to maintain a capability to expand Britain's military resources to the fullest extent in a national emergency.

This necessity to prepare for a wide variety of possible tasks meant that the keynote for the Army's re-organisation scheme was flexibility, and this applied both to its active and reserve lines. The First World War had not only slighted the pre-war Regular Army but it had also destroyed the established

¹⁵ D. French, 'Doctrine and Organization in the British Army, 1919-1932,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol.44, No.2 (June, 2001) pp.497-515.

¹⁶ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.565 'Memorandum by the S. of S. for War relating to the Army Estimates, 1920-21.'

reserve structure. As such there was no scope to simply re-establish and reform the Army's 1914 organisation. Initial plans therefore envisaged re-building the new post-bellum army as a truly national institution, and as such it was hoped, via the extension of conscription, to shape it into a fully integrated, universal organisation with a strong and effective compulsory reserve component. However, with the return to voluntary recruitment the War Office was forced into re-moulding the pre-war system to bring it into line with Britain's new post-war strategic situation. Faced with a growing manpower crisis and a deteriorating security situation across the Empire, the idea of reconstituting the Territorial Force as a ready reserve force increasingly gained traction, but the demand for Regular troops and an ever-narrowing budget meant that the Territorials had to offer a clear utility and relevance if they were to justify a share of the expenditure.

Yet the Haldanian Territorial organisation did not fit easily into this post-war strategic picture. A home defence role had been difficult to justify even before 1914, and the lack of any obvious invasion threat made it indefensible once victory was declared. Similarly, the conflict had left the European powers militarily exhausted, which suggested that the need to deploy another mass army to the Continent could be discounted for the foreseeable future, and in any case another such involvement would certainly entail conscription. Furthermore, the part-time nature of Territorial service made it an inappropriate source of manpower for garrisoning duties in peacetime, and utilising Territorials for medium-scale conflicts would be impossible without the introduction of far more flexible legislation regarding their overseas obligations, both as individuals and formed units.¹⁷

As a result the general assumption has been that the Territorials' role at this time was superfluous, and that their potential contribution towards national defence was, at best, unclear.¹⁸ This has also led some historians to regard the Territorial reconstitution as politically motivated, and furthermore that it

¹⁷ P. Dennis, 'The Reconstitution of the Territorial Force 1918-1920' in A. Preston & P. Dennis (eds.) *Sword and Covenants: Essays in Honour of the Centennial of the Royal Military College of Canada, 1876-1976* (London, 1976) pp.190-211; D. French, (2000) p.15; H. Strachan, 'The Territorial Army and National Defence,' in K Neilson and G. Kennedy, *The British Way in Warfare: Power and the International System, 1856-1956*, (Farnham, 2010) p.167; I.F.W. Beckett, (2011) p.244.

¹⁸ I.F.W. Beckett, (2011) p.244; H. Strachan, (2010) p.167.

was a flawed compromise forced upon a suspicious and begrudging General Staff.¹⁹ Such assertions overreach themselves. Although political pressure in Parliament and the advocacy of others in positions of authority may have been a factor in the Territorial reconstitution, it is clear that within the War Office a voluntary reserve force component was regarded as a vital part of an integrated post-bellum army. However, this was only as long as the Territorials provided a role that contributed directly to Britain's strategic defence requirements. It was this question over the purpose and function of the new Territorial organisation, and the circumstance in which it could be used, that dominated the ensuing debate over its reconstitution.

In light of its importance, this chapter will therefore address how the role and purpose of the TA was perceived in the immediate post-war years, and how these perceptions in turn influenced its prioritisation as part of broader defence planning. Initially this will focus on the preliminary intentions for the post-bellum Army, and will explore how the future of a voluntary reserve framework was conceptualised in light of wartime experience. From this point a closer examination will be made of the debate that developed over a Territorials' terms and conditions of service, in particular whether he would now be formally liable for General Service overseas or for home defence only. After analysing the advantages and disadvantages of these options, it will be possible to address whether the Territorials were re-established as a valuable reserve with a role relevant to the Army's strategic requirements, or whether historians have been right to denigrate its reconstitution.

* * *

The Position of a Voluntary Reserve in Early Military Planning

The military authorities did not wait for the end of the First World War before they began planning the Army's future organisation. Aware that they might otherwise be forced to revert to pre-war arrangements, the Army Council began reviewing the alternatives as early as June 1917.²⁰ This resulted in the establishment of the Army Reorganization Committee, tasked with assessing the

¹⁹ G. Spillan, 'Manpower Problems in the British Army, 1918-1939: the balancing of resources and commitments,' (Univ. of Oxford, D.Phil thesis, 1985), p.72; P. Dennis, (1987) p.42.

²⁰ TNA WO 163/22 Army Council Minutes: 213th Meeting, 5 June 1917.

Empire's future defence requirements and recommending how the peacetime army could be re-organised to meet them.²¹

Although its final report may not have gone beyond the War Office, this committee still arrived at several important conclusions. Central to these was the conviction that Britain could not afford to retreat into imperial isolation after the defeat of Germany. This was reflected in its proposed ordering of military priorities, which ranked the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe first, followed by the security of the Empire second, and home defence measures last. The ability to effectively intervene on the Continent was singled out as an enduring necessity.

The committee therefore managed to identify the key dual factor that would dominate future planning, viz. that the military, in addition to its enduring requirement to police the Empire, also had to retain the capability to form a mass army. The ideal solution would be to establish an integrated army formed of two parts: one small, professional and voluntary, the other large, national and compulsory. There was no place in this organisation for a revived Territorial Force, and the committee was keen to emphasise that the pre-1914 voluntary reserve system had demonstrably failed to meet the requirements of modern war.²² Thereafter, the British Army's future ability to conduct another national war depended on reforming its reserve structure around compulsory military service.

This assertion continued to be the ideal after the Armistice was signed. The end of active hostilities prompted the creation of several new committees, all tasked with re-assessing the Army's future organisation, administration and doctrine in light of wartime experience.²³ Although the demands of imperial and home defence were still acknowledged, at this stage establishing an organisation capable of mass expansion remained a key requirement. The need to re-mobilise a mass army may appear redundant with peace negotiations underway, but for the Allies the option of renewing hostilities had

²¹ TNA WO 106/356 Army Reorganization Committee Report, 30 June 1917.

²² T. Bowman and M. Connelly, 'The Auxiliary Forces,' in T. Bowman and M. Connelly (eds.) *The Edwardian Army: Recruiting, Training, and Deploying the British Army, 1902-1914*, (Oxford, 2012) pp.1-59.

²³ D. French, (2001) pp.500-503.

to be kept on the table.²⁴ After all, the original Armistice only had a lifespan of thirty-six days which had to be periodically extended and, in any case, could be repudiated by any party on forty-eight hours notice.²⁵ Yet the political imperative to demobilise ensured that British military strength quickly dissipated over 1919. This realisation alarmed the commander of the Rhineland occupation force, Gen. Robertson, and the CIGS himself had to warn Lloyd George that if hostilities resumed they would lack the manpower and logistical capability to advance towards Berlin.²⁶

As a result the 'Reorganization Committee of the *Post Bellum* Field Army,' established under Maj.-Gen. Sir William Bird in November 1918, was charged with devising an organisation that would not only be capable of supplying drafts for imperial duties, but would also act as a framework for another national mobilisation.²⁷ Once again, it was recognised that the only way to guarantee a sufficient future supply of reserve manpower was to retain compulsory service in peacetime. In the meantime the War Office was forced to rely on a series of contingency plans capable of re-mobilising a total of fifty BEF divisions in an emergency.²⁸ All demobilised troops not already allocated to a specific reserve category were automatically signed into the Class Z reserve, with a liability to return to their units if needed.²⁹

The necessity to preserve the wartime army, albeit in suspended animation, ensured that the existing divisional structure had to be retained, which entailed maintaining at least fifteen Territorial divisions in being as complete formations with Regular cadres. In the meantime, Bird's committee decided that Territorial units themselves should continue to carry out annual training but should now be integrated much closer with the Regular Army, with each Regular battalion being affiliated to three Territorial

²⁴ TNA WO 32/5383 Churchill to Wilson, 20 Feb 1919.

²⁵ War Office, *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-1920*, (London, 1922) p.727. Extensions were authorised on 13 Dec 1918, 16 Jan, 16 Feb and 4 April 1919 See I. Brown, 'The British Expeditionary Force and the difficult transition to 'peace', 1918-1919' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.19, No.4 (1996) p.100.

²⁶ K. Jeffery (ed.), *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, 1918-1922*, (London, 1985) 2/1A/19 Robertson to Wilson, 6 June 1919; 2/90/21 Wilson to Lloyd George, 16 June 1919.

²⁷ TNA WO 32/11357 Minute by DCIGS, 22 Nov 1918 and War Office to Maj.-Gen. Bird, 27 Nov 1918; WO 32/11356 Minute by DDSD, 27 Nov 1918; WO 32/11356 Minute by DCIGS, n.d. c.25 Nov 1918, Minute by AG, 26 Nov 1918; WO 237/2 Army Reorganization Committee 1919: Abstract of Recommendations; WO 32/11357 Bird to Lynden-Bell, 15 July 1919; D. French (2001) p.501.

²⁸ TNA WO 32/11356 Enc. 7A Report on the Interim and Post Bellum Army, 3 Dec 1918.

²⁹ TNA WO 33/917 Report of War Office Remobilization Committee, 1919.

battalions, so that the former could assist them in carrying out individual training in peace and provide personnel for expansion in war.³⁰

Although only an interim plan responding to the uncertainties of 1919, this emergency scheme shows that there were several advantages in keeping the Territorial organisation intact, whilst simultaneously blending it with the Regular Army through cadres and more formal affiliation. Nevertheless, future policy was still predicated on the eventual introduction of a form of compulsory military service. The final immediate post-war attempt to radically reform the Army's organisation occurred when the 'Committee on the Organization of the After-War Army' met under the chairmanship of Lt.-Gen. Alexander Hamilton-Gordon. In keeping with all earlier assessments, the committee strongly advised against forming separate Regular and Territorial Armies, as this system had already been proved to be inadequate:

A system of peace organization which concentrates the greater part of the trained regular personnel in a few regular units, which results in the mixture in all non-regular units of men of unequal physical standards and widely different ages, and which provides no mechanism for expansion beyond units maintained in peace, cannot enable the whole manpower of the nation to be utilized ... should another grave emergency arise.³¹

Instead Hamilton-Gordon recommended abandoning the Cardwell system of linked battalions, as well as the regional Territorial formation structure, replacing them instead with an organisation based on five Corps areas, containing the cadres of twenty divisions that in an emergency could be duplicated into a National Army of forty divisions.

Historians have viewed these recommendations as the Army's only real attempt to retain an organisational capacity to mobilise a national army, and the report does illustrate how the problems associated with mass expansion had been closely studied.³² Yet it was a radical plan that stood little chance of implementation. Bond has assigned the blame for its failure on the impending cabinet decision to reduce defence priorities in August 1919, the so-called 'ten year rule.'³³ Spillan has

³⁰ TNA WO 32/11356 Enc. 7A Report on the Interim and Post Bellum Army, 3 Dec 1918.

³¹ Quoted in B. Bond, (1980) p.23.

³² TNA WO 237/13 Report of the Committee on the Organization of After-War Army, July 1919, p.154.

³³ B. Bond, (1980) p.23.

concurred, and in addition considered that the political costs of forcibly dismantling the Territorial system were prohibitive.³⁴

Nevertheless, the deepening manpower crisis in the Army and the impending end of conscription ensured that the time was inopportune for introducing ambitious and potentially disruptive reforms. Faced with a worsening 'crisis of Empire,' the Army was desperate for manpower to guard against domestic unrest at home, as well as replacement garrisons for India, the colonies, the Middle East and Ireland. In early 1919 a division was still tied up in Italy and another was needed to occupy the Turkish Straits, while further personnel were needed for the Army of Occupation and to support the intervention in Russia.

As a result the War Office clamoured for more troops, as there were simply not enough available to cover all of its responsibilities.³⁵ Yet with Cabinet unwilling to extend compulsory service troop numbers were only set to decrease, especially once conscription and the Class Z reserve liability ended after April 1920.³⁶ This forced the War Office to fall back on a crash programme of voluntary enlistments, but despite offering a number of expensive inducements, attempts to encourage veterans to re-engage for further service largely failed, and those who did come forward were often untrained or physically incapable.³⁷ As a result, manning levels continued to deteriorate over 1920, both in front line strengths and in the depth of the reserve. As the manpower pressure mounted, the advantages of reconstituting a strong Territorial reserve organisation became increasingly apparent.

³⁴ G. Spillan, (1985) p.72.

³⁵ TNA CAB 24/71 GT.6434; WO 33/1004 Memo by CIGS: Military Commitments after Peace has been signed, 5 Dec 1918; Churchill to Lord Curzon, 16 Jan 1919 reproduced in M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Vol.V, 1923-1939*, (London, 1976) p.457; *Parl. Papers*, Cmd. 565: Memorandum of the Secretary of State for War relating to the Army Estimates for 1920-21, p.7.

³⁶ IWM Wilson MSS: Diary entry for 10, 15 and 23 Jan 1919; Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George MSS F/8/3/8 Lloyd George to Churchill, 18 Jan 1919; K. Middlemas (ed.) T. Jones, *Whitehall Diary: Vol.I, 1916-1925* (London, 1969) p.72; Parliamentary Archives, Lloyd George MSS F/8/3/8 Churchill to Lloyd George, 27 Jan 1919, also K. Jeffery, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire, 1918-22*, (Manchester, 1984) pp.14-15.

³⁷ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd. 1193 General Annual Reports on the British Army, 1913 to 1919; W.S. Churchill to D. Lloyd George, 9 April 1919 (unsent letter) reproduced in M. Gilbert, (1977) p.610; W.S. Churchill to A. Chamberlain, 4 Feb 1919, reproduced in M. Gilbert (1977), p.510; W.S. Churchill to D. Lloyd George, 21 Feb 1919, reproduced in M. Gilbert, (1977) p.549.

The Value of a Reconstituted Territorial Reserve

Although the focus was still on re-establishing a full-time force for imperial service, the War Office acknowledged that without a functioning reserve the Army would be incapable of responding to any unforeseen crises. Britain's wartime mobilisation had severely disrupted the established reserve framework and the process by which additional military manpower could be generated. The normal inflow of men completing their Regular terms of service had ceased for the duration of the war, which ensured the post-war army lacked sufficient depth to its manpower and left it solely reliant on a rapidly dissipating pool of active personnel.³⁸ Efforts to promote direct enlistment into the Army Reserve had proved disappointing, as by the end of 1919 only 63,549 men had been processed into the normal Section 'B' reserve, whilst none were registered under the more flexible Section 'A' terms of service.³⁹ These deficiencies, which were further exacerbated by a chronic shortage of technical specialists, effectively prevented the army from fielding the balanced, medium-sized expeditionary force it believed it would soon need.

In any case, the Army also lacked the machinery to sustain itself once the expeditionary force had been committed. Before 1914 this function had been performed by the Special Reserve (SR) but there had never been much confidence in its capabilities, and plans for its abolition were already being put forward by 1919.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the SR's specific role, namely the provision of drafts to reinforce battalions overseas, was now more essential than ever. As a consequence the early re-establishment of a viable voluntary reserve structure was a priority. However, to be truly effective this reserve had to be capable of achieving three primary functions. Firstly, it had to act as an expansionary framework for national mobilisation on a compulsory basis; secondly, it had to offer a flexible source of trained formations to augment a medium scale expedition without conscription. Thirdly, it had to

³⁸ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd. 565: Memorandum of the S. of S. for War relating to the Army Estimates for 1920-21, p.7.

³⁹ Churchill to Lloyd George, 25 Sept 1919 reproduced in M. Gilbert, (1977) p.881; *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.1193 General Annual Reports on the British Army, 1913 to 1919, p.94.

⁴⁰ J. Gooch, 'Haldane and the National Army' in I. Beckett and J. Gooch, (eds.) *Politicians and Defence: Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy*, (Manchester, 1981) p.80; E. Spiers, *Haldane - An Army Reformer*, (Edinburgh, 1980) p.89; TNA WO 32/3675 Hamilton-Gordon to Macdonogh, 22 July 1919; Macdonogh to Vesey, 24 July 1919; WO 32/3676 Report by DO, 25 Nov 1919; *Parl. Papers*, Cmd. 565: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War relating to the Army Estimates for 1920-21, p.10; WO 32/3675 Minute by AG.1, 12 July 1919.

provide an organisation capable of furnishing drafts to support a commitment of Regular troops over and beyond what could be provided by the Regular Army Reserve.

With its pre-existing geographical footprint and infrastructure there were clear advantages in utilising the Territorial Force for all three of these functions. Furthermore, it was recognised that demobilised Territorial veterans represented a valuable but largely untapped source of trained manpower. The Director General of the Territorial and Volunteer Force (DGTVF), Lord Scarbrough, and the Adjutant-General, Lt.-Gen. George Macdonogh, agreed it would be easier to re-establish or convert existing Territorial units into a reserve organisation rather than raising a new force from scratch, and both admitted they stood a better chance of re-enrolling men sooner rather than later.⁴¹

Indeed, with the abandonment of the two-tier long/short service army scheme the decision to revert to a regional organisation of Territorial formations was regarded as inevitable.⁴² Despite advising caution, even the sceptical Deputy Director of Military Operations, Brig.-Gen. Walter Kirke, conceded that there were advantages in retaining the fourteen Territorial divisions ‘on the old TF basis rather than not at all, always provided that by accepting an obviously faulty organization we do not compromise our position when pressing for a scheme more in conformity with modern requirements.’ The General Staff also confirmed their preference for the Territorial organisation to act as the sole machinery for future military expansion, as both the AG and CIGS considered it far preferable to any extemporised setup similar to Kitchener’s New Armies.⁴³

Significantly, however, it was recognised that a reconstituted Territorial organisation had to offer clear advantages over the pre-war system, and it had to provide for a broader, more flexible and more relevant role than simply home defence. This role would also have to embrace the possibility of another total war, whilst also contributing to the Army’s more likely imperial commitments. As Kirke pointed out, conducting a national war without compulsory service was now inconceivable, and as a

⁴¹ TNA WO 32/11246 Proposal for Reconstituting the TF by DGTVF, 24 Feb 1919; Minute by AG, 1 March 1919.

⁴² W.S. Churchill to A. Chamberlain, 4 Feb 1919 reproduced in M. Gilbert, (1977) p.510.

⁴³ TNA WO 32/11246 Minute by AG, 24 March 1919; DCIGS to AG, 26 March 1919.

result they could not accept any form of organisation or any 'entangling agreements' that would militate against the effective mobilisation of the nation's manpower.⁴⁴ At the same time, what the Army desperately needed was a source of reserve manpower for the small and medium scale campaigns it currently envisaged, and for which Regular resources would be insufficient. For this reason Kirke rejected simply re-raising the TF in its limited, pre-1914 form:

If the above facts are accepted, namely that the Territorial Force as constituted before the war is of no value for small wars whilst for a large war compulsory service would be introduced, it is difficult to see what attraction the Territorial Force would have under pre-war conditions unless it offered some definite possibility of escaping foreign service. No such inducement could, however, be permitted since it would vitiate any scheme for general mobilisation.⁴⁵

Yet despite these concerns the General Staff was still committed to re-establishing the Territorials, primarily as a manpower reserve of demobilised veterans, and it was vital that the organisation was set up before potential volunteers lost interest.⁴⁶ These men could establish an efficient, well-equipped and experienced Territorial reserve organisation for very little effort. With this objective in mind, the initial intention was to only accept fit, trained veterans aged between 18 and 41, enlisting on an interim two-year engagement. Commanders would be carefully selected from experienced field officers and their appointments reviewed by a travelling board presided over by the DGTF. The inefficient would be vigorously expunged and the Territorial Reserve of Officers combed out to ensure it was not 'merely a dumping ground for those for whom no other use can be found elsewhere,' whilst the force itself would be fully equipped with war scales of equipment. Once established such an organisation would allow a large number of war experienced men to be retained, who otherwise would be lost to the Army.

Nevertheless, the General Staff was also right to be concerned that the utility of such a force, however well trained and prepared, would be seriously undermined if individual Territorials only remained liable under the pre-1914 conditions of service. As a result they were adamant that any Territorial enlistments had to be under new, flexible terms that reflected the Army's manpower requirements, in

⁴⁴ Ibid. Minute by AG, 1 March 1919; Minute by DCIGS, 21 March 1919.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Report by DDMO on 'The Reconstitution of the Territorial Force at the Present Time,' 12 March 1919.

⁴⁶ Ibid. AG to DCIGS, 24 March 1919.

line with the intention to create an integrated force that brought Regulars and Territorials much closer together.⁴⁷ As the DCIGS explained to Churchill:

The TF is or should be an essential part of our fighting machinery and should be organised, administered and trained by the same machinery as the Regular Army ... The War has brought us together as one army and I sincerely hope we shall not drift apart again into watertight compartments.⁴⁸

Indeed, rather than re-instate the cumbersome pre-war administrative organisation it was initially intended to abolish the Territorial Directorate and, like the Regular Army, place responsibility for the TA entirely with the Army Council's Military Members.⁴⁹ Even though Churchill's decision to revive the County Associations implied that some form of Directorate was necessary, there were still calls for its reform.⁵⁰ For example, some pressed for the Directorate to be given executive powers over personnel, buildings and equipment issues, and pushed for the Director-General to be given greater status in the Army Council.⁵¹ The General Staff, on the other hand, deprecated any reforms that widened the separation between the Regular and Territorial Armies or loosened its control over their wartime mobilisation. As was pointed out in May 1919:

I sincerely hope that we are going to reckon on the Territorial Force as a definite part of our war organization in the future in default of any system of compulsory National Service. If we are, then it cannot be too strongly urged that it must be organized, trained and administered on the same lines and by the same machinery as the rest of the military forces of the Crown, i.e. by the Army Council.

As a purely tentative measure a TF Directorate may be necessary but once the After-war Army is organized we shall work as one Army. It may then be necessary to keep a small section to deal with civil and social duties.

I do not think that we ought to maintain in peace an organization which we know from experience we should have to alter for war.⁵²

This rational aspiration to have an organisation suitable for both war and peace led the General Staff to push for the Territorials to be administered in exactly the same way as the Regular Army.⁵³ Eventually, however, whilst recognised as undoubtedly correct from the perspective of efficiency, abolishing the Territorial Directorate and reducing the power of the Associations was not regarded as practical politics. As the new DCIGS, Philip Chetwode, pointed out:

⁴⁷ TNA WO 32/11790 Churchill to Harington, Masterson Smith, Stevenson and Creedy, 12 April 1919; See also WO 32/2681 Minutes by Lee, Scarbrough, Geddes, Wilson and Churchill, 9 Jan 1920.

⁴⁸ TNA WO 32/11790 DCIGS to S. of S. 14 April 1919.

⁴⁹ TNA 32/11789 AG to U.S. of S., 24 April 1919; WO 32/11792 'Extract from Précis for the Army Council, No.981 of May, 1919.'

⁵⁰ TNA WO 32/11789 AG to U.S. of S., 24 April 1919.

⁵¹ Ibid. DGTF to U.S. of S., 24 April 1919; AG to U.S. of S., 24 April 1919; U.S. of S. to S. of S., 30 April 1919; WO 32/11792 DGTA to U.S. of S., 30 April 1919.

⁵² TNA WO 32/11789 Minute by DCIGS, 10 May 1919.

⁵³ Ibid. DGTF to U.S. of S., 24 April 1919.

We have reconstituted the TF on pre-war lines and thus revived all the old prejudices, jealousies and touchiness with regard to direct interference by the War Office. Such being the case it is open to doubt if the TF would come into line with the full proposals of the General Staff though they might consent to be directly represented by CIGS.⁵⁴

It was also doubted whether it was possible to organise a part-time volunteer force in the same way as the Regular Army. Founded around the County Associations, there was still a lingering belief that Territorials could only be administered in a local, decentralised manner.⁵⁵ As such it was only thought possible to try and streamline the War Office's internal organisation, so that the DGTF could be kept informed of each branches' executive decisions and his access to the Army Council could be improved.⁵⁶

Moreover, the authorities were committed to overhauling the Territorials order of battle in line with the demands of modern war. Accordingly the General Staff was keen to see the Territorial Force re-established in its pre-war configuration of fourteen divisions and fourteen mounted brigades, but with the organisation now under much closer centralised control and with each volunteer being required to accept a formal liability to serve overseas.

However it was also realised that imposing this 'General Service' obligation was potentially controversial. Accordingly, in order to assuage fears that the Territorials might be used as a drafting body for Regular units, this obligation would only become active once a 'national emergency' had been declared and compulsory military service reintroduced by Parliament. Although Territorials would thereafter deploy as formed units, and every effort would be made to keep them together, no pledge would be given to retain them intact once in theatre.⁵⁷

As Dennis has pointed out, this decision represented an uneasy compromise between the efforts to maximise the Territorials' military utility and the concerns being raised in some quarters that service

⁵⁴ TNA WO 32/11791 DCIGS to DMI, DSD and DMO, 30 Nov 1920.

⁵⁵ Ibid. DGTF to U.S. of S., 23 Dec 1920; Chetwode to Wilson, 28 Dec 1920.

⁵⁶ Ibid. Creedy to Wilson, 4 Jan 1921.

⁵⁷ TNA WO 32/11246 Note for the S. of S. by the AG, 31 March 1919.

would be considered so onerous that few would enlist.⁵⁸ By pledging to keep Territorial units intact until they reached a theatre of war the War Office could refute any accusations that Territorials would be committed without warning to an unpopular imperial campaign, or simply broken up to maintain the strength of Regular units. Rather, Territorials would only proceed overseas ‘with the rest of the Nation,’ instead of possibly having to sacrifice their civil livelihoods and prospects by being dispatched on the whim of a future government.

However, by making this pledge the War Office introduced a limitation that seriously undermined the Territorials’ flexibility, and made the prospect of utilising Territorial troops in support of medium-scale operations a distinctly complicated undertaking. Furthermore, even though it was accepted that any future National Army would be raised through conscription, the pledge on unit integrity threatened to separate Territorials into a legally protected special class of reserve that would undermine the efficiency of any general mobilisation. In what became notorious throughout the interwar period as the ‘pledge,’ the general service obligation was thus, as Beckett has concluded, ‘so hedged with legislative qualification as to prevent the War Office either from using territorials in the very situations of medium-scale conflict which was regarded as their only likely employment or from drafting territorial manpower where it was most required.’⁵⁹

As a result the Territorials were by this point increasingly presented as an independent second line, rather than an integral part of the first, which departed markedly from what the General Staff had initially intended. Although the reconstituted Territorial organisation would be well placed to provide a framework for military expansion, the utility of individual Territorials would be seriously restricted. Furthermore, the perceived need to offset any overseas service liability with various guarantees only offered to complicate future mobilisation planning whilst contributing little to solving how drafts for the expeditionary force could be produced without the Special Reserve. At the same time there was a lingering doubt as to whether the overseas General Service liability would be accepted, or whether a purely home defence role would be reinstated. The realisation that such problems still existed

⁵⁸ P. Dennis, (1987) p.43.

⁵⁹ I.F.W. Beckett, (2011) p.245.

prevented an early decision being made, despite the fact that Churchill was under increasing pressure to present the War Office's final plans.⁶⁰

However, any conclusive pronouncement on this issue was unlikely whilst Cabinet continued to wait for Britain's strategic position to be clarified at the Paris peace negotiations.⁶¹ In the meantime the deteriorating security situation across the Empire and the domestic imperative to cut expenditure made it vital for the Territorials to prove their utility if they were to justify a share of the estimates.⁶² This became essential after Cabinet decided in August 1919 to slash expenditure on defence and base all service estimates on the assumption that no major war would occur within ten years.⁶³

In the context of the time the rationale behind the so-called 'ten year rule' was not unreasonable.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the 'ten year rule' ensured that the army could not afford any unnecessary additions to its estimates, and Churchill's public commitment to re-establish the Territorials, despite the absence of any firm decision on its precise role, had already alarmed the CIGS. On 7 August Wilson had drafted a paper entitled 'The Future of the Army,' which Churchill circulated to the Cabinet on 20 August.⁶⁵ In this Wilson insisted that the Regular Army was already over-extended garrisoning the volatile Empire. On the other hand, as there was no prospect of invasion or a potential European enemy to prepare against, he could only conclude that there was no immediate requirement to expand the army or provide units purely for home defence.

Wilson's paper has been used to suggest that the CIGS believed the Territorial Force had no role in the post-war army.⁶⁶ This is over-stating the case. It is true that Wilson was relieved he no longer had

⁶⁰ TNA WO 32/11246 Report on the Conference of TF Association Representatives, 1 April 1919 and 1 May 1919; Minute by QMG, 10 June 1919; Minute by DO, 13 June 1919; WO 32/11245 Notes on the Conference with the Deputation from the CCTA, 24 July 1919.

⁶¹ J. Ferris, *Men, Money and Diplomacy: The Evolution of British Strategic Foreign Policy*, (Ithaca NY, 1989) p.18.

⁶² A. Orde, *Great Britain and International Security, 1919-1926* (London, 1978) p.4; K. Jeffery, (1984) pp.11-12; J. Ferris, 'Treasury Control, the Ten Year Rule and British Service Policies, 1919-1924', *The Historical Journal*, Vol.30, No.4 (Dec, 1987) pp.859-883.

⁶³ TNA CAB 23/15 Cabinet Conclusions, 15 Aug 1919.

⁶⁴ TNA WO 32/3510 Memorandum on Accelerating Demobilization and its Effect on Military Commitments, 6 Aug 1919; IWM Wilson MSS: Diary entry for 7 Aug 1919.

⁶⁵ TNA CAB 24/87 GT.8039, 20 Aug 1919; See also IWM Wilson MSS 2/90/25, Wilson to Churchill, 7 Aug 1919.

⁶⁶ P. Dennis, (1987) p.46.

to prepare for a national war and could focus on modernisation and more immediate commitments.⁶⁷

However, both Wilson and the Cabinet Finance Committee that recommended the 'ten year rule' accepted that the Army still needed to maintain a capability to expand.⁶⁸ Indeed, Wilson concludes his paper by emphasising the potentially short-term nature of his recommendations:

I shall have to put in a saving clause pointing out that my proposals are only for the immediate future and that taking a longer view of the military situation of the world it will probably be both necessary and wise to re-organize the forces of the Empire on a broader basis and one which will admit of considerable expansion in the case of a large war.⁶⁹

Typically, Wilson was not attempting to formulate a long-term policy for the Army, but merely seeking to allocate resources to meet immediate priorities.⁷⁰ The actual purpose for the paper was to remind the government that a small expeditionary force was a strategic necessity, and that the Regular Army and imperial security needed their immediate attention. This position was well made when the DCIGS, Maj.-Gen. Charles Harington, outlined the General Staff's point of view to the House of Commons Army Committee. Here Harington pointed out that there was only a limited budget to ensure the defence of the Empire, and if the Territorials were to justify a share of any expenditure they had to make a practical contribution to defence. This included accepting an obligation to reinforce the expeditionary force, as the shrunken estimates 'would leave little or nothing for a Territorial Force relegated to purely Home Defence.'⁷¹

Political Necessity versus Military Utility: The Debate over the General Service Obligation

The emerging debate over the Territorial General Service liability was not directed solely by military necessity, but increasingly by the differences between the CIGS and his Minister. By this point Churchill had begun to view the Territorial reconstitution as an essentially political matter, and in order to avoid controversy was increasingly turning back towards a home service liability. Concerned over the lack of organised military forces in the country, he warned Lloyd George that, if the Government was faced with revolution, 'there will be no Army Reserve on which we can call, no

⁶⁷ J. Ferris, (1987) p.870.

⁶⁸ TNA CAB 27/71 Finance Committee Minutes, 11 Aug 1919.

⁶⁹ TNA CAB 24/87 GT.8039, 20 Aug 1919.

⁷⁰ J. Ferris, (1989) p.67.

⁷¹ TNA WO 32/2681 Statement by DCIGS, 14 Aug 1919.

Special Reserve and no Territorial Force. There will therefore be no formed units at the disposal of the Government in aid of the Civil Power beyond about 30,000 to 35,000 Infantry and Cavalry mainly concentrated at Aldershot, Salisbury, Ripon and Catterick.⁷² Also acutely aware that he had already promised to announce his final proposals for the Territorials on 1 October, Churchill's priority was to make the Territorial reconstitution both a popular and political success.

Wilson, on the other hand, was only interested in the military aspects of the problem and therefore for him it was imperative that the Territorials had to perform a valid role if they were to absorb a considerable portion of the War Office budget. Given the strategic priorities of the time, this role had to include an imperial defence function. As Wilson recorded in his diary:

He [Churchill] told me that politically it was absolutely necessary to rebuild the 14 Terr. Divs. I said I had nothing to say against that but that I must put in my paper showing what, in my opinion, was absolutely necessary to keep the Empire safe especially Ireland, Egypt, Mesopot[amia] & India. When these were satisfied we could go on to the Terr. Force ... He was anxious to get me on his side about the Terr: but I would not move out of my soldier's view which, as I told him, the Cabinet might overrule if they liked & politically might for all I know be wise in over-ruling.⁷³

Wilson could only argue that a decision to reconstitute the Territorials purely on political grounds would do little to ameliorate the pressing deficiencies in defence, and may well do considerable harm.

As he replied to Churchill:

Remember that it may be politically wise, politically expedient, even politically necessary to re-create the old Territorial Force, on this subject I express no opinion except that in our present financial state such a course may conceivably cause the loss of a portion of our Empire. If with all the facts before them, the Cabinet decide on this course I have absolutely nothing further to say.⁷⁴

In response Churchill professed amazement that Wilson and the Army Council would apparently seek to abandon the Territorial Force and 'calmly come forward with the suggestion to abolish it.' As he continued:

I am quite certain that neither the Government nor Parliament, nor, I may add, the Public will accept the abolition of the Territorial Force and they would think it astonishing that an Army Council which has so cordially endorsed all previous declarations on this subject should now stultify themselves by a complete reversal of policy. The course of events would not be altered, but we should be completely discredited.⁷⁵

⁷² Churchill to Lloyd George, 25 Sept 1919, reproduced in M. Gilbert, (1977) p.882.

⁷³ IWM Wilson MSS: Diary entry for 26 Sept 1919.

⁷⁴ IWM Wilson MSS 18 B/17 Wilson to Churchill, 6 Oct 1919.

⁷⁵ Ibid. Churchill to Wilson, 2 Oct 1919.

This exchange clearly illustrates the two men's conflicting perspectives, as well as the fact that Wilson was just as susceptible to hyperbole as Churchill. Still, there is no evidence that the CIGS ever pushed for the outright abolition of the Territorial Force. Rather he objected fundamentally to re-establishing it without a viable and relevant role. For this he had in mind a clearly accepted obligation to reinforce the expeditionary force as formed units in a medium scale campaign and, ideally, to supplement the Regular Reserve by subsuming the draft-finding role previously imparted by the Special Reserve.

Compromise

Responding to this impasse, Scarbrough proposed a new arrangement incorporating a broader obligation of service that effectively merged the Territorial and Special Reserve functions together. Accordingly, although the Territorials would primarily be for home service, they would retain a liability to be embodied for imperial service in support of the Regular Army once the Regular Reserve had been called out. This could be as formed units or individuals, the only restrictions being that individuals could only serve within their own corps and those required would be drawn first from the bottom of a seniority roster based on length of service. This was exactly what the General Staff wanted, and provided these principles were included in the conditions of service they proposed to give the reconstitution their full support.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, Churchill's fears that potential volunteers would reject any liability to serve overseas made him reluctant to support the proposal.⁷⁷ This was despite the fact that his concerns were at odds with the general consensus amongst the Territorials themselves. After collating the views of several Territorial representatives it had become clear that opinion was strongly in favour of the general service liability, especially if an assurance was given that Territorials would only be called out after the Regular Reserve and not used for menial purposes such as garrison duty in peacetime. Indeed, it

⁷⁶ TNA WO 32/2681 'Suggested Obligations of Service,' 22 Oct 1919.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Conference between the S. of S., U.S. of S., DGTF and CIGS, 23 Oct 1919.

was claimed that a home service liability alone would only imply that the Force was not being treated seriously, and perhaps not even wanted.⁷⁸

An unambiguous overseas service obligation certainly fitted more with the General Staff's idea of what type of reserve the Territorials should be, as it would allow the army to maintain and moderately expand the expeditionary force once the Regular Reserve was exhausted and, although Territorial units would only be available as drafts within their own corps as formed sub-units, once in theatre each individual would share the Regular soldier's liability to be sent where he was needed.

However, this still left outstanding the problem of how the expeditionary force would be supplied with drafts before Territorial sub-units were ready to deploy. With the Special Reserve earmarked for abolition it was proposed that the Territorials absorb this additional responsibility, through enlisting a supernumerary 'Special Class.' These volunteers would serve under an extra liability to be called out alongside the Regular Reserve, for an additional retaining fee of 1.s a day, and would provide a source of draft reinforcements whilst, in Scarbrough's words, also acting as a 'visible buffer between the rest of the Territorial Army and the too sudden operation of the General Service obligation.' In this way he hoped to reform the discredited pre-war reserve structure into a 'single, simple and inexpensive organisation closely assimilated to that of the Regular Forces.'⁷⁹

Citing the MGO and the Finance Department's objections that it would be impossible to fund and would split units into two groups serving under different terms, Dennis has denigrated Scarbrough's scheme, dubbing it an expensive and unwieldy compromise.⁸⁰ Yet, although unit homogeneity was undoubtedly an important consideration, the scheme did offer clear advantages in simplifying the reserve structure and maximising the Territorial organisations' functional utility. Dennis also fails to note that the Finance Department later reversed its opinion over the cost of the Special Class, or that considerable savings could be made by not reviving a separate Special Reserve.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Memorandum on the Conferences on Territorial Force Reconstruction, n.d., c.1 Nov 1919.

⁷⁹ Ibid. Memorandum by DGTF on the Organization of the Territorial Force, 21 Nov 1919.

⁸⁰ P. Dennis, (1987) p.47.

It is also clear that the Army Council was not collectively hostile to the proposal, as they had already agreed in October 1919 that the Territorials should be asked to accept 'Special Reserve' conditions of service, although they conceded the difficulty in gaining such acceptance.⁸¹ In fact, as part of a separate review the Director of Organisation, Maj.-Gen. Ivo Vesey, had already recommended replacing the Special Reserve with a type of 'Special Service' Territorial, mainly on the grounds that doing so would be cheaper. Furthermore, such a system would be more in line with the direction of policy, 'in view of the fact that the military future of the Country points to the probability of the necessity for bringing the Regular Army into closer touch with the Territorial Force, and through them with the Nation as a whole.'⁸² The MGO and QMG, whose opinions Dennis relies on for his conclusions, had not been privy to the earlier discussions and were somewhat out of the loop. In reality they were simply reluctant to commit themselves before their individual departments had been properly consulted, and both were mainly concerned with avoiding any premature announcements before all the details had been worked out.

Nevertheless, it is true that the 1919-model Territorial Force would not come cheap. This was a deliberate calculation to ensure that Territorial service would be regarded as a serious contribution to national defence, rather than a simple pastime. In recognition of their increased liabilities and to promote efficiency, Territorials were now to be offered generous financial incentives.⁸³ Fully trained volunteers could accrue a bounty of up to £5 per year, and Territorials would also receive pay and allowances, at full Regular Army rates, whilst attending camps and instructional courses.

This meant that a 'Special Class' volunteer would cost around £44 per year and a Territorial serving on a normal attestation around £35.15s. According to these estimates, the War Office's influential Assistant Financial Secretary, Sir Charles Harris, calculated that the fully established force would cost

⁸¹ TNA WO 32/3676 Memorandum by Military Members, 8 Oct 1919.

⁸² Ibid. Report by the DO, 25 Nov 1919.

⁸³ TNA CAB 24/95 CP371 Memorandum on the Future Organization of the Territorial Force, 29 Dec 1919.

the taxpayer a total of £11,000,000.⁸⁴ At a time when effecting economies was a central priority Harris predictably balked at the expense, and Dennis has agreed with him that the proposed organisation was neither simple nor inexpensive.⁸⁵ As a result plans for the Territorial Special Class were quietly dropped. However, what Harris really disagreed with was the principle of offering any financial recruitment incentives at all, as this was at odds with his traditional notion of what true voluntary service entailed.⁸⁶ In fact, once the proposals were explored in more detail it became clear that the new scheme actually offered real value for money compared with the pre-war organisation.

For example, after making an allowance for post-war inflation, the equivalent 1919 cost of the 260,000 strong, 1914-model Territorial Force was estimated to be £8,080,000. With a recruiting cap of 197,000, the new model TF was estimated to cost £7,045,000 and, even if it increased its size to match the actual strength of the TF in 1914, it would still only cost £8,590,000. Even if a decision were made to raise the Territorial establishment, and the 'Special Class' increased from 53,000 to 63,000 to cover the existing gap in the Regular Reserve, the total cost would still only come to £13,830,000, for what was arguably a far superior and utilisable reserve organisation of some 453,000 men.⁸⁷

Yet, although cost was a powerful influence on the cash-strapped War Office, the underlying objection to the 'Special Class' Territorials was the fact the Regular Army preferred to rely on its own Reserve rather than put too much trust in a voluntary alternative. It is clear that the AG's preference was for a strengthened Regular Army Reserve and he did not want any scheme that vitiated its restoration. Macdonogh was adamant that the Regular Reservist was a better investment and, once the normal process of service had been re-established, would be 'decidedly the better article' regarding

⁸⁴ TNA WO 32/2681 Minute by Assistant Financial Secretary, 2 Dec 1919.

⁸⁵ P. Dennis, (1987) p.48.

⁸⁶ TNA WO 32/2681 Minute by Assistant Financial Secretary, 2 Dec 1919.

⁸⁷ TNA CAB 24/95 CP371-A Amendment to the Memorandum on the Future Organization of the Territorial Force, c.5 Jan 1920.

efficiency.⁸⁸ As a result the General Staff regarded the Regular Army Reserve as the reserve of first choice, and its re-establishment was prioritised accordingly.

Although the debate over the source of drafts and the relative costs of the reconstitution were important it was Churchill's indecision over the General Service obligation that continued to delay a formal announcement on the future of the Territorials. With his own deadline already postponed by three months, he finally submitted the proposed terms of conditions to Cabinet on 1 December, where he appealed for a quick decision as the psychological moment for getting war-trained men was fast receding.⁸⁹ However, at the same time Churchill, who still held serious reservations over the overseas service liability, was increasingly edging towards a less controversial route to ensure the success of the overall scheme. When he put forward his concerns to the Army Council the next day the CIGS was aghast. As the latter recorded in his diary:

We have been months at this, with Winston's knowledge and approval. This morning he suddenly and unexpectedly ran out. He said he would get no more recruits, there would be a complete frost, etc., etc., and he wanted to revert to the Territorial Force of pre-war days. I said that I could not agree to 6-10 millions being spent on a sham.⁹⁰

It is important to emphasise that Churchill did not advocate raising a force limited solely to home service, as Wilson implies. Rather he preferred the obligation for general service to be purely voluntary, relying on men to come forward in an emergency of their own free will rather than being committed to do so in advance. After all, his greatest fear was that if potential recruits were suspicious of the ease with which they could be sent abroad they simply would not join.⁹¹ As such he wanted to achieve the General Staff's aims through the framework of existing legislation, rather than risk provoking negative publicity by having to introduce amendments to the Territorial and Reserve Forces Act.⁹²

⁸⁸ TNA WO 32/2681 Scarbrough to Churchill, 6 Jan 1920; Macdonogh to Churchill, 7 Jan 1920; Draft Memorandum by Scarbrough, n.d. c.1 Jan 1920. Macdonogh also pushed for men to be allowed to enlist in both the Army Reserve and the Territorials, although the Army Council blocked his proposal. See WO 163/25 Army Council 275th Meeting, 21 Dec 1920.

⁸⁹ TNA WO 32/2681 Memo by Churchill, 1 Dec 1919.

⁹⁰ IWM Wilson MSS: Diary entry for 2 Dec 1919.

⁹¹ Churchill believed by imposing the obligation they may only attract 50,000 volunteers for a 190,000 establishment. See TNA WO 32/2681 Churchill to TF Conference, 13 Jan 1920.

⁹² For example, see TNA WO 32/3678 Minute by Churchill, 20 May 1920; WO 32/2681 Minute by Churchill, 9 Jan 1920.

Of course this did not give the General Staff the guarantees over the Territorials' availability that they considered essential. With Churchill and his military advisers at an impasse the Army Council decided to leave the final decision to Cabinet, who would be asked to choose between two options. The first envisaged re-forming the Territorials along pre-1914 lines primarily for home service, with the force only available for general service once a Military Service Bill had introduced conscription. The second choice replaced the home service liability with a clear obligation for general service, which would permit Territorials to be deployed overseas once the Regular Army Reserve had been called out.⁹³

These contrasting options had clear ramifications for the Territorials' future role. The first, for instance, only gave them relevance in a war of unambiguous national importance. Based on the formal assumption that such a war was unlikely to break out for at least a decade, Territorials could thus only be considered available for an eventuality that no service was planning for, at least for the foreseeable future. On the other hand, the second option offered a more flexible reserve more appropriate to the broad range of military problems the Army then faced. Fully expecting to have to fight a medium scale war somewhere within the Empire, the availability of Territorial troops to reinforce the overstretched Regular Army once its own limited reserves were exhausted was of vital importance. Without access to Territorial reinforcements the Army would only be capable of conducting a limited small war before it was forced to resort to conscription, which would be a step the government would be unlikely to take for an imperial campaign. This fact left a clear and alarming gap in the Army's capabilities.

The proposals were put before Cabinet in early January 1920, alongside two additional memoranda outlining the main differences in outlook between the Secretary of State and his military advisers.⁹⁴ Pointing out that a home defence force would be an 'extravagance ... regarded seriously by no one,'

⁹³ TNA WO 163/24 Army Council 259th Meeting, 2 Dec 1919.

⁹⁴ Ibid. Army Council 260th Meeting, 19 Dec 1919. The paper itself was approved for submission four days later at the 261st Meeting, 23 Dec 1919; CAB 23/18 Cabinet Meeting, 23 Dec 1919; CAB 23/20 Cabinet Meeting, 7 Jan 1920.

the General Staff stressed that a Territorial overseas service obligation was essential. As their paper concluded:

They will have a recognized position as a genuine second line of the Army and as the organization through which any expansion of the military forces in the even of a great war will be effected ... The Territorial Force will, in fact, be assimilated in all material respects to the organization of the Regular Army and its Reserves. Our military system will thus be clearly defined, and the anomalies arising from the position of the Territorials as a force confined to service within the United Kingdom will disappear. Their military efficiency and value in the late war has been fully recognized, but they will now assume a wholly different degree of national importance and will receive a degree of support for all purposes, both from the Regulars and Parliament, which has hitherto been denied to them.⁹⁵

In response, Churchill expressed to his Cabinet colleagues his fear that by pushing the General Service obligation too hard they would provoke a practical and political defeat, as the terms would be thought so onerous that no one would volunteer. Although willing to concede that on purely military grounds the arguments were ‘overwhelming,’ he considered it ‘essentially unfair to ask men who are not soldiers to take on a liability to be sent away to India, Egypt, Mesopotamia or the Black Sea for long periods whilst the mass of their fellow-countrymen pursue their ordinary avocations and bear no part whatever of the national burden.’ For Churchill it was as much a political as a military question, as the scheme’s failure would be both embarrassing and highly damaging to the government.⁹⁶

The Cabinet was faced, therefore, with no clear choice. After a lengthy discussion several alternatives were suggested, such as restricting service to within the British Empire, only imposing it for the first two years of service, or allowing each recruit to choose his terms of service, but these were all quickly dismissed as impractical. The Cabinet was acutely aware that public suspicion over how the overseas obligation would be implemented could ruin the scheme, and the perception that Territorials could be used in the face of Labour opposition in Russia or to suppress a mutiny in India was a particular political concern.⁹⁷ As a result an additional reassurance was thought necessary that would give Parliament unequivocal control over the despatch of Territorials, although whether this could be in the form of a simple resolution or would require, for example, a general conscription act being passed in advance, was unclear.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ TNA CAB 24/95 CP.388 Liability of Territorial Force for General Service, 5 Jan 1920.

⁹⁷ TNA CAB 23/20 Cabinet Meeting, 7 Jan 1920; see also WO 32/2681 Memorandum by Creedy, 7 Jan 1920; Minutes by Churchill and Kellaway, 9 Jan 1920; The Manchester Guardian, 2 and 11 Feb 1920.

As the Cabinet failed to come to a decision the subject was handed over to a sub-committee for further examination.⁹⁸ Although some members sided with Churchill's belief that men could be trusted to volunteer in a real national emergency, it had to be pointed out that they had not done so in 1914 and, although men may come forward for another great European war, they were less likely to do so for some obscure campaign on the fringes of Empire.⁹⁹ For planning purposes at least, the General Staff had to know the Territorial Force was available for use, without complications.

Although the general service liability clearly underpinned the entire scheme and to accept anything else would be regarded, in the words of one committee member, as 'simply playing with the Force,' in the end a compromise was inevitable.¹⁰⁰ In exchange for accepting the overseas liability it was deemed that some form of special Parliamentary procedure would be necessary to reassure Territorials that, with their civilian careers at stake, they would not be sent overseas arbitrarily 'by someone pressing a button at the War Office.'¹⁰¹ This reflected the general consensus amongst Territorials themselves, who continued to support a general service obligation as long as there were safeguards against their premature deployment and guarantees for unit integrity.¹⁰²

Despite this decision Churchill remained intractable.¹⁰³ However, by the time a formal decision was due he had finally given in and accepted the compromise.¹⁰⁴ At an subsequent meeting of Cabinet ministers he explained that, despite his prior reluctance, he now offered his support to the inclusion of an overseas liability, accepting that by honestly explaining the reasons they stood a better chance of quelling suspicions that the force was intended for reasons other than imperial defence.

⁹⁸ TNA WO 32/2681 Minutes of the Sub-Committee on the Re-organization of the Territorial Force, Jan 1920. The committee had the first of its three meetings on 9 Jan 1920 and consisted of Churchill, Sir Auckland Geddes (President of the Board of Trade), Frederick Kellaway (Deputy Minister of Munitions) and Lord Lee of Fareham (Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries). Wilson, Macdonogh, Vesey and Scarbrough represented the Army.

⁹⁹ Ibid. Minutes by Kellaway, Wilson and Scarbrough, 9 Jan 1920.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. Geddes to Davies, 17 Jan 1920.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Minute by Geddes, 9 Jan 1920.

¹⁰² Ibid. Scarbrough to Wilson, 13 Jan 1920. The overseas obligation still enjoyed overwhelming support when Churchill addressed another conference of Territorial representatives on 13 Jan 1920, with 29 of those present being in favour and only 2 against.

¹⁰³ Ibid. Minute by Churchill, 23 Jan 1920; also see Rutland to Churchill, 21 Jan 1920; IWM Wilson MSS: Diary entry for 23 and 26 Jan 1920.

¹⁰⁴ IWM Wilson MSS: Diary entry for 26 Jan 1920.

However, Churchill was still keen that Territorials were given a clear guarantee that they would only be mobilised in a true national emergency. As such, although the government had the power to embody the force it could not be sent overseas without specific Parliamentary approval. This required a formal act authorising its despatch to be passed, which would only be actionable after the Army Reserve had been called out and once a state of emergency had been declared. Furthermore, to further reassure Territorials, Churchill announced that they would not be available as drafts for the Regular Army, and if Territorial units were mobilised they would proceed abroad as formed bodies.¹⁰⁵ Instead drafts would be found not from a Territorial 'Special Class' but from a resurrected Special Reserve, now to be re-named the Militia.¹⁰⁶

Evaluation

In the end Churchill's proposal was accepted and finally announced to the public on 30 January 1920, meaning it had taken nearly a year for a formal decision over the role of the new TA to be made. Nevertheless, it is clear that the General Staff were disappointed with the final result, and it is certainly arguable that the Territorial reconstitution represents a lost opportunity.¹⁰⁷

The Territorial Army that emerged was a compromise that, although more usable and relevant than the organisation formed under Haldane, still fell short of what the Army required. This is not to say the TA was entirely without utility. The first priority in post-war planning was to ensure the mistakes of 1914 would not be repeated. This meant that a large reserve framework, capable of considerable expansion in an emergency, was essential. Admittedly, initial planning recognised that the pre-war reserve structure had proved inadequate, and as a result there would be no place for a part-time, voluntary reserve organisation in the future. But this preference only remained an option as long as compulsory peacetime service was a possibility. Once the voluntary principle had been re-instated the

¹⁰⁵ TNA CAB 23/20 'Conference on the Future Organization of the Territorial Force,' 27 Jan 1920. See also WO 32/2681 Memorandum by Creedy, 5 Feb 1920.

¹⁰⁶ TNA WO 32/3677 DO to AG, 23 Jan 1920.

¹⁰⁷ TNA WO 32/3679 DCIGS to AG, 15 April 1920; Esher to Churchill, 23 May 1920, reproduced in M. Gilbert, (1977) p.1106.

necessity for re-establishing a reserve organisation on territorial lines became clear, especially as the War Office was under a great deal of pressure to form a viable reserve framework as quickly as possible.

However, it is true that the General Staff were always opposed to simply re-raising the Territorial Force in its pre-1914 form. Faced with an increasing list of overseas and domestic commitments, an ongoing manpower crisis and a tightening budget, the army could not afford a reserve organisation whose only role was home defence. Therefore, the reconstituted Territorial Force had to offer greater efficiency and be more flexible with regard to its employment if it was to receive the General Staff's full support. As a result broader terms of service, which included a liability for General Service overseas, were considered to be a *sine qua non* for any proposed scheme.

It is certainly possible that the Territorials could have been reconstituted in a form more in keeping with the General Staff's wishes. Given the right inducements and publicity, they may well have created a reserve structure more closely integrated with the Regular Army and with much greater relevance to Britain's strategic requirements in the early 1920s. Although an obligation to deploy with the Regular Reserve in support of an overseas expedition, perhaps even as drafts, may have resulted in a smaller force than envisaged it would certainly have been of greater use to the War Office.

However, although such a course of action was theoretically possible, it is clear that many at the time were unwilling to take too many risks with the new Territorial organisation. Indeed, the greatest obstruction to the General Staff's plans came from their own Secretary of State. Churchill's main priority was to ensure the reconstitution was a popular success for the government, but he feared that volunteers would reject terms of service that were seen as too onerous. As a result the eventual conditions of service reflected a compromise. Although Territorials agreed to serve overseas if necessary it would be up to Parliament to authorise their despatch and, furthermore, they would go in their own units under their own commanders. This may have been appropriate for a national

mobilisation akin to 1914, but it would seriously undermine the availability of Territorials in the event of lesser, but far more likely, types of commitment.

Formed therefore, in Ian Beckett's words, as part of the 'poisonous legacy of the Great War' and the perceived injustices to which Territorials were subjected in 1914, the 'pledge' ensured that, although a general service Territorial expeditionary force was ostensibly available as an imperial reserve, the Territorials' actual role was heavily circumscribed.¹⁰⁸ As the AG pointed out, the intention to guarantee the integrity of each Territorial sub-unit was both impractical and dangerous. If a Regular unit sustained heavy casualties early in a campaign it would be impossible to reinforce it with soldiers from a corresponding Territorial formation, and the experience of 1914-18 had demonstrated that fighting a war on such principles was unworkable. Indeed, Macdonogh declared that he would 'rather not have any Territorial Force at all than give a pledge which would bind the hands of the Military Authorities to that extent in the actual conduct of the war.'¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, in order to push the Territorial reconstitution through this guarantee was duly given, and the General Staff would spend the rest of the interwar years trying to untie the Territorial Army from its restrictions.

¹⁰⁸ I.F.W. Beckett, <http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/War/reviews/revbeckett.html>, accessed 18 Feb 2013.

¹⁰⁹ TNA WO 32/2681 Minute by Macdonogh, 23 Jan 1920.

Chapter Two.

Planning for a National Army: The Re-Organisation and Reduction of the Territorial Army, 1921-1926.

Introduction

The reconstitution envisaged the prompt establishment of a modern, fully organised and efficient reserve force, manned and commanded by trained, war-experienced volunteers. In reality, however, the new Territorial Army quickly fell short of this ambition. Its role as the acknowledged framework through which any military expansion would take place may have been of long-term significance, but in the short term it seemed irrelevant to Britain's immediate needs. As a result the General Staff consistently opposed any attempt to prioritise the Territorials when doing so would come at the expense of the already underfunded and heavily overcommitted Regular Army.

Consequently, it has been argued that in the strategic context of the 1920s the TA was no more than a costly encumbrance. After all, as the General Staff itself pointed out:

The whole *raison d'être* of the Territorial Army has been definitely ruled out by the Cabinet's decision that a great war is out of the question for 10 years or more. This wipes out any chance of invasion. The Territorial Army cannot find our oversea garrisons, it cannot provide drafts, it cannot furnish reinforcements for an Eastern campaign, and it cannot be used for the preservation of internal order. It therefore, fulfils none of the essential tasks which the maintenance of the British Empire demands.¹¹⁰

Certainly there were no immediate calls to re-mobilise during this period, and in this light some reduction of the defence apparatus was inevitable. By the early 1920s Britain's experiment at 'running the Empire like a military fief' was drawing to an end. Instead martial rule was replaced by a more balanced approach, based on a careful admix of diplomacy, indirect rule, selective garrisoning and imperial prestige.¹¹¹ As a consequence by 1922 the initial post-war crisis period for the British Army was finally starting to subside.¹¹² By this point nationalist unrest had largely cooled in India and Egypt, the domestic security situation in the UK had eased and Britain had managed to extricate itself from its open-ended interventions in Afghanistan, the Caucasus and Persia. The granting of

¹¹⁰ TNA CAB 24/132 CP.3619 'The Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure: Paper by the General Staff,' 10 Jan 1922.

¹¹¹ D. French, *The British Way in Warfare, 1688-2000*, (London, 1990) p.182

¹¹² K. Jeffery, (1984) p.161; B. Bond, (1980) p.33.

Dominion status to the Irish Free State facilitated a largely peaceful withdrawal from Ireland, while the Treaty of Lausanne ended the commitment of British troops to Turkey in 1923. These developments enabled the Cabinet to uphold the principles inherent in the 'ten year rule,' and to direct the War Office to focus, for the foreseeable future, on domestic security and imperial defence. Henceforth the official priority was to be on preparing a small expeditionary force for a limited war within the Empire, rather than on contingent planning for another continental struggle.¹¹³

Where, then, did this place the Territorial Army, an organisation whose role and purpose was largely defined by the possible recurrence of a 1914-18 style global conflagration? Marked by defence reductions and economies, Dennis has described the 1920s as a period solely of 'reduction and recrimination' for the TA, casting it as the victim of financial starvation, War Office hostility and public neglect. As a result he claims that the War Office blithely disregarded the TA's welfare and viability until rearmament began in earnest in the mid 1930s.¹¹⁴ Beckett agrees, stating that as long as the TA lacked a clear purpose it was an easy target for Treasury and War Office staff looking to make savings.¹¹⁵ As a result the majority of historians share the opinion that the General Staff largely ignored the TA, at least as long as a European war appeared remote, and that the Territorial organisation was left to atrophy.¹¹⁶

Although they hold an element of truth, neither of these assessments fully address how the General Staff actually viewed the role of the Territorial Army at the time, nor do they explore the genuine efforts made to advance its capabilities. With the experience of 1914 fresh in War Office memory, establishing an efficient framework for future military expansion was still viewed as an important task. When faced with more pressing strategic problems the General Staff undoubtedly questioned the wisdom of investing too heavily in this role, but they still wanted to ensure the TA could carry it out effectively in an emergency. Likewise, once the instability of the immediate post-war years had subsided serious efforts were made to examine the issues surrounding future mobilisation. After the

¹¹³ B. Bond, (1980) pp.31-32; N. Gibbs, *Grand Strategy, Volume I: Rearmament Policy*, (London, 1976) p.52.

¹¹⁴ P. Dennis, (1987) pp.100-123.

¹¹⁵ I.F.W. Beckett, (1991) p. 248.

¹¹⁶ D. French, (2000) p.53; D. French, (1990), p.185; G. Spillan, (1985), p.117; B. Bond, (1980), p.27; J.R. Ferris, (1989) p.125; H. Strachan, (2010) p.169.

limited capabilities of the TA were made apparent a great deal of effort was put into identifying the best way of improving Territorial efficiency, and how it could be organised and maintained at an appropriate level of readiness. None of these aspects have been emphasised sufficiently in the literature.

This chapter will therefore re-assess the assumptions in the existing scholarship through an examination of several key areas in the Territorial Army's development. Initially this will focus on the programme of organisational reform introduced during the immediate post-war years, and whether or not this process was successful in modernising it into a balanced second line reserve army. This will then be related to the series of cuts to expenditure carried out up to 1922, and how the concomitant reductions influenced the structure, readiness and perceptions that surrounded the TA. From this point it will be possible to look beyond the accusation of 'reductions and recriminations,' and examine how the role of the TA was conceptualised in the more stable environment of the mid 1920s. This will enable us to trace how the TA's role and organisation developed alongside, and in accordance with, the direction and priorities of British strategic policy.

Sentiment before Efficiency: The Re-Organisation of the Territorial Second-Line, 1920-1922

After the numerous delays during the reconstitution the first priority was to get the new Territorial Army up to strength. Given the planning assumption that between 250,000 and 300,000 men would always choose to spend their spare time undertaking auxiliary military training, the War Office did not consider this to be unattainable.¹¹⁷ However, initial recruiting results proved disappointing. In the first seven months after recruiting was opened some 55,512 men had been attested, against an establishment in other ranks of 220,552.¹¹⁸ Although this would gradually reach 83,263 by February 1921, by September the Territorial Army was still at only 62 per cent of its established strength.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ TNA WO 32/2681 'Draft case to be put by the Associations and other recruiting agencies to the general public and the individual recruit,' 19 Jan 1920.

¹¹⁸ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.1610 General Annual Report on the British Army, 1920.

¹¹⁹ *Hansard*, HC Deb 22 June 1920 vol.130 c.1995; *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.1941 General Annual Report on the British Army, 1921.

Initially it was hoped that demobilised veterans would form the backbone of the new force, However, in the event their response was muted, only accounting for some 50.7 per cent of the initial enlistments. A total of 18,624 were regarded as re-enlisting Territorials, having served in a TF unit prior to February 1920, and a further 9,523 had previous military experience of some kind. However, 26,889 men had no previous experience at all, and 17,490 of these were under the age of nineteen.¹²⁰

It was hoped 'war-exhaustion' and grievances over the way Territorials were treated in 1914 would only temporarily curb re-enlistments, but the number of experienced ex-servicemen coming forward continued to decline.¹²¹ Admittedly, 32,180 of the 73,851 volunteers enlisting in 1920/21 had some form of prior military service, but this was balanced by the need to train 46,314 recruits with no military experience at all. Over the following years the number of trained ex-soldiers volunteering slowly diminished – in 1921/22 the total dropped to 12,891, compared with an intake of 23,770 new recruits, falling to 7,758 and 24,789 respectively the following year.¹²²

There was also a marked reluctance in earlier years for those enlisting on one and two-year engagements to fully commit to longer terms. In 1920/21 4,157 chose to discharge themselves on termination of their initial engagement, and this jumped to 12,169 the following year.¹²³ The failure to encourage retention meant that, although the reconstituted TA was enlisting more men per quarter than the pre-war Territorial Force, many units were consistently under-strength due to the inability to keep enlistments above the level of wastage.¹²⁴

With Territorial recruiting only a qualified success, the next priority was its re-establishment into an effective second line. Yet finalising the Army's peacetime organisation was no easy task and it took

¹²⁰ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.1610 General Annual Report for the British Army, 1920.

¹²¹ Lt.-Col. S. Peel, 'The Territorial Force', *The Army Quarterly*, Vo.1, No.1, (Oct, 1920) p.37; K.W. Mitchinson, *Amateur Soldiers: A History of Oldham's Volunteers and Territorials, 1859-1938*, (Oldham, 1999) p.186; TNA WO 32/18606 Comment by Gen. Harrison, Southampton; *The Times*, 29 April 1920; WO 163/23 Informal Meeting of the Army Council, 11 Dec 1918; WO 163/26 Army Council Précis No. 1070 'War Medals and Clasps,' and Army Council 280th Meeting, 25 May 1921; *Hansard*, HC Deb 24 July 1923 vol.167 c.238w; HC Deb 14 March 1922 vol.151 c.1941; HC Deb 12 Feb 1920 vol.125 c.261.

¹²² Figures extracted from the relevant General Annual Reports for the years 1920 to 1923 inclusive (*Parl. Papers*, Cmd. 1610, 1941, 2114 and 2272).

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ G. Steppler, *Britons, to Arms*, (Stroud, 1992) p.136.

several years before the General Staff laid down the composition of its higher formations.¹²⁵ The recent experience of fighting a modern continental enemy ensured several key factors had to be taken into consideration. For example, it was expected that formations now had to be capable of generating a weight of firepower far above what had previously been necessary, as well as deploying a much greater level of logistical and technical support.¹²⁶

Furthermore, the disorder and waste that marked the Army's wartime expansion had clearly illustrated why its organisation had to be standardised in peace.¹²⁷ As the TA would deploy in support of the expeditionary force in complete formations it had to be organisationally interchangeable with the Regular Army, as their dissimilarities in 1914/15 had caused considerable confusion and necessitated the breaking up and reconstruction of several TF formations before they could join the BEF.¹²⁸ With these factors in mind the War Office was determined to reconstitute the TA as a replica of the Regular Army, in order to further its main effort of 'remould[ing] the existing TF into a Territorial Army which would be scientifically proportioned according to the lessons learned in the late war.'¹²⁹

Consequently, the War Office's initial plans envisaged raising the TA as a modernised, balanced and self-contained second line, formed in parallel with the divisional framework being re-established for the Regular Army. Although recruiting limits were set at sixty per cent of the establishment, early planning foresaw a peacetime strength of around 220,000 men organised into fourteen regional infantry divisions. However, unlike the pre-war TF these divisions were only one part of a complete combined arms framework. The future intention was for each division to possess a full allocation of artillery, engineers, signals, medical, ordnance and logistical support. Furthermore, the Territorial infantry would be supported by a streamlined cavalry division, which would field two Yeomanry

¹²⁵ D. French, 'Doctrine and Organization in the British Army, 1919-1932,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol.44 No.2 (June, 2001) pp.508-510.

¹²⁶ TNA WO 32/11357 Formation, Terms of Reference and Work of Reorganization Committee, 1918-19; WO 237/12 Report of the Bird Committee: Infantry Divisions, 21 March 1919. By 1923 Bird's recommendations were rejected as too unwieldy for an army focused primarily on imperial policing. See D. French, (2001) p.501, 508-9.

¹²⁷ 'A Territorial Officer,' (1921) p.123.

¹²⁸ F. Perry, 'Manpower and Organisational Problems in the Expansion of the British and other Commonwealth Armies during the two World Wars,' (University of London PhD thesis, 1982) pp.25, 73.

¹²⁹ TNA WO 32/11257 'War Office Memorandum on the Re-organization of the TF', n.d. but May 1922.

brigades in peace along with an increased allocation of RHA batteries and other mobile Divisional Troops.

Yet the greatest departure from the pre-war organisation was in the plans for an expanded allocation of Army and Corps Troops, especially amongst the artillery, signals, medical services and engineers. These were to be newly raised, and included several specialist units, such as bridging, motor machine gun and signals intelligence companies.¹³⁰ This new order of battle reflected the importance, clearly established during the First World War, of the combined arms approach and the value accorded to combat support and service elements. However, as these new units had no pre-war lineage the War Office could not simply raise them in their existing drill halls. Neither were there any funds available to raise them in addition to retaining units now declared surplus to the new order of battle.¹³¹

As a result the War Office outlined a programme of conversions and amalgamations designed to balance the Territorial organisation. This task was deemed essential if the TA was to operate as a modern and viable military force, and central to its success was the future role of the Yeomanry.¹³² Despite being clearly deficient in artillery and support arms before 1914, the Territorial Force had been supported by an overabundance of horsed cavalry. During that time a total of fifty-five Yeomanry regiments had existed, but the newly reorganised TA only needed ten to remain mounted.

The General Staff was determined to convert these forty-five surplus regiments into the artillery batteries and armoured car companies the TA lacked, and in achieving this aim they were prepared to take a firm line. As such the Yeomanry were warned that conversion was the only alternative to abolition, and were informed in no uncertain terms that their problem was ‘not to consider or suggest any alteration of the actual military requirements for the Territorial Army which are fixed, but to

¹³⁰ TNA CAB 24/95 CP.371 ‘Future Organization of the Territorial Force’, 29 Dec 1919.

¹³¹ TNA WO 163/26 Army Council 274th Meeting, 6 May 1921 and Précis No.1071 ‘The Financial Position of the scheme for the Territorial Force.’

¹³² TNA WO 32/18596 Comment by S. of S., 28 Feb 1921; Comment by CIGS, 28 Feb 1921; WO 32/11257 MGO to U.S. of S., 17 Aug 1921.

consider the possibility of converting the 45 pre-war surplus Yeomanry Regiments ... in order to preserve their identity and traditions.’¹³³

However, and despite the fact that all but seventeen regiments had been dismounted by 1918, it quickly became apparent that those representing the post-war Yeomanry refused to accept their conversion in peace. Mainly basing their opposition on the belief that adopting another role would mean the total loss of the ‘Yeoman class’ to the TA, they rejected the plan in its entirety.¹³⁴ Whilst the Yeomanry remained set against any change, the War Office also struggled to find the best way to choose the ten regiments to remain mounted. The final selection process, based on seniority, was divisive, not least because it was based on a disputed list dating from 1855.¹³⁵ Additionally, by chance rather than design the oldest regiments were all clustered in the centre and west of England and Yorkshire, with the sole exception of the Ayrshire Yeomanry.¹³⁶ This resulted in angry protests from those counties left without any connection to mounted service and, as such, the future of the Yeomanry soon became an issue of local politics as well as military organisation.¹³⁷

Regardless, the General Staff remained committed to the conversion scheme and was prepared to force the issue on the Yeomanry commanders, who they believed constituted the main obstacles to progress.¹³⁸ Yet efforts to present the Yeomanry with a united front were undermined once again by the personal intervention of the Secretary of State. Churchill had always preferred to see the Yeomanry remodeled into an imperial service force, and he now declared himself unconvinced of the very principles underpinning the General Staff scheme.¹³⁹ As he informed Wilson early in 1920:

The military arguments which led, after the South African War, to the large increase in Yeomanry Cavalry have not, in my judgement, been upset by the present war. The kind of wars which the British Empire has to look forward to as the most probable are wars with small armies in large countries with open flanks and where mobility will count ... In regard to all these theatres, there would be much scope

¹³³ TNA WO 32/18606 DCIGS to War Office Conference, 4 February 1920 [emphasis in original]

¹³⁴ Ibid. War Office Conference, 4 Feb 1920.

¹³⁵ Worthington-Evans’ later use of seniority to select four regular cavalry regiments for disbandment was also controversial.

¹³⁶ TNA WO 32/18606 ‘Appendix B: Yeomanry remaining as Cavalry Units and Cavalry Divisional Troops.’ The other counties represented were Wiltshire, Warwickshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Cheshire, Leicestershire and the Yorkshire Hussars and Dragoons.

¹³⁷ See Ibid, Note on Welshpool Town Council meeting, 20 Feb 1920; Dorset Association to War Office, 11 Feb 1920; Glamorganshire representative to Conference, 13 Feb 1920; WO 32/ 18607 DGTF to DCIGS, 16 Feb 1920.

¹³⁸ TNA WO 32/18607 DGTF to DCIGS, 16 Feb 1920; DCIGS to CIGS, 18 Feb 1920.

¹³⁹ TNA WO 32/11358 Secretary of State’s approval for future organization of the Army, 23 Jan 1920.

for Yeomanry Cavalry. In addition, the importance of this force for internal security must not be overlooked.¹⁴⁰

Instead, he considered the regular cavalry as a more obvious target for economy, as thirty-one regiments of regulars cost the tax-payer £5,500,000 per annum, whilst twenty-five Yeomanry regiments were estimated at only £300,000. Although he would be glad to see the Yeomanry regiments volunteer to become gunners, he refused to make the choice compulsory:

To force this upon a large number of reluctant yeomanry regiments will really be to decree their destruction ... They will lose their best and strongest elements and change their character and composition and the resulting artillery, with its almost farcical training, will have a very low standard of value.¹⁴¹

Churchill's argument that mounted cavalry still had some utility in imperial campaigns was not without foundation. During the War there had been a place for mounted reconnaissance, shock action and exploitation under the right tactical conditions.¹⁴² Indeed, Wilson himself agreed that there was still a role for the horse in modern war.¹⁴³ However, he was horrified by the idea of abandoning the TA's balanced re-organisation scheme and instead retain up to forty mounted regiments without a purpose. Yet the only way he could dissuade Churchill from insisting on this was to agree to defer the issue, allowing the Yeomanry to be reconstituted as cavalry with the provision that in two to three years they would convert according to the General Staff's wishes.¹⁴⁴

In the event over half of the earmarked regiments bowed to the inevitable and agreed to begin the conversion process. Nevertheless, fourteen chose to avail themselves of Churchill's offer and remained as cavalry.¹⁴⁵ Their acceptance of what was only a temporary reprieve exasperated the General Staff.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ TNA WO 32/18607 Churchill to Peel and Wilson, 26 Feb 1920.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² M. Hughes, 'General Allenby and the Palestine Campaign, 1917-18' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.19 No.4 (1996) pp.73-79; J. Bou, 'Cavalry, Firepower, and Swords: The Australian Light Horse and the Tactical Lessons of Cavalry Operations in Palestine, 1916-1918,' *Journal of Military History*, Vol.71 No.1 (Jan, 2007) pp.99-125; S. Badsey, *Doctrine and Reform in the British Cavalry, 1880-1918*, (Aldershot, 2008); W. Philpott, *Bloody Victory: The sacrifice on the Somme and the making of the twentieth century*, (London, 2009) pp.239-241; D. French, 'The Mechanization of the British Cavalry between the World Wars,' *War in History*, Vol.10 No.3 (2003) p.298, 305.

¹⁴³ TNA CAB 24/132 CP.3619 'The Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure: Paper by the General Staff,' 10 Jan 1922.

¹⁴⁴ TNA WO 32/18607 CIGS to Secretary of State, 5 March 1920.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. War Office to all Commands, 5 May 1920. The Lincolnshire Yeomanry refused to do either and chose voluntary disbandment.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. DCIGS to War Office Conference, 8 March 1920.

Predictably the decision threw the re-organisation scheme into disarray, and threatened to upset the balance of the whole Territorial structure.¹⁴⁷ As a result Wilson pressed Churchill to either confirm his commitment to the Territorials' re-organisation or 'upset the G.S. scheme and have a new one which would only be a make-shift and not in accordance with our requirements.'¹⁴⁸ However, Churchill replied that the need to keep expenditure down and the poor response to Territorial recruiting had led him to follow different priorities:

I am more than ever convinced that we ought to allow the yeomanry to be reconstituted substantially as it was. If economy is required in the mounted branches, it would surely be better to reduce some of the cavalry regiments each of which cost eight times as much as the yeomanry. The first thing is to get the numbers and, incidentally, as many units as have a power of survival in them created as possible.¹⁴⁹

Wilson remained convinced that the Secretary of State's root motivation was 'of course, to save Winston's Oxford Hussars.'¹⁵⁰ However, as had become clear during the reconstitution debate, Churchill's key priority was to make the Territorial scheme a popular success, and so he insisted on a policy that encouraged recruiting possibilities. As he informed Wilson:

Do remember that we cannot afford to destroy live units, and that we have got to make our nosegay up out of flowers we can grow in our gardens, and that they must be living, growing organisms and not paper products cut out with the scissors.¹⁵¹

Unfortunately, such characteristic rhetoric failed to impress the CIGS, who replied prosaically that it was 'unwise to cultivate flowers when we really want useful vegetables, particularly as in this case the flowers are at the expense of the vegetables, viz., the Regular Army and its essential reserve.'¹⁵²

With neither side willing to compromise, the dispute over the future of the Yeomanry only served to further sour the already-strained relationship between Churchill and his military advisers.¹⁵³ After requesting a revised set of recommendations and expecting the General Staff to fall into line, Churchill had to angrily reject their unaltered proposals:

I entirely disagree with [the G.S. paper]. It shows a complete want of recognition of the real facts of the case and will simply lead to the destruction of the Yeomanry without securing any adequate force

¹⁴⁷ TNA WO 32/11275 Scarbrough to DCIGS, 21 April 1920.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. CIGS to Secretary of State, 11 Nov 1920.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. Secretary of State to CIGS, 20 Nov 1920.

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in C.E. Callwell, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: His Life and Diaries*, (2 Vols., London, 1927) Vol.II, p.323.

¹⁵¹ TNA WO 32/18608 Secretary of State to CIGS, U.S. of S., DGTA and AG, 24 Dec 1920.

¹⁵² Ibid. CIGS to S. of S., 2 Jan 1921.

¹⁵³ J. Ferris, (1989) p.68; For Wilson's reflections on Churchill as War Minister, see IWM Wilson MSS, Diary entries for 23 Jan and 19 Feb 1921.

in their place. To destroy the Yeomanry at the moment when we are spending so much money of the Regular Cavalry is absolutely indefensible.¹⁵⁴

Two days later a disgruntled Churchill left for the Colonial Office, leaving a final decision on the re-organisation scheme to his successor. Fortunately for the General Staff, Sir Laming Worthington-Evans had little interest in overriding the counsel of his military advisers. This became clear when he had to deal with one of Churchill's earlier public pledges, which suggested that if any of the ten senior yeomanry units failed to recruit up to establishment they might find themselves replaced by a more successful regiment. This led the Northumbrian Hussars, which had reached full strength but was fourteenth in seniority, to lobby vigorously to remain as cavalry.¹⁵⁵ Worthington-Evans refused to be drawn by this.¹⁵⁶ As he informed a deputation from the Northumbrian Hussars:

It is impossible to go on providing money for arms that are not wanted. Beyond the ten regiments Yeomanry is not wanted as Yeomanry but it is badly wanted as artillery. We cannot get a single division complete until we have the rest of the arms filled up and it is to the Yeomanry and to the County spirit we look to find these other arms on a voluntary basis and if we fail in doing this we are actually breaking up the Territorial Army ... and if we do not get a voluntary Territorial Army then the whole military scheme is ruined.¹⁵⁷

The General Staff certainly did not want the yeomanry debate re-opened, and even preferred to accept less yeomanry regiments than have to absorb any more.¹⁵⁸ As such it was imperative to get Churchill to support the War Office, although Worthington-Evans already knew he was unlikely to do so.¹⁵⁹ As expected, when approached Churchill bluntly refused to alter his opinion, stating that his pledge still stood and that his successor would have to honour his undertaking.¹⁶⁰

Outmaneuvered politically, Worthington-Evans was forced to concede. An incensed Henry Wilson advised him to just respect the pledge given to the Northumberland Hussars, so that they would be 'landed with only one Yeomanry Regiment too many.'¹⁶¹ However, Worthington-Evans felt unable to

¹⁵⁴ TNA WO 32/18608 Churchill to DCIGS, 11 Feb 1921.

¹⁵⁵ TNA WO 32/18596 Ridley to Worthington-Evans, 23 Feb 1921; Northumberland to Worthington-Evans, 23 Feb 1921; Clifton Brown to Worthington-Evans, 2 March 1921. Both Ridley and Clifton Brown were Majors in the Northumberland Hussars.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. AG to S. of S., 21 March 1921; DGTA and DCIGS to U.S. of S., 2 March 1921; Worthington-Evans to Northumbrian Hussars Deputation and DGTA to S. of S., 28 Feb 1921; Worthington-Evans to Northumberland, 9 March 1921.

¹⁵⁷ TNA WO 32/18596 Worthington-Evans to Northumbrian Hussars Deputation, 28 Feb 1921

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. DGTF to PS to S. of S., 21 Feb 1921.

¹⁵⁹ Bodleian Library, Worthington-Evans MSS MS. Eng.hist. C.919 Churchill to Lyon, 23 Feb 1921; TNA WO 32/18596 Comment by Clifton Brown, 28 Feb 1921; Northumberland to Worthington-Evans, 12 March 1921.

¹⁶⁰ TNA WO 32/18596 Churchill to Worthington-Evans, 2 April 1921.

¹⁶¹ TNA WO 32/18609 Wilson to Worthington-Evans, 26 April 1921.

retain the fourteenth most senior regiment without keeping those in between, and reluctantly authorised their retention as well.¹⁶² For Wilson the implications of doing so were clear: ‘In consequence, several TF divisions will go without RA, RE, etc. I told S of S that such action was unpardonable – but it will surely be done.’¹⁶³

* * *

The wrangle over the future of the Yeomanry shows how the War Office lacked full control over the direction and development of the Territorial Army, and in turn this illustrates a more general problem that undermined Territorial efficiency throughout the interwar years. The dual nature of Territorial administration and its legacy of independence from centralised military authority consistently complicated the War Office’s efforts to implement reform. Additionally, pressure applied from those in political authority also had an undue influence over what should have been purely functional decisions directed by the General Staff.

Indeed, the fact that a similar level of intransigence was encountered over the proposed conversion of surplus infantry units proved that the dispute over the Yeomanry was not a one-off. Only 168 of the 208 pre-war battalions were required for the re-organised TA, but the announced intention to either amalgamate or disband the remainder led to vigorous lobbying from several constituency MPs, including some members of the Cabinet.¹⁶⁴ This pressure almost forced Worthington-Evans to back down, although fortunately for him Cabinet intervened to insist on ministerial solidarity in seeing the War Office scheme implemented.¹⁶⁵

However, although largely ending well for the War Office, the disputes over amalgamations sparked a much broader debate over the direction of military policy and the TA’s role within it, particularly when set against a backdrop of growing calls for economy. Hereafter it was suggested that the

¹⁶² Ibid. Note by S. of S., 29 April 1921. These were the North Somerset Yeomanry, Duke of Lancaster’s Own and the Lanarkshire Yeomanry.

¹⁶³ Quoted in C.E. Callwell, (1927) p.323.

¹⁶⁴ J. Ramsden (ed.) *Real Old Tory Politics: The Political Diaries of Robert Sanders, 1910-1935* (London, 1984) p.159, Entry for 28 July 1921; TNA WO 32/11257 AUS to DF(b), 2 Aug 1921; CAB 24/127 CP.3231 ‘The Reduction in the Infantry of the Territorial Force: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War,’ 16 Aug 1921.

¹⁶⁵ TNA CAB 23/27 Cabinet Meeting 82(21), 28 Oct 1921.

Army's organisation was still being governed by the conditions pertaining at the Armistice, rather than by the future military requirements of the Empire. It was assumed that a developed country like Britain could largely improvise, at much lower cost, any technical and specialist capabilities the Army may require in the future. As a result it was thought that the whole subject of military re-organisation and spending should be taken up in connection with forthcoming discussions on Government expenditure.

The idea that the future of the Army's organisation should be reviewed in light of the shift in strategic and economic priorities became especially important as the pressure to cut expenditure grew. Faced with rising unemployment and an expanded national debt, and opposed by an increasingly vocal 'anti-waste' movement, a centralised economy drive by the coalition government was inevitable.¹⁶⁶

Within this atmosphere defence spending was an obvious and popular target for economy. Within Cabinet it was thought that any failure to demobilise to pre-war levels would provoke accusations that Britain had not benefitted from victory and was adopting a needlessly aggressive posture.¹⁶⁷ Having declared that the Army should focus on imperial policing, Cabinet consistently pushed for reductions in its size and the substitution of 'scientific' multipliers for manpower wherever possible.¹⁶⁸

The Army was particularly susceptible to Treasury pressure as, unlike the other service departments, the War Office failed to convince the Cabinet of its own grand strategic vision.¹⁶⁹ As a result it had to sustain a series of deep cuts to its expenditure throughout the decade. In managing these reductions the General Staff formulated a balanced policy of cutbacks but continued to insist that front-line strengths had to be maintained, even at the expense of the ancillary services and reserves.¹⁷⁰ This inevitably meant that a large proportion of the cuts fell on the Territorial and Reserve Vote, and this

¹⁶⁶ G. Peden, *The Treasury and Public Policy, 1906-1959*, (Oxford, 2000) p.80; G. Burrows and P. Cobbin, 'Controlling Government Expenditure by External Review: The 1921-2 "Geddes Axe"', *Accounting History*, Vol.14 No.3, (2009) p.202; A. McDonald, 'The Geddes Committee and the Formulation of Public Expenditure Policy, 1921-1922,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol.32 No.3 (Sept, 1989) p.650; K. Morgan, *Consensus and Disunity: the Lloyd George Coalition Government, 1918-22*, (Oxford, 1979) pp.170-172.

¹⁶⁷ G. Peden, (2000) p.170.

¹⁶⁸ TNA CAB 23/15 Cabinet Meeting, 5 Aug 1919; CAB 23/27 Cabinet Meeting, 28 Oct 1921.

¹⁶⁹ J. Ferris, (1987) pp.878-881; J. Ferris (1989) p.78.

¹⁷⁰ TNA WO 163/26 Army Council 280th Meeting, 25 May 1921; WO 32/11305 Minute by CIGS, 9 June 1921; WO 32/11306 Note by CIGS, 12 Aug 1921.

apparent enmity shown to the TA during this period has been cited as evidence that the General Staff was again gunning for its abolition, and that this was averted only by political interventions.¹⁷¹

The fact the General Staff resented what they saw as excessive spending on the TA is certainly not in doubt. Robert Sanders, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the War Office, noticed that ‘the way that most of the chiefs are down on the Territorials is quite remarkable. The Adjutant General and Quartermaster General most conspicuous in this way.’¹⁷² The former DGTF, Lord Scarbrough, was certainly alarmed at rumours that the Army Council was actively seeking to abolish the TA.¹⁷³ Without doubt, both Wilson and the DCIGS, Philip Chetwode, preferred to see reductions fall on the Territorials, including the disbandment of any units.¹⁷⁴ However, the General Staff never argued formally for its complete abolition. Aside from being politically impossible, this would have left the Army without a framework for mobilisation, the necessity for which was now well established.

What perturbed the General Staff was the belief that cuts in the Territorials were being misapplied, both in their depth and direction, and the fact that they were being implemented without due regard to military essentials. Instead the General Staff argued in favour of a dual policy that sought to maintain first-line strengths to meet immediate commitments whilst preserving the training efficiency of the TA as far as possible, even if this came at the cost of its overall size and composition. Any unit that did not require instruction in peace, or whose role was purely administrative, could be raised on the outbreak of war. Therefore a policy that safeguarded the infantry and artillery brigades, as well as the specialist Divisional RE and Signals, would best preserve the fighting potential of the existing TA divisions.¹⁷⁵

However, responsibility for coordinating the initial reductions lay with the Under-Secretary of State, Sir Robert Sanders, and his first official proposals were formulated largely without General Staff

¹⁷¹ J. Ferris, (1989) p.71.

¹⁷² J. Ramsden, (1984) p.155, Entry for 1 May 1921.

¹⁷³ Scarbrough MSS, Scarbrough to Churchill, 17 Jan 1922, quoted in P. Dennis, (1987) p.93.

¹⁷⁴ LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd MSS 133/1, Chetwode to Montgomery-Massingberd, 20 July 1921.

¹⁷⁵ TNA WO 32/11257 ‘Conference held in DO’s Room to discuss reductions which might be made in the Territorial Force’, 30 July 1921.

representation. Instead they were dominated by the War Office's finance department who, steered by its secretary, Sir Charles Harris, wanted to see cuts to training as well as ancillary services.¹⁷⁶ As a result Sanders' proposals included the abolition of all fourteen Divisional Trains, including all but the Supply and 1st Line Drivers, as well as most of the Medical Services, Corps Signals and an additional twenty infantry battalions. He also proposed, however, reducing the number of Regular Brigade Major attachments, cutting the camp period from 15 to 8 days and halving the bounty for trained men, whilst abolishing it altogether for new recruits.¹⁷⁷

Aiming to 'prune away ruthlessly all that is superfluous and unessential,' Worthington-Evans directed his department's cuts at reducing commitments in the Middle East, administrative reform and a series of reductions to the Regular infantry, whilst the expeditionary force would be downsized to five divisions.¹⁷⁸ The Territorial share of the reductions would consist of the £1 million cut outlined above, reducing the TA to 192,000 men and an annual cost of £5.75 million, with over three-quarters of the savings being achieved through limiting access to training and reducing the number of permanent staff.¹⁷⁹

Yet it was clear that opinions over what was 'superfluous and unessential' differed, and Worthington-Evans' proposals did not meet the favour of the General Staff. Echoing the earlier arguments made during the reconstitution they stressed that the strength of the Army should depend solely on its existing commitments, and so they advised Worthington-Evans to prioritise spending accordingly. As such they could not support any large-scale expenditure on the TA, as the force contributed little to its imperial defence needs:

The whole *raison d'être* of the Territorial Army has been definitely ruled out by the Cabinet's decision that a great war is out of the question for a considerable period of years. This automatically discards any chance of invasion. The Territorial Army cannot be used for a small war, and it cannot be used for the preservation of internal order. It, therefore, fulfils none of the essential tasks which the

¹⁷⁶ TNA WO 32/5283 Minute by Harris, 21 June 1921; WO 32/11257 Harris to Sanders, 5 Aug 1921.

¹⁷⁷ TNA WO 32/11306 'Future Military Expenditure,' 9 Aug 1921.

¹⁷⁸ TNA WO 163/26 Army Council Précis No. 1065, 'Army Estimates, 1921-22' June 1921; J. Ferris, (1989) p.86; WO 32/11306 'Future Military Expenditure: Part I Possibilities of Reduction in Regular Army,' 9 Aug 1921.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 'Future Military Expenditure: Part V,' 9 Aug 1921. £100,000 had to be absorbed to cover the cost of new Anti-Aircraft units.

maintenance of the British Empire demands and is a drain upon the resources of the Regular Army which alone can perform them.¹⁸⁰

The validity of the General Staff argument was hardly in doubt, and Worthington-Evans conceded that the Territorial Army was only really being maintained as the basis of a future national army. As such it had little immediate value and was also proving increasingly expensive to maintain. However, the Under-Secretary was wrong to assume the General Staff wanted to see the TA abolished.¹⁸¹ Instead, what Sanders regarded as the General Staff's 'stonewalling' was probably more to do with Wilson's refusal to agree with his proposals after it became clear that they had been formulated without professional advice.¹⁸²

Wilson certainly refused to countenance any diversion of resources from the Regular Army, but only because he considered the first-line still too weak to meet its existing military liabilities. As he warned at the time, 'any reduction in these units must therefore by so much increase the risk that is being run. To adopt such a policy, while continuing to spend even 5 or 6 millions annually on the Territorial Army, which answers no essential purpose at the present time, is contrary to all sound military principles.'¹⁸³ However, he never actually suggested abolishing the TA. In fact he and the other Military Members wanted the proposed cuts to the Territorials to be carefully managed so as to make sure the force's core military efficiency was preserved as far as possible. Otherwise, as the QMG warning Sanders, 'the Territorial Army will cease to exist as a mobilisable force, and hence its actual value in a military sense is considerably discounted.'¹⁸⁴

It was thus the question of ensuring the TA's military effectiveness that steered the General Staff, and Sanders' proposals to reduce the permanent staff and the number of training days directly threatened this. The General Staff therefore preferred to see a reduction to the TA's organisation before any limits were imposed on its training or efficiency.¹⁸⁵ This preference was reinforced after further cuts

¹⁸⁰ TNA WO 33/1004 'Extract from a Paper on Future Military Expenditure by Secretary of State for War, August 1921: General Staff Advice.'

¹⁸¹ J. Ramsden, (1984) p.159. Entry for 21 Aug 1921.

¹⁸² TNA WO 32/11257 CIGS to S. of S., 19 Aug 1921.

¹⁸³ TNA WO 32/11306 Note by CIGS, 12 Aug 1921.

¹⁸⁴ TNA WO 32/11257 QMG to U.S. of S., 12 Aug 1921.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. Memorandum by the General Staff, 18 Aug 1921; DO to DMO, 21 Sept 1921.

were demanded from the Territorial Vote in 1921, leaving only three options available to the War Office. Firstly, they could abolish an entire division; secondly, they could reduce the annual training period to ten days and halve the bounty; or thirdly they could further reduce the establishment of infantry battalions from sixty to fifty percent.¹⁸⁶ Most of the General Staff representatives opted to abolish a division, or more specifically amalgamate the two London Divisions, as they were the most expensive in terms of accommodation and the least well recruited.¹⁸⁷

Such a verdict was not merely an example of Regular Army prejudice. The option of disbanding a formation in order to re-distribute combat units and facilitate cuts to the RASC and RAOC was already widely accepted in the Regular Army.¹⁸⁸ The willingness shown by the QMG, AG and the CIGS to apply a similar approach to the TA simply reflected acceptance of an established principle, and was in line with Wilson's earlier instructions that the organisational size of the TA should be cut, even by as much as half, before reducing its training capabilities.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, reducing the TA's peace size would ease the burden on administrative units, and the funds thus released could then be used to lessen the cuts elsewhere.

As it was thought an imperial campaign was unlikely to need more than ten divisions there was little risk at this point in maintaining a smaller force, and this would allow them to keep faith with the original policy of a complete and balanced Territorial Army. After all, it made little sense, as the QMG put it, to try to upkeep fourteen divisions 'so completely emasculated as to render each and all valueless from the point of view of war.'¹⁹⁰ Yet in spite of these arguments Sanders was certain that abolishing divisions would be politically impossible, and he thus convinced a reluctant Army Council

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 'Committee on Reduction of Expenditure upon the Territorial Force,' 21 Sept 1921.

¹⁸⁷ TNA WO 163/26 Army Council Précis No.1083 'Reduction of Expenditure on the Territorial Army,' 10 Oct 1921. Maj.-Gen Hazelton (representing the QMG), Col. Kirke (representing the CIGS) and Col. Howard (representing the AG) were in favour of abolition, whilst Col. Kirwen (representing the MGO) and Lt.-Gen. Birch (DGTA) preferred reducing establishments in order to preserve permanent cadres.

¹⁸⁸ TNA WO 32/11306 'General Staff Note on the Secretary of State's review of the financial situation', 16 August 1921; Macdonogh to Cubitt, 27 Aug 1921; J. Ferris (1989) p.86.

¹⁸⁹ TNA WO 32/11257 Memorandum by the General Staff, 18 Aug 1921; AG to U.S. of S., 12 Aug 1921.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. QMG to U.S. of S., 12 Aug; AG to U.S. of S., 12 Aug 1921.

to accept his proposal for a cut in the annual training period instead, reducing it from fifteen days to ten for all arms along with an associated cut to the bounty.¹⁹¹

However, final ratification of these reductions had to be postponed until the newly established Committee on National Expenditure had completed its comprehensive review of government spending.¹⁹² Commonly referred to after its chairman, Sir Eris Geddes, the committee expected the armed forces to absorb £59.7 million out of the projected £100 million savings. As its share of this total, the army had to cut £20.2 million from its 1922/23 estimates. To achieve this the Geddes Committee recommended focusing the bulk of the reductions on the Regular Army.¹⁹³ In coming to its conclusions it is clear that the committee was more concerned with securing immediate savings on the service estimates than preserving long-term military efficiency.¹⁹⁴ As Regular units were the most expensive to maintain they were thus a convenient and lucrative target for quick savings.¹⁹⁵

In contrast the Territorials escaped the ‘Geddes axe’ more or less untouched. The Committee accepted that the TA served no immediate purpose and was now nearly twice as expensive, man for man, than before the war. Interestingly, however, the committee did not propose any reduction in size or organisation, but instead suggested halving the amount spent on the regular permanent staff, capping expenditure on this item at no more than £500,000 per annum.

Predictably the General Staff once again vigorously opposed the direction of these cuts. Indeed, Wilson found the Committee’s overall recommendations ‘frankly terrifying,’ and thought their implementation would precipitate the loss of the Empire.¹⁹⁶ Unsurprisingly, in their official retort the General Staff disagreed with almost every aspect of Geddes’ report. As they repeatedly affirmed, without modifying its conditions of service the TA was incapable of fulfilling any of the current tasks

¹⁹¹ J. Ramsden, (1984) p.159. Entry for 21 Aug 1921; WO 163/26 Army Council 286th Meeting, 3 Nov 1921.

¹⁹² TNA WO 32/11257 Minute by S of S, 12 Dec 1921.

¹⁹³ TNA CAB 24/131 CP.3570 Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure, 14 Dec 1921.

¹⁹⁴ B. Bond, (1980) p.27.

¹⁹⁵ A Regular Infantry Battalion cost up to £200,000 per annum, compared with £16,600 for a Territorial Battalion. *Parl. Papers*, 1922 (71) Army Estimates for the year 1922-23.

¹⁹⁶ K. Jeffery (ed.) *The Military Correspondence of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson 1918-1922*, (London, 1985) p.324; Wilson to Rawlinson, 23 Dec 1921; K. Jeffery, *Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier*, (Oxford, 2006) p.277.

the army had to perform, and was absorbing money from the only units that could. What was worse, Regular units were now being abolished to fund the TA. As such Wilson declared it 'impossible to justify retention of the Territorial Army in its present form on military grounds ... If they are to be so retained for political reasons it is only fair to the Army Council that the fact should be made public.'¹⁹⁷

In the end the General Staff made little headway in ring-fencing measures to preserve Territorial efficiency, and even Churchill, who chaired the Cabinet committee tasked with reviewing the Geddes recommendations, could do little to protect the TA from the £1,175,000 cut to its budget.¹⁹⁸

Admittedly the Territorial Army's share of the cuts could have been deeper, and in their final form they did represent a compromise between the demands of finance and the essentials of military efficiency. Yet as a compromise they satisfied no party fully, and at the same time the way in which they were applied remained unrelated to any long-term policy. In size the TA would remain established at fourteen divisions, but these formations would be shorn of most of their service and support assets. Although the combat arms units would be preserved, each infantry battalion would now have its establishment size reduced to 600 other ranks and seventy-five per cent of its scale of officers, while artillery batteries would only be authorised to man four guns instead of their wartime complement of six. Similarly, though the fourteen-day annual training period remained intact the efficiency bounty was cut from £5 to £3 for a trained man and £2. 10s for a recruit, and a number of reductions were made to the TA's permanent staff.¹⁹⁹

It also remains that these reductions were not directed in accordance with the TA's role. The partial failure of the conversion scheme and the ensuing economic cuts to the Territorial Vote ensured that the essential support arms and specialist cadres were largely missing from the TA's order of battle. This necessitated the abandonment of the General Staff's initial plans for a balanced second line reserve force. Instead efforts were made to establish a compact but efficient framework of fighting

¹⁹⁷ TNA CAB 24/132 CP.3619 'The Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure: Paper by the General Staff,' 10 Jan 1922.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. CP.3692 'Report of Committee appointed to examine Part I (Defence Departments) of the Report of the Geddes Committee on National Expenditure,' 4 Feb 1922.

¹⁹⁹ P. Dennis, (1987) p.98.

units, in order to maintain key skills and the ability to expand if necessary. To further this aim the General Staff always wanted any reductions to be managed in such a way so that Territorial efficiency and training potential would be left intact. However, although the annual training period was kept intact, the cuts to the bounty and the permanent staff all threatened to lower efficiency.

The upshot of these developments was that by 1922 the reconstituted TA was under-strength, badly disorganised and ill prepared to carry out its main function as a parallel second line army and framework for military expansion. It was clear that a fresh review was required in order to examine the role of the TA in light of post-war developments, especially as even serving Territorials were now reportedly unsure of its purpose. Aware that without firm control and direction they risked a serious decline in its strength and morale, by the mid 1920s the War Office was prepared to make a concerted effort to extract the TA from the disordered state it had been left in.

A Policy of Drift? The Role of the TA in Military Planning, 1922-1926

As has been seen, during the early 1920s discussion regarding the role of the Territorial Army centred around a single eventuality – a great war necessitating the full mobilisation of the nation's resources. Indeed, as far as the General Staff was concerned, the Territorial Army seemingly offered no other viable function. As such there were certainly grounds to question the immediate worth of the TA in the strategic context of the early 1920s.²⁰⁰ The fact that the Regulations stated that the TA could only be embodied when Britain faced 'imminent national danger or great national emergency,' illustrates that by 1924 Territorial mobilisation was only conceptualised within the context of a large-scale general war.²⁰¹

These factors go a long way to explain why this period was not one of immediate and sustained investment for the TA. However, the Territorials' role as the framework for national expansion was not treated as lightly as the literature would suggest, as the possibility of a future Great War was never

²⁰⁰ LHCMA Kirke MSS 1/3/1 Kirke DMT to DSD 14 Feb 1922; Kirke MSS 1/3/5 'Draft: Lecture on the Military Responsibilities of the Empire as affected by the War,' n.d. but Feb 1922.

²⁰¹ War Office, *Regulations for the Territorial Army (including the Territorial Army Reserve) and for County Associations*, 1924 (London, 1924), para.14.

entirely dismissed. Just as the Army quickly re-appraised its doctrine in light of the lessons of the First World War, so did it make similar efforts to ensure the waste and inefficiency associated with the 1914/18 mobilisation would not be repeated.²⁰² The Territorials were an intrinsic part of this and, as the discussions that took place around the 1922 Chanak crisis showed, their possible mobilisation for even a limited commitment could never be ruled out.²⁰³ After all, the General Staff had already noted in 1921 that Britain's undertakings as a League of Nations member already constituted an unlimited liability for the Army.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, and despite the ramifications of the 'ten year rule,' the diplomatic agreements reached at Locarno in 1925 and the Treasury's progressive dominance over defence policy, ensuring the stability of Western Europe remained critical to Britain's overall strategic security.²⁰⁵ As the CIGS put it in 1924:

For us it is only *incidentally* a question of French security; essentially it is a matter of British security ... The true strategic frontier of Great Britain is the Rhine; her security depends entirely upon the present frontiers of France, Belgium and Holland being maintained and remaining in friendly hands.²⁰⁶

Consequently, the War Office was keen to capitalise on the knowledge gained between 1914 and 1918 and establish plans for a viable framework for expansion and an efficient mobilisation process before the opportunity was lost. As Gen. Sir Ivor Maxse publicly warned:

To-day we can still lay our plans with recent knowledge and experience of what is required, but in a few years' time, or in the dim future, when another war bursts upon us, you will all be taken aback and just as surprised as you were in 1914 ... if we planned a bit more and thought seriously, it might be possible, without adding to the estimates of the Fighting Services in a perceptible degree, to produce a workable scheme. If we do not think about it we certainly shall not do so.²⁰⁷

For Maxse, the Territorial Army was fundamental to the viability of any such plans. Indeed, it was the only part of the military capable (at least in theory) of processing and fielding large formations for the expeditionary force, given the Regular Army's chronic lack of reserves and inability to mobilise

²⁰² TNA WO 32/2856 DGTA to DRO and DSD, 4 June 1924.

²⁰³ J. Ramsden, (1984), p.181. Entry for 1 Oct 1922.

²⁰⁴ LHCMA Kirke MSS 1/3/1 'Note by the General Staff for the CID,' 1 Sept 1921.

²⁰⁵ J. Jacobsen, *Locarno Diplomacy: Germany and the West, 1925-29*, (Princeton NJ, 1972) p.37; J. Jacobsen, 'Locarno, Britain and the Security of Europe,' in G. Johnson (ed.) *Locarno Revisited: European Diplomacy 1920-1929*, (London, Routledge, 2004) pp.10-12; F. Magee, 'Limited Liability'? Britain and the Treaty of Locarno,' *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.6 No.1 (1995) pp.1-22; P. Cohrs, 'The First 'Real' Peace after the First World War: Britain, the United States and the Accords of London and Locarno, 1923-1925,' *Contemporary European History*, Vol.12 No.1 (2003) p.28; B. Bond, (1980) p.34.

²⁰⁶ TNA WO 155/4 Memorandum by the General Staff, Dec 1924; TNA CAB 4/12 Memorandum by S. of S. for War, 26 Feb 1925; CAB 4/11 CID Paper No.516-B.

²⁰⁷ Gen. Sir I. Maxse, 'The Territorial Army: Based on Suggestions put forward by the Writers of the Gold Medal Essays, 1924 (lecture)' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.71 No.484 (Nov, 1926) p.664.

any more than two divisions for much of the 1920s.²⁰⁸ Yet doubts over Britain's ability to mobilise for another Great War, and more particularly the Territorial Army's preparedness to expand, were a common area for discussion in military journals at the time.²⁰⁹ Such concerns were undoubtedly warranted given that the War Office lacked the plans to project anything more than a token force overseas, and the truth that the Army was even less prepared for a continental war in 1924 than it had been in 1914 was quickly realised.²¹⁰ As a result, the efforts to prepare for such a contingency put the Territorial Army at the forefront of the Army's organisational planning over the ensuing years.

* * *

Serious discussions over the Territorials' place in mobilisation planning began with the arrival of Sir Hugh Jeudwine as DGTA, who began to push for clarification regarding their role as soon as he replaced his predecessor, Sir Noel Birch, in October 1923.²¹¹ By March the following year the lack of progress in this task led him to submit a lengthy paper demanding a definite decision over how the TA was to be prepared for war, and formal clarification as to where the TA now sat in Britain's overall military organisation.²¹²

Describing the TA at that point as 'a bundle of uncoordinated good-will,' Jeudwine complained that its potential was being wasted as no-one knew what its exact role was, which not only undermined its training but also its morale. Furthermore, the TA had become badly disorganised since the reconstitution. Poor recruiting and the programme of reductions meant that the TA was not in truth made up of formed bodies, and its fourteen divisions were only at some forty-five per cent of their war establishment. In addition many of their supporting units had not been formed, even in cadre

²⁰⁸ TNA WO 32/5297 CIGS to S. of S., 15 March 1922; CAB 24/159 CP.200(23) 'Future Size of our Regular Army' April 1923; CAB 2/3, CID 155th, 156th and 169th Meetings; WO 32/5943 'Strength of the Military Forces in Relation to Military Commitments,' 20 March 1923; WO 33/1023 Minutes of 13th Meeting of the Expeditionary Force Committee, 16 Feb 1923 and 'Composition of the Expeditionary Force for Small Wars,' 21 Feb 1923; CAB 2/5 CID 231st Meeting, 19 Dec 1927 and CID Paper No.847-B 'Present Distribution and Strength of the British Army in relation to its duties'; B. Bond, (1980) p.32; G. Spillan, (1985) Chap.4.

²⁰⁹ For example, Capt. G.E. Grimsdale, 'The Territorial Army and its Expansion for War,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.X No.2 (July, 1925) pp.358-362; Maj. L.I. Cowper, Gold Medal (Military) Prize Essay for 1924', *RUSI Journal*, Vol.70 (1925) pp.202-223; I. Maxse, (1926) pp.661-676; Capt. E.S. Bingham, 'The Training of the Territorial Army in Peace Time and its Expansion in Time of War,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XI No.2, (Jan, 1926) pp.386-390; J. Beach (ed.) *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam, 1910-1942*, (Stroud, 2010) Diary entry 3 Sept 1926, p.277; D. O'Connor, 'The Twenty Year Armistice: RUSI between the Wars,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.154 No.1 (2009) p.84.

²¹⁰ TNA WO 33/1058 'Composition of the Expeditionary Force,' 28 Nov 1924.

²¹¹ TNA WO 32/11271 DGTA to U.S. of S., 10 Nov 1923.

²¹² TNA WO 32/2856 DGTA to U.S. of S., 14 March 1924.

form. Furthermore, no thought had been put into how in wartime they were to coordinate and manage the voluntary Territorial system along with the introduction of conscription, or how they were going to organise the training programmes and supply the leaders that would be required.

On a more practical level, even if a Territorial formation could re-arrange itself administratively and commence serious training on embodiment, there had been no preparatory work to ready headquarters, earmark equipment or allocate concentration and training areas. Also there had been little thought into how they could expand, duplicate and train homogenous units simultaneously, nor how they were to be equipped.²¹³

Jeudwine understood that there was little chance of finding solutions to all these problems, but he did want confirmation on certain central principles and a simple clarification of what the TA would be asked to do on the outbreak of a major war, what size it should expect to expand to and how they were to integrate conscription into the TA's embodiment. Yet the consequent debate that Jeudwine's paper provoked only served to illustrate the lack of any consensus over how the Army's mobilisation was to be organised.²¹⁴ Partly this was due to many of the key decisions being outside of the War Office's control. For example, although the General Staff could tell Jeudwine to prepare to expand the TA initially into twenty-eight divisions and also raise support units (such as Tank Battalions) that did not exist in peace, the provision of manpower could not be pre-planned. The introduction of conscription depended on the nature of the war and on national feeling towards it, and in the absence of a peacetime National Register the ranks of the first fourteen Territorial divisions would almost certainly rely on voluntary enlistments.²¹⁵

The DGTA did, however, manage to get the Army Council to agree to set up a standing committee to discuss the problems of Territorial mobilisation.²¹⁶ Taking as its point of departure the lessons learnt

²¹³ Ibid. 'Peace Organization of the Territorial Army,' Memorandum by DGTA, 14 March 1924; see also WO 163/30 Army Council Précis No.1186 (Revised) 'The Peace Organization of the Territorial Army: Appendix.'

²¹⁴ TNA WO 32/2856 'The Expansion of the Territorial Army in War', n.d. but May 1924; DSD to CIGS, 3 June 1924; DGTA to DRO and DSD, 22 May & 4 June 1924.

²¹⁵ Ibid. PUS to CIGS, AG, QMG, MGO, 7 May 1924; Wade to Creedy, 10 July 1924; Minute by CIGS, 3 June 1924.

²¹⁶ TNA WO 163/30 Army Council 340th Meeting, 23 Dec 1924.

from the unmethodical expansion between 1914-18, its ensuing report was based on several key assumptions. First and foremost it accepted that the TA would only be used in a major war, but that it would have to rely on voluntary recruitment until conscription was introduced by Parliament. This could take up to six months, at which point the first complement from the TA was expected to depart to the theatre of war. As a consequence, Territorial expansion would be undertaken in two set phases, whereby each existing Territorial unit would initially only throw off a cadre to form a reserve unit until conscription was introduced, at which point this reserve unit would itself throw off an additional cadre for a triplicate unit. Original Territorial units would therefore only train their own initial volunteers, until centralised training centres could be formed to cater for a national army.²¹⁷ As a result the embodied TA could bring its existing first-line divisions to war strength as quickly as possible to reinforce the expeditionary force, whilst at the same time leaving behind a framework of cadres to form up to thirty-three infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions.

However in the absence of any increase in funding there were deep divisions as to how this re-organisation process could be best managed.²¹⁸ The General Staff were all for root and branch reform. Continuing the line of reasoning from 1922, their preference was still to streamline the TA by disbanding two to three divisions. The saving thus made could be re-directed into organising the remaining formations properly and this, the CIGS believed, would be preferable to continuing with fourteen inadequately prepared divisions with no prospect for their improvement.²¹⁹

Jeudwine's committee, on the other hand, wanted to re-organise the TA according to a set scale of readiness, whereby each division would be selected and given a higher or lower establishment depending on the order in which it would proceed overseas. In this way they could carry out the overall expansion scheme, but with only a select number of formations at proportionately less expense. Scaling each division according to priority would, in their opinion, cause the minimum

²¹⁷ TNA WO 33/1088 'First Report of the Territorial Army Expansion Committee,' 4 Aug 1925.

²¹⁸ Ibid. 'Covering Note to accompany the First Report of the Territorial Army Expansion Committee,' 8 Aug 1925; CAB 24/178 CP.54(26) 'Standing Committee on Expenditure: Report,' 9 Feb 1926.

²¹⁹ TNA WO 32/2857 CIGS to PUS, 30 Sept 1925.

dislocation in peace while producing the maximum result in war, whilst keeping the overall organisation intact.²²⁰

However, for Jeudwine this option risked establishing a *corp d'elite* within the Territorial organisation which, given the then fragile state of morale, would seriously undermine Territorial confidence. He therefore broke with the committee's majority opinion, and submitted his own recommendation that the Army Council should approve the Expansion Committee findings in principle, but defer from implementing any measures until either more funding became available or the issue gained in urgency.²²¹

Jeudwine was in no rush to introduce reform haphazardly, as his priority in the first instance was simply to set in place the main principles governing Britain's military expansion. Indeed, he intended later Second and Third Reports to deal in greater detail with issues of recruitment and administration and the actual formulation of mobilisation schemes.²²² At the same time Jeudwine was well aware that reforms in a voluntary force like the Territorial Army had to be handled extremely carefully. As he had pointed out in an earlier debate:

If destruction of Divisions and reconstruction of Territorial formations on a new plan should be closely followed by further destruction and further reconstruction, without any definite end in sight, the effect on the Territorial Army will certainly be to induce a most dangerous spirit of discontent and discouragement.²²³

He therefore believed they had to avoid imposing any controversial decisions that may compromise the Territorial Army's popularity, especially as it continued to struggle to recruit.²²⁴ Conversely, most other members of the General Staff could not countenance the real risk they ran of having to commit the TA to a future campaign disorganised, ill-equipped, and unprepared. This aspect particularly concerned the CIGS. Regarding Jeudwine's view as 'simply a policy of drift,' Cavan argued that as

²²⁰ TNA WO 33/1088 'Majority View,' 8 Aug 1925.

²²¹ Ibid. 'Minority View,' 8 Aug 1925.

²²² Ibid. 'Future Programme of Committee,' 4 Aug 1925.

²²³ TNA WO 32/11271 DGTA to U.S. of S., 10 Nov 1923.

²²⁴ Jeudwine's predecessor also shared this opinion. See TNA WO 32/2857 MGO to C.1 (E.A. Armstrong), 6 Oct 1925.

the government had publicly declared the TA as the basis of national expansion it would now be almost a breach of faith if they did not enable the TA to function in its role.²²⁵ As he continued:

It is, in my opinion, inconceivable that public opinion would tolerate a policy of “laissez-faire” vis-à-vis the Territorial Army, who are now definitely the first reserves, and I feel it would be unforgivably [sic] wrong to make no attempt to render them capable of fighting side by side with the Regular Army against a modern enemy.²²⁶

However, from a practical perspective the timing was unpropitious for making a decision. For example, it seemed inappropriate to discuss modifications to the TA with the future organisational basis of the Regular Army still undecided.²²⁷ As the MGO pointed out, ‘there is not the slightest use tinkering with the Territorial Army until we know what form our future army is to take, and until we adopt a settled policy.’²²⁸

At the same time some began to argue that the committee had been looking at the problem from the wrong perspective. Instead a new approach was forming which concentrated less on organisational preparations but focused instead on introducing measures designed to enhance Territorial efficiency. As the effective mobilisation and expansion of a national army depended mainly on the availability of instructors and leaders, the Territorial Army should focus accordingly on producing a strong corps of well-trained officers, NCOs and specialists rather than fully-formed, deployable units.²²⁹ As such, instead of trying to organise it into a balanced second-line army these proposals envisaged restructuring the TA into a loose framework of cadres, maintained at a high level of efficiency but on a reduced, skeleton basis. Without any sign of an increase in money or manpower on the horizon, this option became increasingly favoured as the decade progressed.

Evaluation

From the War Office’s perspective the Territorial reconstitution was largely a missed opportunity, and the end result undoubtedly disappointing. By 1922 the aspiration to re-organise the Territorial Army into a large, well-balanced and modern reserve force had been abandoned. The intransigence over the

²²⁵ TNA WO 163/31 Army Council Précis No.1231, ‘Expansion of the Territorial Army,’ Oct 1925; WO 32/2857 CIGS to PUS, 30 Sept 1925.

²²⁶ TNA WO 32/2857 CIGS to PUS, 13 Nov 1925.

²²⁷ Ibid. AG to PUS, 6 Oct 1925.

²²⁸ Ibid. MGO to C.1 (E.A. Armstrong), 6 Oct 1925.

²²⁹ Ibid. U.S. of S. to PUS, 6 Oct 1925; AG to PUS, 11 Nov 1925; WO 163/31 Army Council Précis No.1234 ‘Expansion of the Territorial Army,’ Nov 1925.

conversion scheme and the ever-tightening constraints on defence expenditure, not to mention the apparent irrelevance of its role, ensured the General Staff opposed any preferential treatment for the TA. As they themselves admitted:

If the conditions of service in the Territorial Army can be so modified as to permit of their being used in an emergency to reinforce or relieve our hard-pressed Regular Army in defence of the Empire, there would be less objection to the expenditure upon it of Army Funds.²³⁰

Faced with a multitude of overseas and domestic security commitments, the General Staff always preferred to apply reductions to the Army's reserve elements rather than at the expense of front-line strength. This has been used as evidence to claim that the General Staff wanted to see the TA abolished rather than continue to act as a drain on the ever-diminishing Army Estimates.

However, these assumptions over-simplify the ultimate goal the General Staff was trying to achieve from reducing the TA. Directed by strategic necessity and the inflexibility of its conditions of service, excessive expenditure on the Territorials could never be justified. Indeed, reductions across the board were inevitable after cutting defence spending became a government priority. Nevertheless, the General Staff still intended to carefully manage the reductions in accordance with their aim of creating a streamlined, more compact reserve organisation that could be maintained at an appropriate level of readiness and efficiency. As a result they consistently pushed to preserve the TA's fighting elements and training potential, as these were aspects that could not be improvised easily in an emergency but were the key determinants for an effective expansion in its size. The fact they were only partly successful in this aim simply illustrates how the reductions in 1922 were directed as much by purely financial considerations than the desire to implement an effective military policy.

The consequence of this approach admittedly left the TA in a disordered state by the mid 1920s, with little understanding of its function and even fewer prospects of being able to carry it out. However, rather than ignore its decline the War Office moved quickly to restore Territorial morale and re-think how it could be structured to achieve its role in line with the budgetary and organisational realities of the time.

²³⁰ TNA CAB 24/132 CP.3619 'The Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure: Paper by the General Staff,' 10 Jan 1922.

Yet, although all agreed on the importance of re-establishing the TA on a reasonable basis of efficiency and readiness, there was a clear divide on how this could be achieved. With no additional investment likely, the majority view favoured re-organising the TA according to defined levels of readiness, thus creating a two-tier system whereby one part was prioritised over the other. On the other hand it was claimed that the timing was inopportune to force any radical reforms on the Territorials, and instead take a slower and more considered approach to improve its efficiency. Although the ensuing debate did achieve a great deal in identifying the main problems facing the Territorial Army and also suggesting the possible remedies, with no easy solution available a decision was deferred. Nevertheless, what these discussions did show was the seriousness in which the capabilities and readiness of the TA were held within the War Office. This level of significance would continue as Britain's defence policy and military priorities continued to shift over the following years.

Chapter Three.

The Shaft of the Spear: The Role of the Territorial Army in Imperial Defence, 1927-1933.

Introduction

During the 1920s the War Office never lost sight of the possible need to fight another European war.²³¹ As a result the Territorial Army's principal role as the framework for military expansion was never entirely discounted. Indeed, in 1925 Worthington-Evans had very publicly confirmed this fact, stating that any future enlargement of the Army would be carried out exclusively through the Territorial organisation, and this was reiterated yet again in 1928.²³²

Nevertheless, although for training purposes the Army prepared for a mobile war against a well-equipped and organised modern enemy, the General Staff fully understood that the most likely contingency involved a distant campaign somewhere across the Empire.²³³ The Territorial Army was not excluded from this. Indeed, military planning was increasingly underpinned by the assumption that Territorial troops would be definitely available to support the expeditionary force in a medium scale, extra-European war.

At the same time calls for reductions in defence spending continued unabated, and so any improvements to Britain's military capabilities had to be achieved within the constraints of an ever-diminishing budget. As a consequence, strategic and economic imperatives combined to shift the TA in a new direction, away from its function as a structure for the organisation of conscripted manpower and instead towards a role as a more flexible and integrated imperial reserve.

²³¹ D. French, 'Big Wars and Small Wars between the Wars, 1919-39,' in H. Strachan, (ed.) *Big Wars and Small Wars: The British Army and the Lessons of War in the 20th Century*, (Abingdon, 2006), p.38; J.R. Ferris, (1989) p.148.

²³² TNA WO 32/2856 War Office to all GOsC Commands and all Secretaries of Associations, 23 Feb 1925. This letter was also distributed to every War Office department and to the commandants of the Staff College, Senior Officers' School and the Royal Military Academy and Royal Military College. On 12 February Sir Laming Worthington Evans publicly announced it to the Council of County TA Associations and later in the Commons. See *Hansard*, HC Deb 16 March 1925 vol.181 c.1891; Duff Cooper (then the War Office Financial Secretary) re-confirmed this in March 1928, *Hansard*, HC Deb. 8 March 1928 vol.214 c.1271.

²³³ TNA WO 279/60 Report on the Staff Conference, Camberley, 16th to 19th January 1928: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Knox (DMT).

However, there was little consensus as to how the TA was to fulfil this broad task. As Lord Apsley pointed out to his fellow peers in March 1928:

The idea is now fully established that the Regular Army is the spearhead, and the Territorial Army the shaft, and that one is of no use without the other ... [But] there is still a certain amount of anxiety and uncertainty as to the exact way in which the shaft should be used.²³⁴

In the mid 1920s the TA was still focused on preparing a national army to fight a general European war, and little planning had been done around the possibility of deploying a limited number of voluntary, composite formations. Therefore, the War Office again attempted to formalise the TA's dual role in order to integrate it more closely with the broader demands of Britain's strategic requirements. Achieving this depended on whether it could successfully re-orientate the direction of Territorial policy, whilst also reforming its organisation and conditions of service to enable it to perform as both a expansionary framework and a voluntary reserve for imperial duties.

In order to examine whether or not the War Office achieved these aims this chapter will focus on several key areas of development. The first will look at the nature of the dual role foreseen for the TA, and how the General Staff hoped to re-model it and simultaneously reduce its cost in line with the government's demands. This will then lead on to an examination of the influence of the County Associations and their often fraught relationship with the War Office, especially over the direction of Territorial policy. Lastly, the role of the TA will be placed in context with the Army's strategic priorities at the time, particularly pertaining to mobilisation planning. From this point the War Office's efforts to identify the main obstructions to Territorial preparedness will be assessed, through the work of the Stephens Committee and the subsequent campaign in the early 1930s to abolish the 'pledge' on unit integrity. From here it will be possible to see to what extent the TA was capable of fulfilling its dual role as a framework for expansion and voluntary imperial reserve.

* * *

Cadres and Cuts: Re-organising for a Dual Role

When Gen. Sir George Milne took over as CIGS in February 1926 he did so determined to set out a clear policy for the Army. As he had reminded the Chiefs of Staff:

²³⁴ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 8 March 1928, vol.214 c.1314: Comment by Lord Apsley.

Whereas in the past there had always been a definite Naval policy, no clear-cut policy had been laid down as far as the Army was concerned. In 1914 a definite policy had evolved because a definite war problem with a definite enemy had emerged. At the present time the Army was completely out of date.²³⁵

However, this had to be done in the face of further calls to reduce defence spending. Milne therefore focused his efforts on formulating an affordable plan that set priorities in accordance with the Army's most likely commitments. Noting that most prior attempts had concentrated on mobilising for another continental war, and that 'considerable expenditure was being incurred in paying retaining fees to men who might be, but were very unlikely ever to be, required for any such eventuality,' the CIGS wanted to re-orientate policy towards imperial defence, as this was the type of involvement the Empire was now most likely to face. In his assessment these would most likely follow a familiar pattern:

... our wars usually commenced by a small force becoming committed in hostilities, to extricate which force reinforcements, first of a division and ultimately of a corps, were probably necessitated. For such a kind of war the Army was not prepared at the present time.²³⁶

This shift back to a limited, expeditionary posture, involving neither a considerable expansion in the Army's size nor the introduction of conscription, made the previous planning assumptions for the Territorial Army largely irrelevant. Indeed, Milne openly doubted whether the reconstituted TA's size and organisation was now appropriate, or whether modern advances in military science made 'an immense levées-en-masse' [sic] really necessary, especially as defence spending continued to shrink.²³⁷

In consequence both the CIGS and the Under Secretary of State, the Earl of Onslow, agreed that the TA's role and organisation had to be brought in to line with existing military requirements. This meant reappraising its role as a source of reinforcements for the expeditionary force in a medium scale, extra-European campaign. The General Staff had sought to remodel the TA as an imperial reserve since the reconstitution but, as they had reflected in 1922, the issue had already been

²³⁵ TNA CAB 53/1 COS 30th Meeting, 27 May 1926.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ TNA CAB 53/12 COS.41 'Review of Imperial Defence 1926,' 22 June 1926.

‘exhaustively discussed’ and the ‘difficulty of reconciling such an obligation with the limitations inherent to the recruiting of the Force was found to be insuperable.’²³⁸

However, as its de facto re-organisation into cadres had already been tacitly accepted, in substance the TA had already shifted away from its original, intended form.²³⁹ As such it was hoped that the Territorial Army would embrace a new, more flexible dual role, whereby it would act as both the foundation of a National Army whilst also supplementing the Regular Army in any war where its own reserves proved inadequate.

In theory this aspiration was entirely feasible as long as the TA was manned and organised with such a dual role in mind. For Onslow the TA’s position as the ‘cadre for a nation in arms’ was its most important long-term function, but he recognised that a force organised for the worst-case scenario would easily be capable of meeting a lesser one:

So far as the Territorial Army exists to assist the Regular Army in a small war I think we may allow the greater to contain the less, and assume that any organisation which envisages the Territorial Army as a cadre for a nation in arms, will without great difficulty be able to supply a small force to assist the Regular Army in a small war. The task, therefore, is to try and make up our minds as to the earliest date when a great war can be possible, and how to “cut our coat according to our cloth.”²⁴⁰

The fact that the General Staff did not anticipate another great war until the mid-1930s at the earliest meant that it was unnecessary to maintain the TA at a high level of readiness. Its military capabilities could be preserved, however, as long as they invested in its long-term efficiency, through fostering its morale and encouraging the proficiency of its commanders and instructors. Thus, the necessity to ‘maintain “esprit de corps” in the Territorial Army, its “Territorial” character and County patriotism,’ whilst also being able ‘to lay our hands on a sufficient number of officers and non-commissioned officers to start training the recruits from the moment they come in’ were endorsed as the two fundamental requirements for the future.²⁴¹

²³⁸ TNA WO 32/2728 ‘Conclusions formed on subjects discussed at Command Conferences on the Territorial Army,’ 1925; CAB 24/132 CP.3619 ‘The Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure: Paper by the General Staff,’ 10 Jan 1922.

²³⁹ Lt.-Gen. H. Jeurwine, ‘Some Territorial Problems,’ *RUSI Journal*, Vol.73 No.490, (May, 1928) p.320.

²⁴⁰ Surrey History Centre: 5th Earl of Onslow MSS 5337/11/(25) ‘Unpublished Memoir Manuscript,’ Onslow to Milne, 4 May 1926.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Therefore, by this point a policy of cadreisation, whereby resources were directed on the training of commanders, instructors and specialists, had already gained widespread acceptance. Accepting that establishing the TA as a large, well-balanced second line was unviable, its re-organisation into cadres was not only a practical recognition of the Army's limited and funding recruiting potential, but also offered the most effective way of retaining a nucleus of efficient personnel and the organisational capacity to expand.

However, reforming the force accordingly proved more problematic, especially after a renewed round of economies called for the Territorials to absorb its share of the cuts.²⁴² Yet it would be a mistake to regard the ensuing reductions imposed over 1926/27 as simply another callous attack on the TA by the General Staff. Rather they should be viewed as part of a broader re-orientation in how the Territorials were organised, in line with the role and likely commitments they were expected to face. Indeed, Milne was careful to note that reducing the TA was not considered as an end in itself. Rather they were seeking to ascertain how they could safely reduce expenditure on less important areas across the Army, in order to sustain those that were truly essential.²⁴³

Accordingly Milne's intention was to reduce the TA only to a level consonant with 'maintaining an efficient organisation and equipment for expansion in war,' whilst also retaining enough capability to, 'mobilize a force reasonably adequate to meet our continental commitments, and to man our static defences at home, whilst bringing the coast and AA defence in Britain on to a Territorial basis.'²⁴⁴ In light of the importance of this task, the resultant cuts would be carefully considered by a prominent Army Council sub-committee, chaired by Onslow and with the CIGS, MGO, PUS, DGTA and DF(b) as members. Their primary task was to ascertain what the TA's wartime duties were, and how quickly and in what strength they would be required after mobilisation. Once these parameters were identified the committee could then explore how the existing system could be altered to bring about

²⁴² The TA's allocation initially amounted to £281,000, from a total reduction of £1,267,000.

²⁴³ TNA WO 32/2670 CIGS to PUS, 8 July 1926.

²⁴⁴ TNA CAB 53/12 COS.41 'Review of Imperial Defence 1926,' 22 June 1926.

the most economical method of achieving them.²⁴⁵ Therefore, rather than simply applying an arbitrary cut to Territorial expenditure, their priority was to streamline the TA in accordance with its role, as well as its efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

The committee quickly identified that the TA had little need to be maintained at a high level of readiness. Mobilisation planning envisaged a pre-deployment period of at least six months in which to bring units up to war strength and conduct intensive training. It also confirmed that those support units drawn from an existing civilian skill-base, such as medical and transport formations, could be safely left out of the order of battle until war was declared. However, the funds released from accepting a slower mobilisation rate were not enough to match the recurrent savings the War Office was required to make. Discovering that any further cuts involved interfering with aspects of policy, the committee had to decide on the specific direction any reductions would take. These narrowed down to three main areas, which included either reducing Territorial training (through a cut in the annual training period from fifteen to eight days), cutting emoluments (by abolishing the Bounty), or alternatively reducing the Territorial organisation in size, via the ‘telescoping’ of its fourteen divisions into seven and a further reduction in unit establishments.

Given that his preference for cadres depended on assuring Territorial efficiency rather than strength, Milne strongly opposed any reduction to their annual training obligation as this remained a Territorials’ only opportunity to gain practical experience.²⁴⁶ Reducing establishments, however, would hardly impact on units already under-strength, as long as sufficient other ranks were available to facilitate the training of commanders and instructors. In any case, as Worthington-Evans later explained, such a reduction would have little influence on attainable efficiency, as really it would just cap numbers at what they could expect to recruit.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ TNA WO 32/2670 U.S. of S. to CIGS, MGO and PUS, 7 July 1926.

²⁴⁶ TNA WO 163/32 Army Council 353rd Meeting, 5 Nov 1926.

²⁴⁷ TNA WO 32/2729 Worthington Evans to Lord Derby, 2 Feb 1927.

Whilst Milne, therefore, preferred to reduce paper establishments, Onslow and Jeudwine opted for a far more ambitious alternative. Reflecting a proposal that the DGTA had been pushing for at least a year, this questioned whether it was strictly necessary to retain Haldane's original fourteen-division structure in peace.²⁴⁸ Instead they advocated halving its size by pairing existing formations to form seven new regional divisions, which would create a compact peacetime organisation established at near war strength.²⁴⁹ At the same time each original unit would organise additional cadres, which in the event of a general mobilisation could be expanded to reconstitute the original fourteen divisions, and thereafter duplicated as necessary. As a result the TA could be re-modelled into an effective dual reserve organisation capable of quickly reinforcing a small to medium scale campaign as well as expanding to at least thirty-five divisions. No units or formations would have to be abolished outright and the TA would retain the national footprint essential to keep alive its traditions and county connections, whilst also being far more cost-effective.²⁵⁰

Yet neither Onslow nor Jeudwine managed to convince Milne of the advantages of the scheme.²⁵¹ Probably foreseeing accusations that they were seeking to abolish half the TA, the CIGS demurred from a radical option that ostensibly risked the TA's capacity to expand. Instead he wanted to keep any reductions focused on areas that were not directly linked to the TA's training and efficiency as a military body. This left the Bounty. Although the committee held back from abolishing it for those already serving, it was calculated that withholding it from new enlistees and re-engagements would eventually release some £332,000 per year. A previous cut to the Bounty in 1923 suggested that any negative impact on recruiting would only be temporary, and as such it was seen to be the least objectionable alternative.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Surrey History Centre: 5th Earl of Onslow MSS 5337/11/(25) 'Unpublished Memoir Manuscript,' Onslow to Milne, 4 May 1926.

²⁴⁹ Namely a Scottish Division (Highland and Lowland); Northern Division (Northumbrian and West Riding); Lancashire Division (West Lancs and East Lancs); Midland Division (Welsh and North Midland); Western Division (South Midland and Wessex); Eastern Division (East Anglian and Home Counties); and one London Division (1st and 2nd London).

²⁵⁰ Surrey History Centre: 5th Earl of Onslow MSS 5337/11/(25) 'Unpublished Memoir Manuscript,' Onslow to Milne, 4 May 1926.

²⁵¹ Ibid. Onslow to Worthington Evans, 27 May 1927; TNA WO 32/2670 Army Council Précis No.1268, Oct 1926. The committee did, however, consider telescoping together the two under-performing London Divisions.

²⁵² TNA WO 163/32 Army Council 353rd Meeting, 5 Nov 1926; WO 32/2729 Worthington-Evans to Derby, 10 March 1927.

In line with these recommendations the Army Council submitted its proposals to lower the establishment of infantry battalions from 680 to 500 and other units in similar proportion, disband several low-readiness veterinary and medical units, and abolish the Bounty. However, this decision met with a wall of protest from the County Associations. Angry at not being consulted over the direction of the cuts, the Associations refused to sanction their implementation. In particular they vigorously opposed the abolition of the Bounty, and set about compiling their own recommendations instead. Unsurprisingly, these concluded that no meaningful economies could be made to the TA's administration costs, and so any cuts had to be taken from the training grant.²⁵³

‘A Skid on the Wheel of Progress:’ The County Associations and the Direction of Territorial Policy

Dennis has described the ensuing dispute in depth, but he has focused mainly on the opinions and grievances held by the Associations.²⁵⁴ This has obscured the real significance of the debate. What the clash over the Bounty really indicates is the disconnect that existed between those responsible for administering the TA and those charged with deciding the direction of its policy.

There is no doubt that the strength of feeling amongst the Associations was genuine, and many of their objections were certainly valid. Lowering establishments may have had little effect on poorly recruited units in the south, but it would penalise stronger units in the north. The Bounty was also more than a pecuniary reward. It was meant to recognise the Territorials' increased obligations, which was an especially sensitive issue given that the War Office sought to broaden these liabilities even further. Nevertheless, in some scattered units the Bounty was essential in defraying increased travel costs, and so its abolition would leave these Territorials out of pocket. Furthermore, abolishing it only for new enlistments and re-engagements discriminated against those who could not re-engage in time, and would create two classes of Territorials serving in the same unit. It also removed a

²⁵³ TNA WO 32/2733 Derby to W-E, 30 Sept 1927 and Report of the CCTA Finance Committee, 4 Aug 1927.

²⁵⁴ P. Dennis, (1987) pp.112-123.

valuable aid in bolstering a Commanding Officer's authority, as it was the only way he could incentivise his troops and enforce discipline in a voluntary organisation.²⁵⁵

In this way the apparent decision to abolish the Bounty without consultation and regardless of the Associations' wishes may well have been misjudged. However, for the War Office the crux of the matter was the extent to which it should be beholden to the Associations on what it considered to be matters of policy. As Onslow observed at the time:

The fact is that the T.A.A[ssociations]. are claiming powers that they were never intended to possess – i.e. a right in the govt of the T. Army. Their function is to administer their units not to deal with questions of policy. ... We shall never get peace until the functions of the WO and the Associations are clearly defined and each party is left to do its own job.²⁵⁶

The fact that the Associations insisted that any cuts be drawn from the training grant rather than from their own administrative costs was particularly galling, as it was in complete contravention of the War Office's intent to preserve the TA's efficiency. As he was responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the Army's training, Milne in particular resented any outside interference, insisting that 'if any reduction in the training grant is made I would request that it is clearly stated that it is on the advise of the TA Associations and contrary to mine.'²⁵⁷

In consequence the War Office resisted any calls to limit Territorial training, particularly a reduction in the length of the annual training period. As the Director of Finance pointed out, 'what we want to pay for is efficient men and presumably efficiency varies directly with camp. In four years we shall save about 1/8 of the cost and lose 1/4 of the efficiency.'²⁵⁸ The Director of Military Training fully agreed, pointing out that:

The camp training of the TA is their real training. They do much at other times but camp is their opportunity for functioning as units and ... the majority of Territorials wish to take their soldiering seriously and would resent most strongly a proposal which is so detrimental to efficiency.²⁵⁹

Milne found it incomprehensible that the Council of County Territorial Associations (CCTA) could describe the War Office recommendations as 'calculated to destroy the efficiency and the spirit of the

²⁵⁵ TNA WO 32/2731 'Report on CCTA Deputation,' 21 March 1927.

²⁵⁶ TNA WO 32/2729 U.S. of S., to PUS, 31 May 1927.

²⁵⁷ TNA WO 279/65 Report on the Staff Conference, 14-17 Jan 1929: Comment by CIGS; WO 32/2733 CIGS to PUS, 20 Oct 1927; WO 32/2733 Minute by CIGS, 24 Oct 1927.

²⁵⁸ TNA WO 32/2733 DF(b) to DGTA, 5 Aug 1927.

²⁵⁹ Ibid. DMT to DGTA, 23 Aug 1927.

Territorial Army,' whilst actively calling for cuts to the only aspect of its expenditure that was a crucial determinant of efficiency:

I cannot understand the Gilbertian attitude ... [that] ... recommends in the same breath the cutting down of the Training Grant and a higher standard of efficiency. When such pitiable lack of logic is shown, it is a waste of time to argue the questions raised.²⁶⁰

The demands on the training grant were especially resented after it was noted that, although Associations had agreed to surrender some five per cent of their accumulated surpluses (some £18,000) in 1926, they still held on to some £392,000 of government money that had not been spent on its intended recipients, the Territorials themselves.²⁶¹ Furthermore, with the exception of the period around the 1930 financial crisis, these surpluses continued to rise into the next decade.

Net Surpluses held by Territorial County Associations (on 31 March of each Year).

Year	Surplus (£)
1914	221,000
1921	331,000
1922	331,110
1923	328,418
1924	336,000
1925	358,000
1926	392,000
1927	359,000
1928	389,000
1929	407,000
1930	440,000
1931	415,500
1932	419,500
1933	411,300
1934	483,000
1935	492,000
1936	482,000
1937	418,300
1938	423,000

Source: *Parliamentary Papers*, 'Financial Statement for TA County Associations' for each year stated.

Although setting funds aside may have made good business sense, the War Office considered it objectionable that the Associations should always state that no economies could be made whilst at the same time consistently accruing a profit from their grants. As Milne put it at the 1929 Staff

²⁶⁰ Ibid. Minute by CIGS, 24 Oct 1927.

²⁶¹ TNA WO 32/2729 'WO Note on Proposals of Lord Derby and Col. Golightly,' 29 Jan 1927; Lt.-Gen. H. Jeudwine, 'Some Territorial Problems,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.73 No.490, (May, 1928) p.319.

Conference, ‘as long as the Associations have piled-up reserves, I cannot agree that they have any great grievance.’²⁶² However, the War Office could do little to force the Associations to return any of these surpluses. As the Director of Finance pointed out, ‘we have no right to confiscate a surplus – we can of course order them to surrender which might possibly mean an end of the County Associations.’²⁶³

For the War Office the root cause of the dispute over the direction of the cuts was that the Associations were only interested in their narrow financial interests and were not taking a broader perspective of what the TA was for. At the time it was believed that the Associations were overstepping their authority in seeking undue influence on policy. This problem was compounded by the belief that most Association members were generally ignorant of what was required from the contemporary Army. According to the Under-Secretary of State, who was himself an Association member, they generally fell into three categories:

They consist (a) of one or two men who have had to deal with affairs of a wider kind than those of a County ... (b) Commanding Officers, ex-Commanding Officers and the Secretary, (c) a mass of people who know nothing of the TA but as it is rather a compliment to be on it get nominated rather in the same way as people try to get nominated as J.P. ... Class (a) if willing can sometimes help by persuading the others to take a wide view – Class (b) think of nothing and will hear nothing but what concerns their own particular case. For them the argument is “the TA is the cheapest force in the world” and for that reason ‘nothing must be done to touch it – if anything is done it must be done with our consent and in accordance with our advice.’²⁶⁴

Furthermore, too many of the Associations’ Military Members were deemed to be out of touch with modern military methods and requirements. As Milne noticed, the CCTA’s committee on reductions ‘contains hardly any serving Territorial officers. I doubt if any of them even know how the [training] grant is expended. Nothing can be achieved in the TA until young active men replace many of the members of the Associations.’²⁶⁵ This fact spurred Jeudwine to argue for a formal ruling to ensure a majority were always drawn from those serving, so as to ‘import into the cloistered deliberations of Associations a breath from the open air,’ which would have been particularly helpful as most of the

²⁶² TNA WO 279/65 Report on the Staff Conference, 14-17 Jan 1929: Comment by CIGS.

²⁶³ TNA WO 32/2733 Minute by DF(b), 7 Dec 1927.

²⁶⁴ TNA WO 32/2729 U.S. of S., to PUS, 31 May 1927.

²⁶⁵ TNA WO 32/2733 Minute by CIGS, 24 Oct 1927.

CCTA's active Territorial members disagreed with the Associations' preference to cut the training grant.²⁶⁶

Moreover, several key Territorials agreed that Associations simply acted as a further layer of inefficiency, and that units could be administered more effectively if only the relevant military authorities dealt them with.²⁶⁷ As the Territorial commander of 162nd (East Midland) Brigade, Col.

John Brown, related:

It is like working all the time with a "skid on the wheel of progress." ... Associations are not in close enough touch with the Units. They are always prepared to blame the War Office and the military authorities. They consider themselves a power, and of more importance than the Force itself.²⁶⁸

The War Office admittedly did little to bring the Associations into its internal discussions, and when they did they preferred to approach leading members indirectly.²⁶⁹ However, this was due mainly to pragmatism, as obtaining a unanimous decision from the Associations on any issue was almost impossible. Under existing legislation the War Office was obliged to approach each one individually which meant that, as Onslow noted, 'in fact each Association claims or tries to claim something like a liberum veto.'²⁷⁰

Preferably the War Office wanted to deal with a single representative body, as this would allow them to explain their requirements and address any concerns in an efficient, inclusive manner. The CCTA was the closest to this ideal, but a number of key Associations had opted out of its membership and, as an informally organised assembly, the Council lacked any plenipotentiary powers.²⁷¹ Therefore, in an effort to establish closer relations Onslow suggested they offer the Associations greater access to the Secretary of State and Army Council and establish a joint War Office/Association consultative committee to act as a 'safety valve' in case of future disputes.²⁷² However, the Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Herbert Creedy warned him that such an advisory council had been tried without

²⁶⁶ H. Jeudwine, (1928) p.319; TNA WO 32/2733 'Report on CCTA TA Finance Committee: Special Meeting,' 30 Sept 1927.

²⁶⁷ H. Jeudwine, (1928) p.318; Surrey History Centre, 5th Earl of Onslow MSS: 5337/7/(52) Onslow to Worthington-Evans, 22 March 1927; *The Times*, 11 Jan 1926 'Economy in the Army: The Territorial Associations; A Suggested Retrenchment.'

²⁶⁸ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/115/2 Brown to Liddell Hart, 4 Jan 1926.

²⁶⁹ TNA WO 32/2729 U.S. of S., to PUS, 31 May 1927. In particular the Earl of Derby and Sir William Bromley-Davenport, who acted as the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the CCTA respectively.

²⁷⁰ TNA WO 32/2729 U.S. of S., to PUS, 31 May 1927.

²⁷¹ TNA WO 32/2672 Minute by Milne, 9 May 1928 and Onslow, 17 May 1928.

²⁷² TNA WO 32/9699 U.S. of S. to S. of S., 21 March 1927.

success before the War, and even Onslow had second thoughts in case this was accidentally seen as an indication that the War Office was willing to partner the Associations in determining TA policy.²⁷³

In the event the intention to re-establish a TA Advisory Council was shelved for the time being, and the relationship between the War Office and the County Associations remained strained. This was particularly the case after the former effectively gave in when, after lengthy deliberations, an agreement was finally reached which was balanced heavily in the Territorials' favour. Thereby the TA was required to only absorb a mere £30,000 of the total cuts, in the form of a 2.5 per cent decrease in its annual administrative grant, which was a long way from the £281,000 initially identified as its fair share of the reductions.²⁷⁴ Furthermore, instead of being abolished outright the Bounty would be replaced by a 'Proficiency Grant,' which like its predecessor was not actually linked to the attainment of any specific level of efficiency. Indeed, as Jeudwine later admitted it was 'really only the old Bounty halved and given a new name.'²⁷⁵

Dennis put this concession down to the political pressures that the Associations could exert, and this assessment is most likely correct.²⁷⁶ Worthington-Evans conceded to Churchill that the continuation of the dispute was only causing further damage to the TA:

So long as this feeling exists, the agitation will continue, and all the time it continues real harm is being done to the Territorial Army and many of our best supporters who are connected with the Territorial Army are discouraged and even estranged.... Until the Associations are sure that finality has been reached they will go on passing Resolutions, keeping alive the agitation, both in the Press and in the House.²⁷⁷

Worthington-Evans was thus willing to concede to the Associations' demands largely as an act of mollification. Ultimately, however, there still existed a rift that prevented the creation of a truly effective partnership. As Milne resignedly observed, 'now that the Territorial Associations have become masters instead of servants, ... so far as the Army Council is concerned anything we do will be misconstrued.'²⁷⁸

²⁷³ Ibid. U.S. of S. to S. of S., 21 March 1927; WO 32/9699 Minute by U.S. of S., 29 March 1927.

²⁷⁴ TNA WO 32/2733 WO to Secretaries, All TA Associations, 31 Jan 1928.

²⁷⁵ H. Jeudwine, (1928) p.317.

²⁷⁶ P. Dennis, (1987) p.123.

²⁷⁷ TNA WO 32/2731 Worthington-Evans to Churchill, 22 March 1927.

²⁷⁸ Ibid. Minute by CIGS, 24 Oct 1927.

Furthermore, the political desire to pacify the Associations meant the War Office was acutely aware of the need to tread very carefully when dealing with them. For example, apprehension over antagonising the Associations prevented some much-needed reform of the way the Territorial Army was administered within the War Office itself. By early 1927 it had been realised that the work of the Territorial Directorate was still being impeded by the same flaws that had been identified, but left in abeyance, during the reconstitution. Spurred on by a desire to effect the closer integration of the Territorial and Regular Armies, both Jeudwine and Milne agreed that the anomalous position of the DGTA in particular had to be re-appraised. According to the regulations his role was purely advisory, and there was a real concern that decisions were being made by the Army Council without a full consideration of their effects on the TA. Yet the DGTA had no mechanism to bring Territorial issues to their attention. Instead he had to resort to personal lobbying, which Jeudwine considered to be both inefficient and professionally distasteful.²⁷⁹ Furthermore, under the existing system the Under-Secretary of State was dealing with military questions that, in Milne's opinion, were really the preserve of the General Staff, especially as he was already responsible for the training and efficiency of the TA through the DMT.²⁸⁰

It had always been suggested that raising the DGTA to the Army Council would obviate this, but within the War Office it was agreed that this would only accentuate the differences between the Regular and Territorial. Instead the preference was to replace the DGTA with a Deputy CIGS, who would be formally responsible for the training and organisation of the TA, whilst the Territorial Directorate was placed directly under the CIGS. This would allow representations on Territorial matters to be made direct to the Army's professional head, who, as the officer responsible for considering military policy and training, would ensure the TA remained fully integrated with the broader army. The Under-Secretary would then be retained in a supervisory role to coordinate with the County Associations and represent public opinion in Territorial matters.²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ TNA WO 32/11792 DGTA to U.S. of S., 17 Jan 1927.

²⁸⁰ Ibid. CIGS to S. of S., 21 Jan 1927.

²⁸¹ Ibid. CIGS to S. of S., 21 Jan 1927.

Milne believed such a reorganisation would lead to greater efficiency and less friction than currently was the case, whilst it made sense to introduce in peace the same administrative system that would have to be established on mobilisation. However, although the U.S. of S., Lord Onslow, broadly concurred with Milne and Jeudwine's argument, he hesitated from agreeing to any drastic change. In particular he warned against abolishing the DGTA, as he believed the TA and Associations looked to him as their chief, and a Deputy CIGS would never be regarded with equal confidence. Furthermore, the logical extension of a policy that integrated the TA with the Regular Army necessarily involved the abolition of the Associations, which given the climate of the time was an impossibility.²⁸² Furthermore, Creedy pointed out that the Associations and TA would not accept any measure that appeared to subordinate Territorial for Regular interests, and believed that the Army Councillor responsible for a citizen force should be a politician, not a Regular officer.²⁸³ As a result, although Worthington-Evans was keen to give the DGTA greater access to the CIGS and the other Council members, he held back from authorising Milne's proposals.²⁸⁴

Although blocked at this juncture, Jeudwine brought the issue up again shortly before his retirement. This time he proposed a gradual transfer of certain duties from the Territorial Directorate to the other War Office branches, at the same time re-modelling the DGTA as an 'Inspector-General' for the Territorial Army. He stressed that only through pursuing an integrationist policy could they enhance the popularity and prestige of the force, as it would give confidence to both Territorials and Associations that they were being regarded as a substantial and necessary part of the military system.²⁸⁵ Again, however, Worthington-Evans refused to implement any measures that risked riling the Associations, insisting that first they had to be left to recover from the financial shocks of the previous year.²⁸⁶ As a result, although Milne eventually managed to get formal confirmation that the DGTA was responsible to the CIGS on all matters affecting war organisation, fighting efficiency and

²⁸² Surrey History Centre, 5th Earl of Onslow MSS: 5337/7/(52), Memorandum by Onslow, 26 Jan 1927.

²⁸³ TNA WO 32/11792 Creedy to Worthington-Evans, 7 Feb 1927.

²⁸⁴ Ibid. CIGS to S. of S., 10 Feb 1927; Minute by Worthington-Evans, 30 Feb 1927.

²⁸⁵ TNA WO 32/11793 DGTA to U.S. of S., 18 Aug 1927; CIGS to S. of S., 28 Sept 1927. Jeudwine continued to advocate this reform outside the War Office. See H. Jeudwine, (1928) pp.319-320.

²⁸⁶ TNA WO 32/11793 Minute by Worthington-Evans, 14 Oct 1927.

training, and should only look to the Under-Secretary of State for direction on County Association business, he still viewed the DGTA as ‘essentially a fifth wheel in the coach.’²⁸⁷

* * *

‘Pledged’ Men: The Territorials’ Role in Imperial Defence

By the late 1920s it was generally accepted that little could be done to improve the Territorial Army as long as the relationship between the War Office and Associations remained poor. The only way real progress could be made was if the War Office took the Associations into its confidence and explained, candidly but precisely, exactly why the TA was needed.²⁸⁸ As one former DGTA explained:

Ideas as to the most probable future employment of the [Territorial] Army are, at all events within that Army, vague in the extreme. It results therefore that very conflicting ideas on many subjects find expression and that the decentralized responsibilities which fall to the lot of those charged with the administration of the Army are, with the best intentions, exercised sometimes blindly and not always wisely.²⁸⁹

From the Associations perspective, the failure to detail the circumstances in which the TA could be called upon, and exactly how it would be mobilised, was regarded as evidence that there was no real interest in the organisation. There was even doubt whether the oft-repeated pledge that the TA was the sole medium of expansion was really taken seriously by the military authorities.²⁹⁰

Yet by this time the TA was increasingly identified as an essential component in the Army’s expeditionary capabilities, although perhaps not for the purpose previously assumed. As the DGTA explained in January 1927:

The importance of the TA in a great war is generally admitted but the accepted situation is that the occurrence of a great war is at present too unlikely to need immediate consideration, and the tendency is therefore to regard the Territorial Army as of comparatively small immediate importance.

But what I think is not always fully realized is that our manifold imperial and foreign commitments may at any moment with little warning project us into a situation (e.g. in India or China) in which we shall be forced to supplement our small regular army with additional troops from the Territorial Army both for service overseas and for garrison duties at home. The strength of such additional troops cannot be accurately estimated but would probably not be less than the equivalent of some 6 to 8 divisions and might well be more.

²⁸⁷ TNA WO 32/11792 CIGS to S. of S., 10 Feb 1927.

²⁸⁸ Surrey History Centre, 5th Earl of Onslow MSS 5337/11/(25): Onslow to Worthington Evans, 15 July 1927.

²⁸⁹ H. Jeudwine, (1928) p.311.

²⁹⁰ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 8 March 1928, vol.214 cc.1313-1314.

If these conclusions are right it follows that the questions of military policy and military administration affecting the Territorial Army both in peace and war are of the highest immediate importance, and require the attention and supervision of military members of the Army Council.²⁹¹

On the other hand, it remained true that no real preparations for this had taken place, as the TA Expansion Committee had for all practical purposes been dissolved by 1925 when mobilisation planning for the TA had effectively ceased.²⁹² By mid 1927, however, there were already signs of a subtle shift in planning over how the TA could be used. In May Jeudwine quizzed Onslow on the future of the Expansion Committee, in light of the fact that ‘the employment of formations of the TA in a campaign of less importance than a national war is not now looked on as out of the question.’²⁹³ Milne confirmed this change of emphasis, conceding to Onslow that, since the Expansion Committee submitted its first report, ‘ideas of how the Territorial Army is most likely to be employed in the future have radically changed.’²⁹⁴

This radical change centred primarily on a rational re-assessment of what function the TA would most likely be required to perform. The 1920s witnessed growing concerns over the threat of Russian movements into Britain’s areas of interest in Persia, Afghanistan and China.²⁹⁵ Although it has been claimed that few measures were taken to militate against this, in fact defence policy during the mid 1920s largely centred on conducting a limited war against the USSR, most probably over the strategic buffer state of Afghanistan.²⁹⁶ Fully cognizant of the risk that such a clash could expand into a much larger commitment, the Army’s mobilisation plans remained focused on a war with Russia until the early 1930s.²⁹⁷

As a result of this strategic redirection, the General Staff under George Milne sought to prepare the expeditionary force as a general-purpose organisation, ready to deploy anywhere in the Empire.²⁹⁸

²⁹¹ TNA WO 32/11792 DGTA to U.S. of S., 17 Jan 1927.

²⁹² TNA WO 32/2667 TA.1 to AG.1, 27 July 1925.

²⁹³ TNA WO 32/2858 Jeudwine to Onslow, 11 May 1927.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. CIGS to U.S. of S., 26 May 1927.

²⁹⁵ A. Best, “‘We are virtually at war with Russia:’ Britain and the Cold War in East Asia, 1923-40,” *Cold War History*, Vol.12 No.2, (2012) pp.205-225; P.L. Weis, ‘British Strategic Policy towards Afghanistan, 1919-1939,’ (Dalhousie University, MA thesis, 2008) pp.70-90.

²⁹⁶ J.R. Ferris, (1989) p.155; TNA CAB 2/4 CID 210th Meeting, 25 Feb 1926; CID 25th Meeting, 22 July 1926.

²⁹⁷ G. Spillan, (1985), p.111.

²⁹⁸ TNA CAB 53/1 COS 30th Meeting, 27 May 1926; CAB 53/2 COS 73rd Meeting, 6 July 1928; CAB 2/5 CID 236th Meeting, 5th July 1928; also B. Bond, (1980) p.81.

However, its ability to conduct such a campaign depended largely upon the ready availability of manpower.²⁹⁹ As the Indian Army, even if it was reinforced by Regular troops from Britain, was never considered capable of containing the threat to Afghanistan on its own early planning relied heavily on the Territorial Army.³⁰⁰ For example, based on the Principal Supply Officers Committee's (PSOC) calculations, the TA was expected to provide no fewer than twenty divisions within twelve months of mobilisation.³⁰¹

This shows that any significant, enduring commitment of the expeditionary force depended heavily on the availability of the Territorial Army. Milne was already keen to integrate the Territorials far more intimately into broader military planning. Once the government decided in July 1927 that the Army should prepare mainly for an extra-European war, the CIGS began to argue that the existing expeditionary force structure was totally disconnected from the fourteen Territorial divisions, which he thought was both artificial and distinctly unhelpful to the Army's efforts. Instead Milne preferred the idea of a composite force, made of both Territorial and Regular formations. This would involve reinforcing the existing Regular divisions with a modern Mechanised Force and six TA infantry divisions, plus two Territorial cavalry brigades. Furthermore, he was keen for these Territorial formations to be formally regarded as definitely available after six months for any medium scale commitment, which was a goal fully endorsed by the Army Council.³⁰²

The loss of Imperial and Dominion formations for planning purposes only highlighted the importance of freeing up the TA for deployment, and Milne continued to press for a far broader mobilisation to match his ambitious plans for an intervention in defence of India.³⁰³ As a result he was persuaded to only reduce his planned force of thirty-nine divisions down to a deployed total of between twenty-six

²⁹⁹ B. Bond, (1980), pp.82-83.

³⁰⁰ TNA CAB 53/1 COS 6th Meeting, 17 Jan 1924; 'Memorandum by CIGS: Consideration of Strategical Problems,' 8 Jan 1924; WO 32/5943 'General Staff Review of Military Commitments,' 20 March 1923; CAB 57/2 'Report of the Manpower Sub-Committee,' June 1926; CAB 53/1 COS 36th Meeting, 27 July 1926.

³⁰¹ TNA CAB 53/12 PSO.99 'Memorandum regarding the Basis on which the Future Enquiries of the Principals Supply Officers Committee are to be based,' 17 March 1926 and 'Appendix A: Rate of Expansion of the Forces,' March 1926.

³⁰² TNA WO 163/33 Army Council Précis No.1303 'War Reserves,' 1927; Army Council 360th Meeting, 22 Nov 1927.

³⁰³ TNA CAB 53/2 COS 66th Meeting, 1 March 1928; CAB 4/17, CID Paper No.847 'The Present Distribution and Strength of the British Army in relation to its duties,' Nov 1927; CAB 53/12 COS Paper Nos.45 and 48 'Afghanistan'; See CAB 16/83 for the meetings of the Defence of India Sub-Committee and their First Report, 19 Dec 1927; B. Bond, (1980) pp.107-110; M. Howard, *The Continental Commitment*, (London, 1972) p.91.

and twenty-nine. This still represented at least a fifty per cent increase in the Army's peacetime strength, which of course was a level of expansion far beyond the capabilities of the Regular Army alone.³⁰⁴

In fact, to mobilise anything more than a token force Milne was entirely reliant on the Territorial Army. Its indispensability was clear from the deployment timetable the CIGS compiled for his fellow Chiefs of Staff. These showed that by the sixth month of war Territorial divisions would outnumber Regular divisions by five to three, and Territorials would also constitute all subsequent reinforcements and relief formations. In fact, of the five Regular Divisions in the BEF only three would actually deploy to Afghanistan; the other two would garrison Egypt and the Persian oil fields respectively. Equally, all of the TA's 'First Line,' i.e. the fourteen peacetime divisions, were expected to be ready to deploy within six and a half months of mobilisation, whereupon at least five would head direct to Afghanistan.³⁰⁵ Another six were to be held back in the UK as a general reserve and for home defence/resilience duties, while the remaining two 'First Line' divisions were earmarked as replacement formations for those overseas. Milne also intended the Territorial structure to throw off a 'Second Line' of at least four divisions after Z + six months, which were to be ready to deploy if needed by the end of the first year.³⁰⁶

Milne accepted that mobilisation on this scale was no easy prospect, especially as conscription could not be guaranteed.³⁰⁷ Nevertheless, he was adamant that the Territorial Army had to be ready to field between two and six fully equipped, all-volunteer divisions as quickly as possible. Of course, this was at odds with the previous assumption that the entire Territorial organisation would be embodied, mobilised and duplicated in swift succession for a general European war.

³⁰⁴ TNA CAB 53/2 56th Meeting, 31 May 1927; CAB 53/2 COS 66th Meeting, 1 March 1928.

³⁰⁵ The first Territorial formation available would reinforce Egypt.

³⁰⁶ TNA CAB 53/14 COS Paper No.148 'Appendix 'C': Rate of expansion of Infantry Divisional Formations in the first year of war with Russia,' 7 May 1928.

³⁰⁷ TNA CAB 53/16 COS Paper No.159 'The Basis on which Supply Preparations are to be Framed', 4 May 1928; CAB 53/2 COS 56th Meeting, 31 May 1927.

However, achieving this new capability would involve the introduction of several key reforms, as Milne explained to the CCTA in May 1928. In a deliberate effort to include the Associations in his vision for the Army, the CIGS explained that there was no immediate danger of a European war, and as such only broad plans had to be made for raising a national army. Conversely, however, the chances of the Army becoming involved in a small to medium scale campaign in an undeveloped country were high, and for this eventuality all details had to be worked out in advance. Milne conceded that they may have to call upon Territorials to provide perhaps four or six divisions to reinforce the Regulars overseas, in addition to other formations raised for garrison duties or for home defence. However, this may have to be achieved without a general embodiment of the Territorial Army and without the introduction of compulsory service. They also had to find a way of organising such a force in a fair way, so as to spread the burden of voluntary service throughout the organisation.

Milne assured the Associations that plans were being drawn up to work out how to utilise a limited number of TA divisions in the absence of general mobilisation, and also to formalise the wartime duties of the Associations.³⁰⁸ To realise this an appropriate group was duly constituted under the chairmanship of the DGTA, Lt.-Gen. Reginald Stephens, in March 1930.³⁰⁹ Submitting its findings in May 1931, the committee worked off the assumption that, for an extra-European war, eight TA divisions and one cavalry division had to be ready to proceed overseas after six months. They made a number of recommendations regarding recruitment, the supply of equipment and the delineation of wartime responsibilities, but the key issue for them centred on the availability of Territorial manpower, or rather the restrictions inherent in their conditions of service. As Milne noted on examining their report:

The “pledge” is the main problem to be dealt with at the outset.... I think it is not too much to say that the application of its conditions subsequent to mobilization, or even embodiment, would complicate administration to such an extent as would be almost disastrous. (The AG will doubtless confirm).³¹⁰

The so-called ‘pledge,’ as set out in the enlistment paperwork signed by every recruit, ensured that in the event of a war individual Territorials would only be asked to serve in their own units, and

³⁰⁸ TNA WO 32/2672 CIGS to DSD, 6 June 1928; DSD to DGTA, DMO & I and DRO, 12 June 1928.

³⁰⁹ Ibid. DGTA to CIGS, 3 March 1930. The ‘Stephens Committee’ also consisted of the DSD, DRO and the DF(b).

³¹⁰ TNA WO 32/2673 CIGS to PUS, 4 August 1931.

therefore could not be transferred from one corps to another (or to any Regular unit even if it was in the same corps) without his consent.³¹¹ Unsurprisingly its existence seriously curtailed the Army's freedom of movement in allocating Territorial troops to best effect in wartime. As was pointed out at the time:

It is scarcely necessary to expand that description of what is likely to be the state in war of an Army which is divided rigidly into a large number of small compartments, each of which claims to retain the personnel with which it first started. It requires little imagination to call to mind the accidents of war, and the needs which must arise for employing personnel to better advantage in other compartments. Apart from this, an attempt to work a system based on the Pledge for the pre-war Territorial Army and General Service for everyone else is very unlikely to be successful.³¹²

The continued existence of the 'pledge' had already been identified as a major impediment to efficient mobilisation, but Milne felt he had to honour it for serving Territorials, even though he warned the CCTA that once war was declared, 'there will be only one Army. I wish to make this point clear. There is no distinction between the soldier who serves all the year round and the Territorial soldier.'³¹³

Nevertheless, as long as the 'pledge' was legally in operation there was no way in which Territorial and Regular personnel could be effectively integrated, unless the Territorial volunteered to relinquish his vested rights.³¹⁴ Recognising this, the Stephens Committee had recommended cancelling the 'pledge' for all new enlistments with immediate effect, and also suggested that each new recruit would have to acknowledge that he would be liable for general service in the event of war. Milne and the AG, Gen. Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd, agreed that the 'pledge' should be withdrawn after a set date, although he realised that, as this would not be retrospective, they would still be left with personnel exempt from transfer. This would effectively divide the TA into two 'fluid' and 'non-fluid' categories as regards postings, which would be impossible to administer.³¹⁵

Determined to remove the anomaly of the 'pledge,' the War Office began to informally approach the leading Territorial representatives to sound out their opinion. After receiving a favourable response

³¹¹ Army Form E.501A (Notice paper to recruits), para.9 and Army Form E.501B.

³¹² TNA WO 32/2678 'Note on "Pledge" for Meeting of T.A.A. Secretaries, 7 July 1932,' compiled by the DGTA and DF(b), July 1932.

³¹³ TNA WO 163/33 357th Meeting of the Army Council, 8 April 1927; WO 32/2672 'Address by the CIGS to the Central Council, Territorial Army Association, May 23rd 1928.'

³¹⁴ TNA WO 32/2678 Memorandum by DRO, 'Disadvantages of Existing Pledge,' n.d. but c.July 1932.

³¹⁵ Ibid.; AG to PUS, 22 Sept 1931.

from the chairman and vice-chairman of the CCTA, and encouraged by reports that most Territorials were actually unaware of their 'pledged' status, the War Office put forward its intention (via the intercession of Lord Derby) to abolish the 'pledge' to the Associations in May 1932.³¹⁶

As Dennis has described in detail, this did not receive the unanimous support the War Office hoped for.³¹⁷ Although most Associations broadly endorsed the military arguments behind its removal, there was a wide divergence of opinion as to what the actual effects of abolishing the 'pledge' would be. The proposal to withdraw it from new recruits was relatively uncontroversial, although there were fears on the possible impact on recruiting. There was, however, stronger opposition to its extension to re-engagements, and any attempt to impose it on serving Territorials was viewed as a breach of faith, with obvious repercussions on retention. Furthermore, and despite specific reassurances, there was a still unease that the abolition of the 'pledge' would leave Territorials liable to be utilised as drafts for Regular formations. Already frustrated over the further cuts and the cancellation of the 1932 camps (made necessary due to the ongoing financial crisis), Associations were in no mood to countenance any interference in the Territorials' vested rights.

Faced with this atmosphere of mistrust and hostility, it became clear that the War Office first had to resolve exactly what had to be achieved, and then decide how far they could force reform onto the Territorials.³¹⁸ Although a total withdrawal of the 'pledge' from all serving Territorials would be the ideal, this option was deemed impracticable from the start. The intention was instead to keep the 'pledge' for serving Territorials and those re-engaging, but to warn new enlistments that they would, on the outbreak of war, be made liable for general service. If that option was strongly opposed it was suggested they propose a weaker version of the 'pledge,' which would broaden its definition to allow newly enlisted Territorials to at least be transferred within units of the same regiment or corps,

³¹⁶ Ibid. 'Notes on Meeting between the Earl of Derby and Sir William Bromley-Davenport and the US of S, DGTA and DF(b) on 27 Jan 1932'; 'Lord Derby's Brief,' note by DF(b), 12 April 1932.

³¹⁷ P. Dennis, (1987) pp.134-145.

³¹⁸ TNA WO 32/2678 DF(b) to U.S. of S., 20 Oct 1932.

including Regular units.³¹⁹ Of course none of these options gave the General Staff complete power to integrate Territorial manpower with the rest of the Army. However, it was accepted that a compromise would be better than accepting the continuation of the 'pledge' in its existing form.

Eventually the War Office decided to allow serving Territorials to re-engage on their original terms of service, but they would insist on withdrawing the 'pledge' from new enlistments, although the onus would be on Associations to propose lesser alternatives.³²⁰ Meeting with their representatives in February 1933, the AG, Montgomery-Massingberd, pointed out that the TA had a vital role in Britain's mobilisation plans but the existence of the 'pledge' seriously hindered it from fulfilling this function. Furthermore, the practical exigencies of war meant that honouring it would be all but impossible, and he therefore asked 'whether it is wise, or even honest, to retain the 'pledge' and restrictions which together prevent the Territorial Army from fulfilling its role as our sole basis of expansion in war.'³²¹

He therefore formally asked the Associations to withdraw the 'pledge' from all enlistments on or after 1 April 1934, and inform all subsequent recruits that they would be liable for general service on the outbreak of war. With the exception of a few die-hard opponents, most Associations accepted the AG's argument, and some even proposed a complete and universal abolition to ensure all Territorials served under the same terms.³²² However, the War Office opted not to risk any further opprobrium, as natural wastage would eventually remove all 'pledged' men as they left the TA. As a result the 'pledge' was formally withdrawn from new volunteers on 1 November 1933 – a date chosen as a concession so that it could be implemented after that year's annual training.

Dennis has concluded that the eventual abolition of the 'pledge' indicated that 'at least serious thought was being given to the role that the Territorials might realistically be called upon to play,' and that

³¹⁹ Ibid. U.S. of S to AG, DF(b) and DGTA, 14 July 1932. It was also proposed that they withdraw the 'pledge' from any man enlisting within three months of embodiment, which would leave the peace establishment 'pledged' but kept the expected rush of volunteers during an emergency free from restrictions.

³²⁰ Ibid. Minute by U.S. of S., 20 Oct 1932.

³²¹ Ibid. 'Statement by the Adjutant-General to the Forces,' 15 Feb 1933.

³²² P. Dennis, (1987) p.145.

this point ‘marked the coming of age of the Territorial Army and the real beginning of its gradual recognition as a serious military force.’³²³ It is undoubtedly true that on the whole the War Office was pleased with the end result. As the Under-Secretary of State, Earl Stanhope, wrote to his departmental head, ‘I hope you will think that this is a very satisfactory outcome of a difficult situation. It could quite easily have gone wrong on more than one occasion.’³²⁴ Although still only partial, it was a marked improvement on the pre-existing situation and did remove one of the key manpower restrictions that had seriously constrained the use of Territorial manpower since the reconstitution.

However, in practical terms the decision achieved very little, as a form of the ‘pledge’ actually remained in place. After finally getting round to announcing its withdrawal from new enlistments from 1 May 1934, the War Office erroneously informed an Association not represented at the CCTA that Territorials would only proceed overseas in their own units. After giving this assurance to one Association it had to extend it to all, rather than submit to another round of negotiations, which effectively meant that a final decision over the issue of the ‘pledge’ was held in abeyance.³²⁵

Evaluation

Faced without the likely prospect of another great war, but with a very real chance of having to fight a campaign somewhere in the Empire, during the late 1920s and early 1930s the War Office sought to remodel the Territorial Army into a flexible reserve capable of undertaking more than one task. This dual role would allow it to function both as a framework of national expansion, through its re-organisation into cadres, whilst also leaving it available to reinforce the expeditionary force, either *in toto* or through a limited number of voluntary, composite formations. As a result the General Staff hoped to integrate the TA as far as possible within the broader requirements of military policy and the organisation of the Regular Army. As one DGTA, Hugh Jeudwine, put it:

It is absurd to continue complacently alluding to the Territorial Army as our “Second Line.” ... [Rather] the Territorial Army is a component of our First Line Army, temporarily relegated to cold storage.³²⁶

³²³ Ibid p.146.

³²⁴ TNA WO 32/2678 U.S. of S., to S. of S., 22 June 1933.

³²⁵ I.F.W. Beckett, (2011) p.253.

³²⁶ H. Jeudwine, (1928) p.320.

Achieving this aim was no easy task. Yet, even though he was required to effect considerable cuts on defence expenditure, the CIGS nevertheless remained committed to reforming the TA as a capable, flexible reserve. This involved prioritising the Territorial Army's efficiency over its size, and ensuring that its terms of service did not overly restrict the employment of its personnel. As a result the War Office sought to protect the Territorials' training efficiency above all else, streamline the way the TA was administered within the Army Council, and remove the 'pledge' on unit integrity, the existence of which had stymied mobilisation planning since the reconstitution.

However, these intentions assumed that the War Office had full control of the direction of Territorial policy, which the dispute over the bounty, and then the 'pledge,' proved was not the case. Largely this was due to the fact that the Associations were trying to assume powers outside of their administrative remit, but it also illustrates the delicate balance that had to be made when dealing with a volunteer, part-time and largely civilian army.

Nevertheless, by the early 1930s the War Office had managed to obtain general acceptance for the Territorial Army's dual role. However, this was only in principle, and the TA's actual ability to mobilise effectively for a limited expedition remains largely speculative. Undoubtedly a great deal more needed to be done before Milne's vision was realised, especially regarding how a composite Territorial contingent could be organised, the finalisation of the abolition of the 'pledge,' and what recruiting assumptions could be made in the absence of conscription. As a result these aspects and others formed a main subject for discussion over the ensuing years. However, during this period another shift in strategic priorities, this time away from the Empire and increasingly back towards the Continent, began to alter many of the Army's planning assumptions. In response to these new priorities the Territorial Army's role would soon come under review once again.

Chapter Four.

A Failure of Policy: The Role of the Territorial Army in Rearmament, 1934-1937.

Introduction

From 1933 onwards the unpredictable and deteriorating condition of the international system forced Britain into re-assessing the soundness of its foreign and defence policies.³²⁷ Japan's expansionist policies were seen as a growing threat to Britain's position in the Far East, while Nazi Germany's withdrawal from both the disarmament talks and the League of Nations, coupled with Hitler's clear intention to rearm, were a cause of increasing concern in Whitehall.³²⁸ Previous assumptions, such as the 'ten year rule,' were no longer deemed appropriate, and thereafter some measure of rearmament became inevitable.

The direction in which rearmament would take was, however, still undecided. While the RAF was focused on the German threat and the Navy acted as the main deterrent against Japan, the Army had to maintain a balance. Regardless of whether Britain prioritised imperial defence or a 'continental commitment' during this period, it was clear the Army had to be prepared for both functions.³²⁹ Nonetheless, the continuing deterioration in European security, in addition to the extant threats to the Empire, meant that the War Office had to once again seriously consider the Army's readiness to mobilise against a modern enemy.

³²⁷ TNA CAB 53/23 COS.306 'Imperial Defence Policy, 24 April 1933, enc. Colonial Office, India Office, Home Office, CID and Joint Overseas and Home Defence Committee memoranda; COS.307 'Imperial Defence Policy,' 20 May 1933; CAB 4/22 CID 1113-B 'COS Annual Review (1933),' 12 Oct 1933.

³²⁸ I. Nish, *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism: Japan, China and the League of Nations, 1931-1933*, (London, 1993) pp.201-217; C. Kitching, *Britain and the Problem of International Disarmament, 1919-1934*, (London, 1999) pp. 146-153, 153-164, 163-171; N.M. Ripsman and J.S. Levy, 'British Grand Strategy and the Rise of Germany, 1933-1936,' in J. Taliaferro, N.M. Ripsman and S. Lobell, *The Challenge of Grand Strategy: The Great Powers and the Broken Balance between the World Wars*, (Cambridge, 2012) pp.176-192.

³²⁹ For the 'Imperialist' school, see M. Howard, *The Continental Commitment*, (London, 1972); N.H. Gibbs, *Grand Strategy*, Vol.1: *Rearmament Policy* (London, 1976) p.xii; B. Bond, *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars*, (Oxford, 1980); G. Kennedy, *Anglo-American Strategic Relations and the Far East: Imperial crossroads, 1933-1939* (London, 2002); K.E. Neilson, 'The Defence Requirements Sub-Committee, British Strategic Foreign Policy, Neville Chamberlain and the Path to Appeasement,' *English Historical Review*, Vol.118 No.477 (June, 2003) pp.651-684; D. French, (2000); For the 'Continentalist' school, see G.C. Peden, 'The Burden of Imperial Defence and the Continental Commitment Reconsidered,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol.27 No.2 (June, 1984) pp.405-423; B.J.C. McKercher, 'Deterrence and the European Balance of Power: The Field Force and British Grand Strategy, 1934-1938,' *English Historical Review*, Vol.124 No.500 (Feb, 2006) pp.98-131; B.J.C. McKercher, 'National Security and Imperial Defence: British Grand Strategy and Appeasement, 1930-1939,' *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol.19 No.3 (2008) pp.391-442.

It was well known at this stage that the Army was demonstrably incapable of intervening in a continental war. Those involved in planning for a potential war fully understood that the ability to mobilise and deploy a sizeable force onto the continent largely depended on the Territorial Army. As a result, the rearmament debate, at least as far as it pertained to the War Office, centred predominately on to what extent and how quickly the TA needed to be made ready, and the exact nature of the role it was intended to fulfil. This is a fact the existing literature does not adequately convey.

In order to address this deficiency this chapter will be divided into two parts. The first will deal with the position of the TA in broader military policy, from the point in which the initial deficiency programmes were initiated in 1934 until a ‘limited liability’ policy began to gain the ascendancy in 1937. During this time the War Office remained committed to re-establishing the expeditionary force for the defence of the Low Countries, and acknowledged the primary role of the TA in supporting this forward strategy. As such this part will focus on the War Office’s endeavours to obtain definite authorisation for a Territorial continental role. However, despite receiving broad support from the CID and the Chiefs of Staff, the Government proved reluctant to fully endorse this plan. Importantly, it was not the re-conditioning of the expeditionary Field Force *per se* that was the point of contention. Rather it was the prospects of preparing and mobilising the Territorial Army that lay at the centre of the ensuing ‘continental commitment’ versus ‘limited liability’ controversy.

The War Office did not wait, however, for formal authorisation before it began to review the Territorial Army’s capabilities. Running parallel with the discussions in the CID and Cabinet was a serious effort to identify the main impediments to a Territorial mobilisation and find ways to increase its readiness and efficiency. The second part of the chapter will thus concentrate on these efforts by looking at the programme of organisational reform introduced up to 1937. Focusing on efforts to increase readiness by expanding the TA’s cadre base and augmenting its manpower levels, these reforms also included a controversial decision to prioritise some units at the expense of others, effectively creating a two-tier organisation. However, it also became apparent that the direction and priority of these reforms was largely dependent on the individual influence of the incumbent CIGS.

The disagreement between Montgomery-Massingberd and Devereil can therefore be used to illustrate a broader problem, insofar as a comprehensive decision on the role and organisation of the TA was still unforthcoming.

The Territorials' Role in the Formulation of Strategic Policy

The establishment of the Defence Requirements Committee (DRC) has rightly been identified as a defining moment in interwar defence planning. Its details have been covered elsewhere, but it remains important to emphasise certain key points from its discussions, specifically how the role of the Territorial Army was conceptualised, where it fitted within wider military policy, and how it related to the development of a reconditioned expeditionary force.³³⁰ Meeting over the winter of 1933/34, the DRC quickly set about examining the relative dangers posed by Japan and Germany, with the aim of formulating recommendations to remedy the 'worst deficiencies' in the services.³³¹ Within these discussions several important conclusions were arrived at, but the most important involved classifying the nature of the threats, particularly between Europe and the Far East. Although in early 1934 Germany was not yet to challenge the European balance or openly rearm, the DRC saw German military expansion as inevitable. Hitler's withdrawal from the League of Nations and Disarmament Conference indicated the direction of his policies, and led to Germany being accepted as the 'ultimate potential enemy,' against which long term planning should be directed.³³² In the DRC's view the Japanese menace was real, but only threatened the periphery of the Empire, whereas a revanchist Germany threatened its very centre.³³³

Britain understood that if Germany sought to challenge the Versailles equilibrium she would have to face France, and as the traditional invasion routes to Paris went through Belgium and Holland these countries were similarly threatened. Yet the inviolability of the Low Countries was also central to

³³⁰ A thorough historiographical overview of the scholarship regarding the DRC is provided in B.J.C. McKercher, (2006) p.105 n.21.

³³¹ Formed as a sub-committee of the CID, the DRC consisted of the individual Chiefs of Staff (Admiral Sir Ernle Chatfield, General Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd and Air Chief-Marshal Sir Edward Ellington), Sir Robert Vansittart for the Foreign Office, Sir Warren Fisher for the Treasury, and the Cabinet and CID Secretary, Sir Maurice Hankey.

³³² B.J.C. McKercher, (2008) p.109, 112; B. Bond (ed.) *Chief of Staff*, (1972) p.26.

³³³ B.J.C McKercher, (2008a) p.410; C. Layne, 'Security Studies and the Use of History: Neville Chamberlain's Grand Strategy Revisited,' *Security Studies*, Vol.17 No.3 (2008) p.405; TNA CAB 16/110 Minutes of DC(M) Meeting, 25 June 1934.

British defence thinking and, as the Chiefs of Staff agreed, the only way of securing this area and denying it to an enemy lay in the commitment of ground troops.³³⁴

Traditionally the defence of the Low Countries had been viewed as a means to secure the maritime security of the Channel. However, as aerial bombing capabilities developed throughout the interwar period Holland and Belgium were increasingly viewed as a valuable buffer zone, adding depth to Britain's air defences and reducing the potential frequency and intensity of air attacks whilst simultaneously allowing British aircraft to undertake its own counter-offensive.³³⁵ Additionally there were clear political arguments to intervene, as an expeditionary force would act both to deter an enemy and bolster a potential ally:

Assistance on sea and in the air will always appear to Continental peoples threatened by land attack to be by indirect assistance. Refusal on our part to provide assistance would be interpreted as equivalent to abandoning them to their fate.³³⁶

The ability to despatch in good time even a small contingent would, therefore, 'exercise an influence for peace,' and 'have an incalculable moral effect' out of all proportion to its size.³³⁷

Britain, the DRC thus argued, had clear strategic reasons to deploy an expeditionary force if war threatened the integrity of Western Europe, notwithstanding existing commitments to Locarno and the European balance of power. It was also hard to argue against the fact that Britain's expeditionary capability had been allowed to atrophy too far, as in 1933 the Army could only provide a 'token force' of one or two divisions, with it taking up to ten years to complete even the existing limited mobilisation arrangements.³³⁸ The committee therefore recommended re-establishing a Regular Expeditionary Force capable of deploying within one month of the outbreak of hostilities one cavalry divisions, plus four infantry divisions, two air defence brigades and one tank brigade. The initial importance afforded to this role can be seen in the spending recommendations issued by the DRC,

³³⁴ TNA CAB 53/23 COS.310 Imperial Defence Policy: Annual Review 1933, 12 Oct 1933.

³³⁵ J.P. Harris, 'The General Staff and the Coming of War 1933-39,' in D. French and B. Holden Reid, (eds.) *The British General Staff: Reform and Innovation, 1890-1939*, (London, 2003) pp.179-180; TNA CAB 16/109 DRC.14 Defence Requirements Committee (DRC) First Report, 28 Feb 1934.

³³⁶ TNA CAB 16/110 CP.205(34) 'Report on Ministerial Committee on Defence Requirements,' 31 July 1934: Appendix 3 'The position of the Low Countries.'

³³⁷ Ibid; TNA CAB 16/109 DRC First Report, 28 Feb 1934.

³³⁸ TNA CAB 53/4 COS 111th Meeting, 20 June 1933.

where a considerable share of the total was earmarked for the Army, with the majority of this directed towards reconditioning the expeditionary Field Force.³³⁹

However, only a relatively small increase (£250,000 per annum) was to be allocated to the Territorial Army. Historians have noted how Fisher and Vansittart pushed Montgomery-Massingberd to demand three times this amount, a suggestion from which the CIGS had apparently ‘demurred.’³⁴⁰ Instead, according to Peden, the War Office ‘held its peace’ and delayed proposing any plans for the TA for another year and a half.³⁴¹ Both interpretations thus strongly imply that the requirements for the TA were more or less ignored, following Howard’s pointed statement that in 1934 there was ‘no suggestion that a force even larger than five regular and fourteen Territorial Divisions might one day be needed, and that preliminary preparations should be undertaken to create one. Never again.’³⁴²

This is too simplistic a view. Firstly, the context and timing has to be taken into account. The DRC’s mandate was to identify and recommend initial deficiency priorities for all three services, and Montgomery-Massingberd knew the situation was not so grave as to demand what amounted to a substantial expansion of the Army. Germany at that point had not rearmed and even the War Office did not seek to claim the threat was imminent.³⁴³ In late 1933 the CIGS believed they probably had five years before Germany could be considered a practical threat, and during this time France and her eastern allies held an overwhelming military superiority in Europe.³⁴⁴ Modernising the Field Force in itself was an expensive and protracted undertaking, and he was surely correct in realising that the cost to do the same for the TA would be ‘enormous’ and would represent a considerable expansion of the

³³⁹ B.J.C. McKercher, (2008) pp.112-113; G. Peden, (1979) p.68, 122; B. Bond, (1980) p.197; TNA CAB 16/109 DRC First Report: ‘Summary of the Expenditure to make good the Deficiencies over a Five-Year Programme,’ 28 Feb 1934. Of the £71, 323,580 to be spent by 1939, £39,990,980 was allocated to the army, of which £25,680,000 was earmarked for the Field Force.

³⁴⁰ B. Bond, (1980) p.197.

³⁴¹ G. Peden, (1979) p.121.

³⁴² M. Howard, (1972) p.106.

³⁴³ TNA CAB 24/245 ‘Summary of the Present State of German Preparation for Military Re-armament,’ 25 Nov 1933; N.M Ripsman and J.S. Levy, (2012) p.182; G. Peden, (1979) p.69.

³⁴⁴ TNA CAB 16/109 DRC 3rd Meeting, 4 Dec 1933; M. Alexander and W. Philpott, ‘The entente cordiale and the next war: Anglo-French views on future military cooperation, 1928-1939,’ *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol.13 No.1 (1998) p.64.

committee's remit at that time.³⁴⁵ Lt.-Col. Pownall, then acting as an assistant secretary to the DRC, noted that a five year programme to ready the Regulars and 'to do the Territorials properly too,' would require some £145 million, which was an 'impossible figure, and dangerous too, for if it was presented ministers might well declare that the Army was too expensive and turn to the RAF who claim to get as good, or better, results at much less cost.'³⁴⁶

With this in mind it was hardly surprising that the amounts asked for were tempered by what the War Office and Chiefs of Staff thought they could feasibly extract from the Treasury.³⁴⁷ As a result, the imperative to proceed gradually with defence expenditure on an ascending scale resulted in the relatively small provision of £250,000 per annum for the TA, spent 'partly on material and partly on cadres,' in order to tackle the more pressing deficiencies in its training.³⁴⁸

This in no way should be taken to imply that the Territorials were judged to be of little importance. One has to recall that the Chiefs of Staff always considered that 'limited participation' in a European war was neither feasible nor desirable, in either a military or political sense, and a policy that committed only a small proportion of the country's military resources to the continent was 'fraught with the greatest danger.'³⁴⁹ This became apparent when, even as the debate in the DRC was taking place, Montgomery-Massingberd set out planning a much broader mobilisation scheme that relied heavily on the Territorial Army. In February 1934 he circulated a memorandum to the Army Council containing new proposals, known as the Western Plan, to enable the Field Force to deploy onto the continent swiftly and in strength. Although the spearhead was an all-Regular force, all three remaining Contingents consisted solely of Territorial formations, scaled to fight a modern war and

³⁴⁵ TNA CAB 16/109 DRC First Report: Appendix 2. Equipment and ammunition for the expeditionary force, at £5,136,000, would absorb the lion share of the annual capital charges on Army Estimates, proposed at some £7,132,000; TNA WO 32/3486 'Financial Note on CIG's Minute of 7 Feb 1934'; CAB 16/109 DRC Minutes, 23 Jan 1934; B. Bond (ed.) *Chief of Staff*, (1972): Entry for 11 Jan 1934, p.33; TNA WO 32/3486 MGO to CIGS, 13 Feb 1934; CAB 16/109 DRC.7 'Statement by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff,' 9 Jan 1934. Hankey agreed that sizeable expenditure on the TA amounted to more than remedying a deficiency and Montgomery-Massingberd reminded the committee they had to stick to their terms of reference in their recommendations. See TNA CAB 16/109 DRC 8th Meeting, 20 Jan 1934 and 10th Meeting, 16 Feb 1934.

³⁴⁶ B. Bond (ed.) *Chief of Staff*, (1972): Entry for 18 Dec 1933 p.29.

³⁴⁷ B. Bond, (1980) p.197; TNA WO 32/3486 PUS to CIGS, 19 Feb 1934; Minute by Hailsham, 23 Feb 1934.

³⁴⁸ TNA CAB 16/109 DRC First Report, 28 Feb 1934; DRC 4th Meeting, 18 Jan 1934.

³⁴⁹ TNA CAB 53/23 COS.310 Imperial Defence Policy: Annual Review 1933, 12 Oct 1933.

with the first fit to deploy within four months.³⁵⁰ Possessing an effective mechanism to build-up the Field Force was seen as vitally important, and the CIGS remained unequivocal in declaring that ‘the development of the Field Force must ... rest with the Territorial Army.’³⁵¹

In fact, rather than quietly ‘demurring,’ Montgomery-Massingberd consistently emphasised the TA’s importance during the DRC meetings, pointing out after Chatfield quizzed him over resurrecting Kitchener’s ‘New Army’ scheme that the Army relied entirely on the TA for its reinforcement and expansion.³⁵² He conceded to Fisher’s accusation that Territorials were being ‘rather stinted in money,’ and confessed that higher expenditure would have to be forthcoming soon, but he also pointed out repeatedly that the TA’s present organisation was utterly unsuited to the demands now being made on it, and therefore ‘it was no good pouring money on them until the position had been fully reviewed.’³⁵³ This reflected the views expressed in the contemporaneous War Office discussions over the TA’s lack of organisational preparedness. From the records it is clear that both Fisher and Vansittart saw expenditure on the Territorials largely in terms of publicity, as a measure to educate the nation in the necessity of an increased financial outlay, whilst the CIGS knew that the TA was limited by more pressing organisational deficiencies which could not be remedied by simply spending large sums of money.³⁵⁴

Even if the initial financial investment was limited, the CIGS still managed to get the latent importance of the TA fully recognised in the published DRC Report. Within this the committee pointed out that remedying the deficiencies in the Regular Field Force was only ‘an essential first step,’ and warned the Cabinet with the caveat that ‘it will be necessary, if the German menace becomes aggravated, to take further measures for the modernisation of the Territorial Army.’ Therefore, whilst the reconditioning of the TA constituted a ‘second and later stage in the improvements of our military forces,’ the committee reiterated that the TA was the sole reserve on

³⁵⁰ Although these formations were to be ‘stiffened’ by troops from the remaining Regular 5th Division, the latter would be organised within the TA structure.

³⁵¹ TNA WO 32/3486 ‘Revision of Field Force to Improve Preparedness,’ Note by CIGS, 7 Feb 1934.

³⁵² TNA CAB 16/109 DRC 6th Meeting, 23 Jan 1934.

³⁵³ Ibid. DRC 12th Meeting, 26 Feb 1934.

³⁵⁴ TNA CAB 16/109 DRC 6th Meeting, 23 Jan 1934; DRC 12th Meeting, 26 Feb 1934.

which to augment and expand the Expeditionary Force, that the small amount allocated was no indication of its long-term importance, and that 'a large expenditure' would no doubt likely be needed in the near future.³⁵⁵

However, in the event the Cabinet, via the debate engendered in the ministerial disarmament committee DC(M), reordered these priorities and trimmed the Army's share considerably to the advantage of the RAF and Navy. As a result the War Office received some £20 million, of which £12 million went to the expeditionary force, whilst the share allocated to the TA was proportionately reduced to only £50,000 per annum.³⁵⁶ The precedence given to encouraging the fragile economy, allied to electoral considerations and intelligence reports on growing German air rearmament, led to air defence measures being prioritised and, guided by the influential Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville Chamberlain, the DC(M) thus reshaped the committee's recommendations in favour of Britain's air deterrent force.³⁵⁷

As has been identified, Chamberlain never advocated a policy of 'no liability' to the Continent and he accepted that a small expeditionary force, and keeping Germany out of the Low Countries, was 'essential to our security.'³⁵⁸ However, his conception of grand strategy was predisposed on a 'double policy' of deterrence and diplomacy, with deterrence relying on the combined threat of RAF bombing, the Navy's power of blockade, and Britain's economic and financial stamina (its so-called 'fourth arm of defence,') to fight a long war.³⁵⁹ As a result the Army lost out mainly to the Air Force, which in Chamberlain's view offered a more convincing restraint to German aggression whilst also being considerably less expensive.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁵ Ibid. DRC First Report, 28 Feb 1934.

³⁵⁶ G. Peden, (1979) pp.68-71; R.P Shay, *British Rearmament in the Thirties: Politics and Profits*, (Princeton, NJ, 1977) pp.34-47; G. Post, *Dilemmas of Appeasement: British Deterrence and Defense, 1934-1937*, (Ithaca, 1993) pp.35-40; TNA CAB 16/110 DC(M) Meeting of 17 July 1934 and 24 July 1934.

³⁵⁷ B.J.C. McKercher, 'From Disarmament to Rearmament, British Civil-Military Relations and Policy Making, 1933-34,' *Defence Studies*, Vol.1 No.1 (2001) p.38; Gibbs, *Grand Strategy Vol.1*, pp.114-117; G. Peden, (1979) p.90; TNA CAB 53/29 'The Role of the British Army: memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer,' paras.7-12.

³⁵⁸ W. Philpott and M. Alexander, 'The French and the British Field Force: Moral Support or Material Contribution?' *Journal of Military History*, Vol.71 No.3 (July, 2007) p.748; TNA CAB 16/111 Minutes of DC(M) Meeting, 25 June 1934; CAB 16/110 DC(M) Minutes of DC(M) Meeting, 3 May 1934; CAB 16/111 DC(M) 'Note on the Report of the Defence Requirements Committee.'

³⁵⁹ C. Layne, (2008) p.408; TNA CAB 16/110 DC(M) Meetings, 15 May and 26 June 1934; B. Bond, (1980) p.206.

³⁶⁰ B.J.C. McKercher, (2008) p.415.

Although most scholars have followed the example of what Layne has called the ‘Churchillian narrative’ on appeasement, and consider the Chancellor’s approach as strategically naive and fundamentally flawed,³⁶¹ not all historians have universally condemned Chamberlain’s view of strategic policy.³⁶² However, the reallocation of funds to air deterrence/defence certainly acted as a brake on the General Staff’s plans, and has led McKercher to conclude that the TA was left as ‘the big loser’ in the revised DRC plans.³⁶³ Admittedly, the cut from £250,000 to £50,000 per annum was considerable, and this was money much needed to meet Territorial deficiencies. As an attached schedule of expenditure remarked, ‘these sums will not, of course, provide more than a fraction of the equipment required for the TA Contingents of the Field Force.’³⁶⁴

However, the provision of equipment was just one part of the General Staff’s preparations, and they by no means failed to actively consider other aspects. The principle of a military commitment to the continent via the Field Force was retained, and such a policy inevitably involved the Territorials.³⁶⁵ The Chiefs of Staff, achieving a strong measure of cross-service and political consensus, continued to push for expedited preparations for the Field Force and a firm policy for the Army.³⁶⁶ In light of Germany’s increasing rate of rearmament and the impending collapse of the Stresa front over Abyssinia, the DRC issued a second, or interim, report, stressing that without additional expenditure the Field Force would be unable to fulfil its responsibilities. This was ‘even more true of the Territorial Army, for which a less than meagre pittance has been provided.’³⁶⁷ Four months later they

³⁶¹ B. Bond, (1980); M. Howard, (1972); P. Dennis, *Decision by Default: Peacetime Conscription and British Defence, 1919-1939*, (London, 1972); E. Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars*, (Princeton, 1997); B. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain and Germany between the World Wars*, (Ithaca, 1984); B.J.C. McKercher, (2008) pp.98-131.

³⁶² J. Charmley, *Chamberlain and the Lost Peace*, (London, 1989); D.C. Watt, *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War*, (New York, 1989); D. Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain*, (London, 2001); D. Dilks, ‘“We Must Hope for the Best and Prepare for the Worst.” The Prime Minister, the Cabinet and Hitler’s Germany, 1937-1939,’ *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol.58 (1987) pp.309-352; P. Kennedy, ‘The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy, 1865-1939,’ in P. Kennedy (ed.), *Strategy and Diplomacy: Eight Studies*, (London, 1983); R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War*, (Basingstoke, 1993); F. McDonough, *Neville Chamberlain, Appeasement and the British Road to War*, (Manchester, 1991); P. Bell, *Chamberlain, Germany and Japan, 1933-1934*, (London, 1996); C. Layne, (2008) pp.397-437.

³⁶³ B.J.C. McKercher, (2008a) p.416.

³⁶⁴ CAB 4/23 CID CP.205(34) Report by the Ministerial Committee on Defence Requirements, 32 July 1934.

³⁶⁵ TNA CAB 24/250 CP.205(34) DRC Report, 31 July 1934: ‘Home Defence: Europe’; B. Bond, (1980) pp.208-209, 215; B.J.C. McKercher, (2001), p.42; B.J.C. McKecher (2006), p.120.

³⁶⁶ TNA CAB 53/24 COS.372 Chiefs of Staff Annual Review, 29 Apr 1935.

³⁶⁷ TNA CAB 4/24 DRC.25 DRC Interim Report, 24 July 1935.

issued another, much broader paper that now called directly for a considerable expansion in the rearmament programme for the TA.³⁶⁸

The Territorial Army became a central pillar of this Third Report as a reflection of its ongoing importance in plans to deploy and develop the Field Force. By September 1935 the CIGS had crystallised his vision for the future British Army and the war it may be asked to fight, and the TA played a central role in his proposals.³⁶⁹ Historians, particularly J.P. Harris, have acknowledged Montgomery-Massingberd's assessment as an important and far-sighted examination, and it was indeed prescient in many areas.³⁷⁰ The CIGS, in agreement with French thinking, envisaged that any war with Germany would commence with a two to three week period of mobile operations, undertaken principally by mechanised forces and aircraft, aimed at achieving a quick victory, and at this point the mechanised First Contingent may have a decisive influence on the battle. However, if, as was quite probable, an early decision was not reached then the operations would grind to a halt quicker than in 1914, leading to a static phase necessitating the mobilisation of national armies and resources. It was at this stage that Montgomery-Massingberd saw the Second, Third and Fourth Contingents (formed from the TA) as playing a vital role in stabilising the front, before taking the lead in the ensuing offensives that would win the war. As a consequence he saw it as imperative to take measures to 'ensure a sound system of expansion of the Services,' and endorsed the existing decision that made this a responsibility of the Territorial Army.³⁷¹

However, the TA's liabilities were far broader than the single task of providing reinforcements for a European war. The CIGS also studied the Army's role in providing for home and imperial defence, and again much of this planning relied heavily on the availability of Territorial formations.³⁷² For example, expansion in air and coast defence depended on Territorial troops, as did the provision of units for internal security in the UK and the Empire. Territorial units would be required to relieve

³⁶⁸ TNA CAB 4/24 DRC.37 DRC Third Report, 21 Nov 1935.

³⁶⁹ TNA WO 32/4612 'Future Organization of the British Army,' 9 Sept 1935.

³⁷⁰ J.P. Harris, 'The General Staff and the Coming of War,' *Historical Research*, Vol.59 No.140 (Nov, 1986) p.197, 203.

³⁷¹ TNA WO 32/4612 'Part I: Organization of the Field Force,' 9 Sept 1935.

³⁷² Ibid. 'Part II: Peace commitments, other war commitments etc, considered in relation to the Field Force,' 9 Sept 1935.

Regular garrisons in Northern Ireland and the treaty ports as soon as they were available.³⁷³ TA divisions were also earmarked for deployment under the Defence of India plan, as well as being tasked with providing formations for both a Middle East Reserve as well as a centralised War Office Reserve.³⁷⁴

Therefore, it is clear that Montgomery-Massingberd viewed the Regular and Territorial Contingents of the Field Force as inextricably linked, and that Territorial formations played a fundamental role in supporting and maintaining Britain's expeditionary capability.³⁷⁵ Their importance is illustrated by the fact he set aside the entire 1935 Staff Conference to discuss how they could best reorganise the TA to meet its responsibilities.³⁷⁶ By immediate necessity the Regular Army had priority for funding and equipment, but in the mid to long-term British military rearmament was firmly centred on preparing the Territorials.

By 1935 the need to make a meaningful start to this process had become increasingly urgent, especially once the 'Western Plan' was confirmed as the Army's primary mobilisation commitment.³⁷⁷ This soon became apparent in the recommendations made within the DRC Third Report to prepare three Territorial Contingents, each of four divisions fully equipped to modern standards and ready to deploy at intervals of four, six and eight months respectively. To achieve this, however, Montgomery-Massingberd pushed for a considerable expansion in the TA's funding as, regarding its mobilisation potential, equipment and reserves, it was then 'little more than a paper force.'³⁷⁸

³⁷³ Ibid. 'Appendix 'A': Home Defence Requirements,' 9 Sept 1935.

³⁷⁴ Ibid. 'Appendix 'B': Table Showing Probable Disposition of Field Force under D.I. Plan,' 9 Sept 1935. These assumptions were later confirmed by the CID's Joint Planning Committee. See TNA CAB 53/29 COS.513(JP) 'Appreciation of the Situation in the event of War against Germany in 1939,' 26 Oct 1936.

³⁷⁵ LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd MSS 159/1 'The Autobiography of a Gunner,' unpublished memoir, p.63; TNA CAB 4/24 DRC.37 'Notes by CIGS on Army Requirements,' Oct 1935; WO 32/4612 'Future Reorganization of the British Army,' 9 Sept 1935; WO 33/1341 Western Plan: Composition of the Field Force 1935; WO 32/3486 CIGS to Army Council, 7 Feb 1934.

³⁷⁶ TNA WO 33/1376 Report on the Staff Conference, 7-10 Jan 1935.

³⁷⁷ TNA WO 33/1377 Field Force Committee: 2nd Interim Report, June 1935.

³⁷⁸ TNA CAB 4/24 DRC.37 'Notes by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on Army Requirements,' Oct 1935.

As a consequence the Army Council was anxious to supply the Territorials with sufficient training equipment and reserves to give them a realistic possibility of mobilising, and also to create a 'war potential' to facilitate further wartime manufacture. This would not come cheap. Equipment costs alone were estimated at some £26,082,000 and Montgomery-Massingberd conceded that such figures represented 'a startling increase to those previously before the Committee.'³⁷⁹ He also urged the reinstatement of the First Report's original £250,000 per annum recommendation, which the committee agreed to, reminding the Government that there could be 'no salvation in half measures.'³⁸⁰

After receiving the DRC's Third Report in December 1935 the Cabinet duly passed it on to the Ministerial Defence Policy and Requirements Committee (DPRC), who discussed its contents over nine meetings in January 1936.³⁸¹ The DPRC accepted most of the recommendations regarding further naval and air expansion, but stopped short of endorsing the Army Council's plans for the TA. The Government's chief industrial adviser Lord Weir, objected on strategic grounds, dismissed the TA plan as an unworkable 'paper proposition' and accused the Army of planning a repeat of 1914, arguing instead for a policy based on air power.³⁸² Others, including Baldwin, Chamberlain, Eden, Lord Runciman and Lord Eustace Percy, stressed the political difficulties of pushing expenditure on the Army through the Commons.³⁸³ This opposition, as Baldwin noted, would centre not so much on the plans for the First Contingent but rather on those for the Territorial Contingents.³⁸⁴

There was nevertheless agreement that something should be done to reverse the clear decline in the Territorial movement. Chamberlain agreed that the TA must be 'revived,' and Baldwin agreed that its equipment should be modernised and recruitment improvised.³⁸⁵ However, their overriding concern was to avoid appearing that they were actively preparing the TA for war. As Pownall observed, the politicians were 'chiefly afraid of public opinion which they thought would rise up in anger at the idea

³⁷⁹ Ibid. 'Notes by Chief of the Imperial General Staff on Army Requirements,' Oct 1935.

³⁸⁰ B. Bond, (ed.) *Chief of Staff* (1972) p.84; TNA CAB 4/24 DRC.37 DRC Third Report: Conclusion, 21 Nov 1935.

³⁸¹ See TNA CAB 16/123 DPR(DR) Meetings.

³⁸² TNA CAB 16/123 DPR(DR).4 Memorandum by Lord Weir, 9 Jan 1936.

³⁸³ Ibid. DPR(DR) 2nd Meeting, 14 Jan 1936; 4th Meeting, 16 Jan 1936; 7th Meeting, 27 Jan 1936.

³⁸⁴ Ibid. DPR(DR) 4th Meeting, 16 Jan 1936.

³⁸⁵ Ibid. DPR(DR) 2nd Meeting, 14 Jan 1936; 4th Meeting, 16 Jan 1936.

of the Territorials being sent to “another Passchendaele.”³⁸⁶ More worryingly in Pownall’s eyes were the emerging details of Chamberlain’s ‘most dangerous heresy,’ his growing conviction towards a limited military liability. As he recorded in his diary, ‘The idea of the “halfhearted” war is the most pernicious and dangerous in the world. It will be 100 per cent – and even then we may well lose it. We shall certainly lose it if we don’t go 100 per cent. In God’s name let us recognise that from the outset – and by that I mean *now*.’³⁸⁷

Faced with opposition to his Territorial Army programme, Montgomery-Massingberd and the Secretary of State, Duff Cooper, nevertheless put up a spirited defence of the plan, arguing that ‘the bulk of the expenditure now proposed ... is intended not to expand the Army ... but to ensure that the shortcomings of 1914 may not recur in a future war in which such shortcomings may be even more heavily punished.’³⁸⁸ Nevertheless, in the end they were forced to accept that limited industrial capacity prevented any building up of reserves within the next three years, but they still argued that this should not prevent them forming a clear policy for the TA. Duff Cooper argued that the Territorials ‘always suffered from a sense of uncertainty’ over their employment, and he thought it vital that the Government ‘should be clear in their own minds as to what the function of the Territorial Army was to be.’³⁸⁹ Eager, therefore, to give Territorials ‘an air of reality’ over their role, Montgomery-Massingberd wanted to state categorically that they constituted the only reinforcements for the Regulars in any emergency, and that this was ‘not necessarily confined to France or Flanders.’³⁹⁰

Yet Chamberlain assumed that the conclusion not to issue a specific policy for the Territorial Field Force Contingents meant that a decision on the £26 million could be deferred. He thus would only accept a reversion to the offer and rationale given in the DRC First Report, considering Territorial rearmament a separate, ‘second step.’ As a result Baldwin’s final judgment was a compromise.

³⁸⁶ B. Bond, (ed.) *Chief of Staff* (1972) p.99.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ TNA CAB 16/123 ‘Note by the Chief of the General Staff on the Memorandum by Lord Weir,’ DPR(DR) 7th Meeting, 27 Jan 1936.

³⁸⁹ Ibid. DPR(DR) 4th Meeting, 16 Jan 1936; 7th Meeting, 27 Jan 1936.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

Support for a continental commitment via a Field Force was upheld, and the Regular Contingent was to be re-equipped as quickly as possible, but a decision on the later Territorial Contingents was to be held in abeyance for three years 'or until such time as the industrial situation of the country and its capacity for output brings these proposals within the range of actual possibilities.'³⁹¹

The committee did, however, recommend that every step be taken to improve recruiting, and confirmed the re-allocation of £250,000 per annum to the TA to improve its efficiency. They also authorised the War Office to state publicly that the function of the Territorial Field Force was 'to serve wherever it is needed, and that it will, if necessary, be used as a second line, not as drafts, but serving in its own units and formations, to support the Regular Army if it goes abroad.'³⁹²

From the records it would appear that both Duff Cooper and Montgomery-Massingberd were happy with this outcome. Indeed, Montgomery-Massingberd declared to Lt.-Gen. Bartholomew that they had done 'better than you and I ever hope for in our wildest dreams,' and considered £250,000 'a suitable sum' to bring the TA up to a reasonable standard.³⁹³ They had secured some agreement on a general policy, as well as acceptance in principle for modernising the force and Government assistance in improving recruiting. There was a general acceptance in the War Office that little could be done to materially prepare the TA for some time. Pownall also considered it 'eminently satisfactory,' noting that the decision not to provide war reserves for the TA 'will make little odds as our productive capacity is inadequate to build up war reserves for the TA before then, in any case.'³⁹⁴ Although he considered that the politicians 'funked – badly' over defining the TA's role, he thought it natural they would make cuts and knew equipping the TA would take longer than three years.³⁹⁵

Montgomery-Massingberd similarly accepted that, whilst everything possible should be done in peace to improve the TA's efficiency, under the conditions prevalent in 1935 it would largely rely on post-

³⁹¹ TNA CAB 4/24 DPR(DR).9 'Programme of the Defence Services Sub-Committee on Defence Policy and Requirements,' 12 Feb 1936.

³⁹² Ibid.; CAB 23/83/13, Cabinet Conclusion, 2 March 1936; Parl. Papers, Cmd.5107 'Statement Relating to Defence,' 3 March 1936.

³⁹³ LHCMA Bartholomew MSS 2/4/6 Montgomery-Massingberd to Bartholomew, 6 Feb 1936.

³⁹⁴ B. Bond, (ed.) *Chief of Staff*, (1972) pp.98-99.

³⁹⁵ Ibid. p.100.

mobilisation production for its final scale of equipment.³⁹⁶ The loss of £26 million therefore had little practical impact on the situation, as they could not simultaneously re-equip the Regulars and build up war reserves within the three-year lifespan of the programme.³⁹⁷

What Montgomery-Massingberd considered more significant was the consensus that a clear public declaration of policy regarding the Territorials should be made, as well as a commitment to provide them with modern training equipment and their missing cadres.³⁹⁸ Furthermore, following Milne's lead the CIGS had always considered the TA as having the same 'general purpose' dual role as the rest of the Army. His decision to scale the Regular and Territorial Armies on a continental standard was based on his ideal that 'the greater contains the less; if the force required for a continental war could be provided it would also enable the D[efence of] I[ndia]. Plan to be implemented.'³⁹⁹ The War Office could not afford to focus solely on Europe at a time when problems around the Empire, particularly in Abyssinia and Egypt, were also coming to a head.⁴⁰⁰ In this context the availability of the Territorial Army as an imperial reserve, in whole or in part, was equally as important as its continental role. Montgomery-Massingberd was keen to communicate this to the TA:

I want to be able to point out to them that no Government can tell them, in case of National emergency, how much of the TA may be wanted – That must depend on what the National emergency is, that is to say, who we have got to fight and in what country. It may be that our divisions only will be wanted; on the other hand we may want 8, or even possibly 12, and therefore we propose to divide them into echelons, giving the first echelon of the TA priority over the other two as regards equipment and peace establishments. If I can get this through it will enable me, or rather my successor, to draw up definite plans in consultation with the Territorial Associations as to what the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Echelons are to consist of ... I want them to look at it on the broader lines because after all no one can possibly say now that the national crisis may not arise on the frontier of India, or even in Egypt, in neither of which case should we want the whole of the Territorial Army.'⁴⁰¹

Exactly how the TA could act simultaneously as an 'army reserve' by providing limited support to a major expedition, and a 'reserve army,' by retaining the capacity to expand it escalate into a national

³⁹⁶ TNA WO 32/4612 'Future Organization of the British Army – Part III: Conclusions,' 9 Sept 1935; LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd MSS 159/1 'The Autobiography of a Gunner,' unpublished memoir, p.63.

³⁹⁷ LHCMA Bartholomew MSS 2/4/6 Montgomery-Massingberd to Bartholomew, 6 Feb 1936, also see Bartholomew MSS 2/4/7 Montgomery-Massingberd to Bartholomew, 24 March 1936; TNA CAB 16/123 DRC.37 Third Report, Vol.II, Schedule IV, 'Note by the Master-General of the Ordnance,' 2 Oct 1935.

³⁹⁸ LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd MSS 158/9 'Notes for my Successor,' 1936.

³⁹⁹ TNA WO 32/4612 'Future Organization of the British Army - Part.III: Conclusions,' 9 Sept 1935.

⁴⁰⁰ S. Morewood, *The British Defence of Egypt, 1935-1940: Conflict and Crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean*, (London, 2005) p.40, 50, 93; J.P Harris, 'Egypt: Defence Plans' in M.J Cohen and M. Kolinsky (eds.), *Britain and the Middle East in the 1930s: Security Problems, 1935-39*, (Basingstoke, 1992) pp.62-64.

⁴⁰¹ LHCMA Bartholomew MSS 2/4/6 Montgomery-Massingberd to Bartholomew, 6 Feb 1936.

war, was, however, unclear.⁴⁰² Nevertheless, the War Office wanted a solution within the existing Territorial organisation, and after gauging Territorial opinion Montgomery-Massingberd was assured that the TA could be relied upon to provide, if requested, a special force of volunteers within the existing force structure.⁴⁰³

However, it soon became apparent that the oblique declaration of policy given in the 1936 White Paper was little help to those tasked with its implementation. The Rhineland crisis swung attention back once more to Europe and showed the inadequacies of Britain's mobilisation arrangements, thus adding a sense of urgency to preparations.⁴⁰⁴ Yet it was clear that the lack of a firm policy for the Army was severely undermining these efforts. As one senior Treasury official complained, 'We do not even know yet what Army we are to contemplate for purposes of supply preparation between now and April 1939.'⁴⁰⁵

For the War Office the Cabinet's reluctance to formalise a role for the Territorial Army and authorise its preparation was the fundamental factor that held up their entire rearmament programme. By December 1936 the Director General of Munitions Production believed there was enough surplus industrial capacity to begin re-equipping the Territorials, but in order to draw up plans he had to know what the intentions for the force were. Therefore, if the Government was serious about rearming the TA it was imperative that measures to broaden production capacity were taken immediately.⁴⁰⁶

When Duff Cooper took this issue to Cabinet he pointed out that a commitment to the principle of a Field Force of both Regular and Territorial Contingents had already been made, and that the TA had thus taken on 'certain definite obligations' and therefore 'it cannot be too strongly emphasised that this force is an integral part of the British Army.' Utilising the argument that a war of any magnitude could not be fought on a principle of limited liability, he stressed that, if they were to adhere to the

⁴⁰² J.K. Dunlop, *The Problems and Responsibilities of the Territorial Army*, (London, 1935) pp.13-31.

⁴⁰³ TNA WO 33/1376 Report on the Staff Conference, 7-10 Jan 1935: Comment by CIGS.

⁴⁰⁴ G. Peden, (1979) p.126.

⁴⁰⁵ TNA CAB 63/14 Robinson to Inskip, 19 Oct 1936.

⁴⁰⁶ TNA CAB 23/86/12 Cabinet Conclusions: 'The Role of the British Army,' 16 Dec 1936; TNA CAB 53/6 COS 192nd Meeting, 12 Jan 1937.

Government's policy communicated in the March 1936 White Paper, then the Territorial Army had to be properly equipped ready to serve wherever it was needed.⁴⁰⁷

Duff Cooper, seeing the policy as already decided in principle, only wanted it 'reaffirmed,' and authority given to proceed at once with issuing contracts now that the industrial situation permitted. However, it was clear that he would face considerable opposition once again from the Chancellor. Chamberlain argued that there still remained strong political, economic and strategic reasons to re-orientate defence policy further in favour of naval and air power.⁴⁰⁸ Duff Cooper retorted that the Chancellor's opinion on strategy did not represent the views of successive Secretaries of State for War or Chiefs of Staff, and as long as the possibility of needing an Army for the Continent existed then they had to prepare the TA.⁴⁰⁹

When Cabinet met to discuss these issues it became apparent that there was still a lack of consensus over what the Territorial Army was for. Duff Cooper presented with clarity the War Office assertion that the TA was an integral part of the Army, but there was no unanimity amongst his ministerial colleagues on this point.⁴¹⁰ Some Ministers suggested that Territorials should only be utilised to replace Regular garrisons abroad, or that they should be retained in Britain for internal security. More ominously for the future, Chamberlain openly questioned the entire logic of the Western Plan strategy, stating his doubts over approaching a future conflict 'from the point of view of the last war,' and that whilst he was not unwilling to equip the TA, he himself 'doubted whether we were right in equipping the Territorial Force for the trenches.'⁴¹¹

Chamberlain certainly did not reject the idea of a large land commitment if Britain found itself engaged in a prolonged conflict.⁴¹² Nevertheless, his policy of deterrence had no place for such a

⁴⁰⁷ TNA COS 53/29 COS.537 'Appendix B 'The Role of the British Army: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War,' 3 Dec 1936.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid. COS.537 'Appendix C - The Role of the Army: Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer,' 11 Dec 1936.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid. COS.537 'Appendix D - 'The Role of the British Army: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War,' 14 Dec 1936.

⁴¹⁰ The Secretary for War told Cabinet that if the Territorial Army was not to be re-equipped it might as well be abolished.

⁴¹¹ TNA CAB 23/86/12 Cabinet Conclusions: 'The Role of the British Army,' 16 Dec 1936.

⁴¹² TNA CAB 21/509 Chamberlain to Inskip, 13 May 1937.

commitment in peace, as it would only undermine the air, naval and economic power that such a policy depended upon. The Treasury preferred any expenditure to go to the Air Force, and when Chamberlain asked Fisher, the Permanent Secretary, whether they should expedite the equipment of the Territorials the answer was a categorical no, along with the rejoinder that air strength should have ‘absolute priority,’ followed by the Navy.⁴¹³ It is therefore hardly surprising that Chamberlain came to the issue with fixed ideas over the role of the Army, and it is certain that he preferred to see the French take the lead in confronting Germany on land, with the TA limited to home and anti-aircraft duties rather than service abroad.⁴¹⁴

Despite the lukewarm response from the Cabinet, Thomas Inskip, the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, sympathised with Duff Cooper’s efforts to reach a decision on the TA’s role. Moreover, as he carefully indicated, a commitment to prepare it for war did not equate to a commitment to use it. Yet there was little inclination amongst the Cabinet to make a judgement then and there, and the issue was passed back yet again to the Chiefs of Staff.

In fact, as the Chiefs soon realised, they were not being asked to merely comment on the re-equipment of the Territorial Army, but now were to advise on the entire future policy for the British Army.⁴¹⁵ Fortunately, although they questioned some of the new CIGS’s justifications, they agreed to support Deverell’s views. Indeed, the realisation that indecision over policy had already delayed the War Office deficiency programme by six months led to their acceptance of Deverell’s insistence that the ultimate aim should be for the entire Territorial Army to be ready within four months of mobilisation.⁴¹⁶ They reiterated that the principal of a Field Force supported by the Territorial Army was essential for both Imperial Defence and for use on the Continent, if called upon. Importantly, the Chiefs stressed that the delay in formalising the Army’s role was giving them the ‘gravest concern.’⁴¹⁷

⁴¹³ G. Peden, (1972) p.127.

⁴¹⁴ R. Self (ed.) *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters: Vol.4 The Downing Street Years, 1934-1940*, (Aldershot, 2005) Letter to Ida Chamberlain, 10 Oct 1936, p.211; Chamberlain Papers, NC2/23A, diary entry, 25 Oct 1936.

⁴¹⁵ TNA CAB 53/6 COS 193rd Meeting, 19 Jan 1937.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid. COS 194th Meeting, 22 Jan 1937.

⁴¹⁷ TNA CAB 53/30 COS.550 ‘The Role of the British Army,’ 28 Jan 1937; CAB 53/6 COS 192nd Meeting, 12 Jan 1937; 193rd Meeting, 19 Jan 1937; B. Bond, (1980) p.239.

Although Inskip accepted the broad advice given by the professional advisers, in practical terms his conclusion was, as Bond noted, a 'severe curtailment' of what Duff Cooper had asked for.⁴¹⁸ Inskip pointed out that, just as the COS had considered that the TA in peace could only be trained 'to a limited extent,' so its equipment should also be on a more limited scale. Therefore he recommended that the TA be issued with sufficient equipment for training purposes, spread out evenly over the whole twelve divisions, which in an emergency could be concentrated to equip one or more Divisions. This, Inskip believed, would be enough to adequately reinforce the Field Force within the first four months, and he considered it impractical politics to go any further at that stage.⁴¹⁹

This, as Inskip well knew, was essentially an interim measure, and he hoped that more equipment would become available over time as manufacturing supply caught up with demand. However, there was no timetable for completion and the whole programme was subject to Treasury approval in detail.⁴²⁰ As a result it was too vague a proposition, fell short of what the Army required in a material sense and did little to answer the War Office's pressing concern over the lack of actual planning. The War Office calculated that even by concentrating all the TA's training equipment together the largest force that could be deployed amounted to only two divisions.⁴²¹ Even then, these formations would lack their quota of tanks and would arrive in theatre without ammunition. Moreover, their despatch would denude the remaining Territorial formations of their own training equipment, thus crippling the mobilisation of subsequent reinforcements.

This, Duff Cooper explained, was not a proposition the Army Council could accept as a policy for the Territorial Army in war. Consequently, he asked for authorisation to follow the issue of training equipment to the Territorial Army with further measures to fully equip a contingent of four divisions for despatch four months after mobilisation. This would ensure that the Regular Field Force had available effective and timely reinforcements and, in accordance with investigations into further

⁴¹⁸ B. Bond, (1980) p.240.

⁴¹⁹ TNA CAB 24/267/47 CP.46(37) 'The Role of the British Army: Memorandum by the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence,' 2 Feb 1937.

⁴²⁰ TNA CAB 23/88/8 Cabinet Conclusions, 5 May 1937.

⁴²¹ TNA CAB 24/269/20 CP.115(37) 'Appendix IV: Statement showing the number of Territorial Army Divisions that can be Equipped for War out of the Total of the Training Equipment.' 23 April 1937. The insufficiency of trucks and anti-tank guns were the most debilitating factors.

industrial requirements, would help to create a broader base of manufacturing potential for the eventual re-equipment of the rest of the TA.⁴²²

The £43,381,000 needed for generating the equipment for these four divisions, added to the £9,284,000 for training equipment, was not, Duff Cooper argued, an impossible amount and Cabinet would be taking a 'grave responsibility' if it ignored the advice of their military advisers.⁴²³ However, Chamberlain was perfectly willing to take that risk and rejected Duff Cooper's further proposals for preparing a single contingent. The Chancellor's stonewalling of the issue, and his preference to 'proceed to the consideration, in comparative leisure, of the proper role of the Army in the light of other considerations,' again left Duff Cooper without a definitive policy to take to the General Staff. He had clearly defined the strategic logic for the Field Force and the interrelatedness of its Regular and Territorial components, an argument that had been stated repeatedly by the Chiefs of Staff.⁴²⁴ However, his attempts to implement what were the necessary corollaries of this were consistently blocked, without any realistic alternatives being proposed in their place. As he told Cabinet, the idea of equipping the TA only for training did not amount to a military policy, but he had to accept it under protest in the hope that an interim decision would lead to a permanent one.⁴²⁵

* * *

Readiness and Reform: Preparing the TA for Mobilisation

Despite the Government's reluctance to confirm the TA's position within broader strategic policy, the War Office was still committed to improving its efficiency, arresting its decline in manpower and increasing its readiness. This was now seen not as a choice, but as a necessity. Planning assumptions for a campaign against Germany envisaged an initial mobile encounter battle, followed more than likely by a period of stagnation and static warfare. This required not only the mechanisation of the

⁴²² Ibid. 'The Organization, Armament and Equipment of the Army: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War,' 23 April 1937.

⁴²³ Ibid. 'Appendix III: Estimate of Capital Expenditure on Modernization of the 12 Territorial Army Divisions,' 23 April 1937; TNA CAB 23/88/8 Cabinet Conclusions, 'The Organization, Armament and Equipment of the Army,' 5 May 1937.

⁴²⁴ Chamberlain admittedly had his reasons to doubt the unity of the Chiefs on this point, believing that between the individual Services 'dog would eat dog.' See his letter to his sister, dated 6 Feb 1937, in R. Self, (2005) p.233.

⁴²⁵ TNA CAB 23/88/8 Cabinet Conclusions, 'The Organization, Armament and Equipment of the Army,' 5 May 1937.

Regular spearhead, but also the concurrent development of an effective organisational structure to maintain and, if necessary, expand such a force once committed. As the experience of 1914 had shown, trained reinforcements could not be quickly improvised in an emergency and the availability of an effective reserve had already been identified as a key recommendation by the ‘Committee on the Lessons of the Great War.’⁴²⁶

Nevertheless, the War Office was well aware that the Army’s existing reserve organisation required a considerable overhaul before it was fit for this purpose. The absence of a Special Reserve/Militia component had led to a hollow structure without any depth between the Regular and Territorial Armies. Therefore, outside of its own Reserve, the Regular Army had to rely entirely on the Territorials (albeit not as drafts) to reinforce it. This led the CIGS to openly concede in 1934 that the role of the TA was of ‘far greater importance’ than in pre-war days, and indeed was ‘now a vital one.’⁴²⁷

Yet as a consequence the TA had to be ready to accept responsibilities that were, as the DGTA noted, ‘heavier by far than any hitherto undertaken by the Auxiliary Force.’⁴²⁸ This required the peacetime Territorial Army to reach a much higher degree of efficiency and readiness than had previously been acceptable. However, achieving this improved standard would not be easy, and by the 1930s it was clear that a considerable capability gap existed. As the CIGS admitted in 1935:

The TA has been starved and neglected ever since the war. It is equipped with totally insufficient and out of date equipment which is enough to discourage any keen man. It is hampered by complicated and in many ways unsuitable regulations which have often been applied in a spirit which I know has caused the greatest dissatisfaction and discouragement. In the present circumstances it is quite incapable of carrying out the duties it is expected to perform in war.⁴²⁹

As a result the War Office under Montgomery-Massingberd began to introduce a number of reforms designed to meet the TA’s most pressing deficiencies. These dealt primarily with improving its readiness to mobilise, particularly of the first Territorial Field Force contingent, and efforts to achieve much closer administrative control over the Territorials were also renewed.

⁴²⁶ LHCMA Kirke MSS 4/30 ‘Report of the Committee on the Lessons of the Great War,’ 13 October 1932.

⁴²⁷ TNA WO 279/75 Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley, 8-12 January 1934: Comment by CIGS.

⁴²⁸ TNA WO 32/2679 ‘Report on the Territorial Army by the Director General,’ Oct 1935.

⁴²⁹ TNA WO 32/2680 Minute by CIGS, 19 Nov 1935.

The first issue the War Office faced was the fact that since the early 1920s the Territorial Army had lacked a complete, balanced organisational structure. Instead it had a preponderance of ‘teeth’ arms, particularly infantry units, while much of the required specialist ‘tail’ was absent. These latter units contained the logisticians, medics, engineers, signallers and other support troops that were indispensable to a modern army. However, most simply did not exist in the peacetime TA, even in cadre form.⁴³⁰ Even those cadres that did exist were often so under-strength that they could achieve little. For example, RASC cadres, with their peacetime establishments set at only some nine per cent of their war strength, were found to be too small to train effectively at all.⁴³¹

The previous assumption had always been that in a war those with comparable civilians skills would volunteer for these roles and could thereafter be organised accordingly. However, the corollary was that they would not be available for many months, time that simply would not be available if Territorial reinforcements were needed quickly. This issue had always been a concern, but previous attempts to solve it had largely failed, mainly due to difficulties in justifying the expense of raising new units or re-organising existing ones.⁴³² Although a committee was established in March 1934 to address this specific problem, it could make little progress as long as these restrictions were in place.⁴³³

The situation looked set to improve after the official adoption of the Western Plan, when the committee was permitted a much broader remit. Again it recommended expanding the number of peacetime cadres, as this was the only way to raise units within the shortened four months post-mobilisation window now intended.⁴³⁴ However, the Government’s slow response in confirming the Army’s role, and the deferral of the whole TA question after the First DRC Report, meant that these

⁴³⁰ TNA WO 32/3490 DSD to DRO, DGTA and DF(b), 18 Aug 1932; TNA WO 32/3484 QMG to PUS, 11 Jan 1935.

⁴³¹ TNA WO 231/227 Army Training Memorandum No.11: Collective Training Period 1933 (Supplementary).

⁴³² Ibid. ‘Minutes of a Conference of Directors held on 14 October 1932 on the Utilization of Existing Territorial Army Units available for incorporation in the Field Force,’ 20 Oct 1932.

⁴³³ TNA WO 33/3218 ‘Report of the Committee on the Provision of New Units for the Territorial Army on Mobilization,’ 26 March 1934.

⁴³⁴ TNA WO 33/3323 ‘Interim Report of the Re-Constituted Committee on the Provision of New Units for the Territorial Army on Mobilization,’ 21 Dec 1934.

recommendations were largely based on assumptions, and after issuing a second interim report the committee had to declare that nothing further could be achieved until a firm policy was decided upon.⁴³⁵ Although the War Office managed to reallocate the R. Signals, RAMC and RAOC units from the converted anti-aircraft divisions to the Field Army, and also achieved a small increase in the establishments for the Territorial RASC in 1935, the failure to build up sufficient cadres made the crash 1938/39 expansion programme for support units inevitable.⁴³⁶

Although the War Office's attempts to solve the problem of missing units largely came to naught, more determined efforts were made to deal with the deficiencies in Territorial manpower. By the mid 1930s the gap between the TA's actual strength and its War Establishment requirements was a cause of considerable alarm. Representing a shortfall of some 13,000 officers and 318,000 men by 1935, this threatened to seriously undermine the new mobilisation timetable outlined in the Western Plan.⁴³⁷ Previously the assumption had always been that the shortfall in Territorial numbers would be remedied during a war either by volunteers or by conscription.⁴³⁸ Yet as the first TA reinforcements had to be ready to support the expeditionary force within four months they could not rely on any post-mobilisation intake. As a result these initial formations at least had to be maintained near full strength in peace.

Achieving this level of manning was not easy. A new committee formed to address the readiness of the TA on mobilisation, under the Director of Recruiting and Organisation, Maj.-Gen. D.K. Bernard, concluded that even if the four strongest Territorial Divisions formed the First Territorial (TA) Contingent they would still be short of some 106,000 men. In addition, lack of manpower undermined the existing mobilisation timetable and seriously hindered units' ability to throw off a second line. For example, on top of the above shortfall the first TA contingent would have to find another 22,969 men if it was to successfully furnish cadres for the formation of its own second line

⁴³⁵ TNA WO 32/3485 'Second Interim Report of Strathcona Committee on the Provision of New Units for the TA on Mobilization,' 21 Nov 1935.

⁴³⁶ TNA WO 163/42 Army Council Précis No.1395 'First and Second Interim Reports of Lord Strathcona's Committee.'

⁴³⁷ TNA WO 32/2680 Minute by AG, 27 Nov 1935.

⁴³⁸ TNA CAB 15/17 'National Service in a Future War,' 27 June 1922; CAB 57/2 Report of the Manpower Sub-Committee, June 1926; WO 32/2856 'The Peace Organization of the Territorial Army,' 1925.

units. As a result it was thought doubtful whether these formations could be relied upon to duplicate themselves and still deploy by $z + 4$ months, which had a knock-on effect along the mobilisation timeframe. Added to the even worse deficiencies in the rest of the Territorial Field Army, the only other option was to accept a slower rate of mobilisation and risk leaving the Field Force without support.⁴³⁹

With these factors in mind, the War Office focused on prioritising those formations making up the First (TA) Contingent and concentrate all the available resources into increasing its readiness. Consequently, Bernard's committee recommended immediately nominating each Territorial Division and Army Unit to its wartime contingent in peace. This would allow detailed plans to be drawn up to make the most of the limited manpower available, and the formations earmarked as the first Territorial reinforcements could thus be prioritised in equipment, training and personnel, and the whole mobilisation process sped up.

However, the subject of divisional nomination in peace was not without controversy. Various alternatives had been discussed at the 1935 Staff Conference, such as forming the first Territorial contingent by creating composite formations of volunteers, or by 'skimming' the entire TA, whereby each division threw off a single composite brigade that could then be organised to form service divisions.⁴⁴⁰ However, none of these were considered truly viable. As a result nomination was the War Office's preference, but there was still a great deal of resistance. As one Territorial representative pointed out, the strongest formations were raised in the North and would almost certainly be first on the list for nomination:

We must not overlook that there are not even 150,000 men in the British Isles who are willing to join, nor that the only thing we can promise the officer or man when he joins the Territorial Army is that he will be shot at at least six months before the rest of the population. We feel very strongly that it would never do to say that, say, the Northumbrian, the Highland and the East and West Lancashire Divisions should go out and bear the brunt of the fighting before the south of England. Psychology plays an important part in this.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁹ TNA WO 32/4244 'Committee on the Readiness of the TA on Mobilization: First Interim Report,' 21 Nov 1935; WO 163/42 Army Council Précis No.1394 'The Readiness of the Territorial Army on Mobilization.'

⁴⁴⁰ TNA WO 33/1376 Report on the Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley, 7th to 10th January 1935.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid. Comment by Col. Evelyn Wood.

In the end the CIGS was compelled to agree, declaring that nomination would do more harm than good to the TA.⁴⁴² However, there were no realistic alternatives. When the Bernard Committee considered the issue ten months later they were convinced that 'it will not be possible to formulate practicable recommendations which will ensure the readiness of the Territorial Army on mobilisation unless this proposal [ie. nomination] is adopted.'⁴⁴³

The Council Members agreed that in financial and material terms nomination made good sense, as it would allow resources to be directed according to priority instead of spread ineffectively over all twelve divisions.⁴⁴⁴ As a result, despite acknowledging the disadvantages, they unanimously agreed that on balance nomination was the best option.⁴⁴⁵ Indeed, as the MGO argued, nomination had to be pushed through if the Territorial Army was to be a viable proposition:

For the first time since the War we are properly confronted with a live practical problem. The material advantages gained from nomination appear to me to outweigh the psychological disadvantages. If we want to have something really ready in 4 months from mobilization everything is to be gained by concentrating on the 2nd Contingent.⁴⁴⁶

As a result the Army Council approved a policy to nominate Territorial divisions to their contingents in peace as soon as the policy gained final Government approval.⁴⁴⁷

With nomination offering to go a long way towards providing for the initial Territorial commitment to the Field Force, the DRO moved onto addressing the other main bar to mobilisation: the acute shortage of manpower. The committee recognised that the Territorial establishment in peace was held at an artificially low level compared with its wartime requirements. The introduction of an even lower recruiting cap as an economy measure further depressed the figures.

⁴⁴² Ibid. Comment by CIGS.

⁴⁴³ TNA WO 32/4244 'Committee on the Readiness of the TA on Mobilization: First Interim Report,' 21 Nov 1935; 'Appendix IV: Memorandum on the Advantages and Disadvantages of Nominating Territorial Army Formations to Contingents in Peace.'

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid. DUS to PUS, 27 Nov 1935.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid. AG to CIGS and PUS, 22 Jan 1936; CIGS to PUS, 19 Dec 1935; Minute by QMG, 19 Dec 1935; U.S. of S. to PUS, 18 Dec 1935.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid. MGO to C.1, 4 Dec 1935.

⁴⁴⁷ TNA WO 163/42 Army Council 385th Meeting, 8 Jan 1936; WO 32/4244 CIGS to AG, 10 Feb 1936; Minute by CIGS, 13 Feb 1936; U.S. of S. to AG, 21 Feb 1936.

The consequence of this 'recruiting crisis' was that most units would need at least a year after mobilisation to recruit and train enough manpower to deploy.⁴⁴⁸ This fact, again, threatened to undermine the Army's mobilisation plans, as the intention was for all twelve divisions to be overseas within that time. In an attempt to improve the situation the committee recommended immediately reducing the gap between the Peace and War Establishments and pushed for a Government-led national recruiting campaign.

The solution to this recruitment problem was thereafter seen largely in terms of money. In 1934 the War Office had decided that if such improvements in numbers and efficiency were to be seen then Territorial service would have to be incentivised and more funding made available.⁴⁴⁹ This challenged one of the recruiting axioms of the 1920s, whereby the pursuit of 'quality' was deemed to be of greater importance than mere quantity. According to the requirements of mobilisation, however, quantity had a quality all of itself. As the Bernard Committee's report observed:

There appears to be a belief that peace strengths in relation to peace establishments are not matters for concern, provided that the individual standard is high. This is a misconception. It must be understood clearly that when peace establishments are finally approved, any unit which falls below establishment to an appreciable extent will be seriously handicapped in time for service with its Division.⁴⁵⁰

This was why the War Office began at this time to improve the Territorial Army 'offer,' initially to aid retention amongst key personnel, particularly skilled specialists and NCOs, and then to encourage recruitment in general.⁴⁵¹ As a result the 1935 Estimates granted the payment of a marriage allowance at camp, hitherto restricted to men over 26, to all NCOs who re-engaged, as well as certain refunds for travelling expenses and an increase in proficiency pay for Territorial specialists and instructors.⁴⁵² The next year the offer was furthered by the restoration of a £5 bounty (in the form of £3 proficiency grant, 10s for weapon training and 30s for extra drills), an increase in the number of travel fares claimable for training and the extension of marriage allowances to all Territorials over 21. The

⁴⁴⁸ G. Spillan, (1985) p.117.

⁴⁴⁹ TNA WO 279/74 Report on the Staff Conference, Camberley, 8-12 Jan 1934.

⁴⁵⁰ TNA WO 32/4246 'Memorandum on the Readiness of the Territorial Army (Other Ranks) on Mobilization, 1936.'

⁴⁵¹ TNA WO 32/2679 'Report by the Director General of the Territorial Army, 1935,' Minute by Strathcona, 18 Oct 1935.

⁴⁵² *Hansard*, HC Deb 18 March 1935 vol.299 c.851; LHCMA Montgomery-Massingberd MSS 158/9 'Notes for my Successor,' 1936.

financial burden on young officers was reduced by an increase from £1 to £5 in their camp allowances, coupled with a Government appeal for employers to encourage their men to enlist.⁴⁵³

Nevertheless, although it was hoped that such measures would help to arrest the decline in the TA there would still be a wide disparity between establishments and strengths, as can be seen below.

Unit Type	War Establishment	Peace Establishment	Proposed Establishment (1 st TA Contingent Units/Later Contingents)	Average Peace Strength 1936
Yeomanry Regt	821	276	536/427	257
Field Bde. RA	761	341	498/395	303
Field Coy. RE	311	138	197/156	105
Infantry Bn.	1,156	588	740/588	451
Div. RASC:				
- Ammunition Coy	385	56	148/122	No useful comparisons
- Baggage Coy	427	56	164/136	
- Supply Coy	489	82	196/157	
Field Ambulance, RAMC	167	No useful comparison	62/49	No useful comparison

Source: TNA WO 32/4246 'Table of Comparison between War Requirements and Peace Establishments (Present and Proposed) of units in a Division of the Territorial Army,' 1936.

Even if the proposed higher Peace Establishments were accepted there would still be a significant manpower gap between that and the War Establishment. As it stood, units would have to double or treble their strength on embodiment, representing an average increase of 160 per cent. Moreover, these units would be inexperienced even by peacetime standards, with over 60 per cent of personnel having only post-embodiment training. The commanders and leaders would have to be drawn from amongst the existing Territorials, which would be a considerable strain. As an average infantry battalion had only a peace strength of 437, this meant that half of them would have to become NCOs to provide the 217 commanders required on mobilisation.⁴⁵⁴ This meant that the selection and retention of experienced officers and NCOs had to have priority.

⁴⁵³ *Hansard*, HC Deb 12 March 1936 vol.309 cc.2357-2359.

⁴⁵⁴ TNA WO 32/ 2680 'The Organization and Administration of the Territorial Army:' Impression of the TA by Maj.-Gen. C.G. Liddell, GOC of the 47th (2nd London) Div., TA, c.Oct 1935.

Unsurprisingly the most pressing concern was over the First Territorial Contingent. As it had to deploy before it could absorb any post-embodiment recruits it would have to rely on a pool of trained manpower already serving. Its requirements in officers could be made up partly from the TA Reserve of Officers and partly from those holding OTC Certificates. However, there was no similar reserve for Territorial NCOs and Other Ranks, so the Army had no way of keeping track of the one-in-two Territorials who left after their initial engagement.

Accordingly, the Bernard Committee recommended reviving a TA Reserve to broaden the base of trained manpower, whereby volunteers could sign up for an additional reserve obligation in exchange for a 30/- retaining fee per year without any training requirements. However, in order to be worthwhile a large number would have to accept this liability. Alternatively, if this could not be guaranteed then a reserve obligation could be made a part of the initial terms of service, which would require legislation and may affect recruitment but would result in a much stronger reserve structure.⁴⁵⁵ The idea of introducing any compulsory element into Territorial service was obviously contentious but, as with nomination, the military argument was hard to deny.⁴⁵⁶ After all, the Adjutant-General, Lt.-Gen. Harry Knox, calculated that only twenty-five per cent of men would volunteer for a TA Reserve, and so it had to be included in their original terms of service if the scheme was to be worthwhile.⁴⁵⁷

The Council agreed and it is probable that if Montgomery-Massingberd were still CIGS the issue would once again have been pushed through. However, his replacement by Sir Cyril Deverell in April 1936 resulted in an unexpected brake to War Office plans. In a scathing attack on the Bernard Committee's latest report, Deverell argued strongly against an increase of establishments and denied the need to make any radical efforts to raise its peacetime strength. Instead, he preferred to focus on improving the quality of the men they enlisted and establish strong cadres of leaders and instructors. He did not object to a voluntary TA Reserve (as long as the men were efficient), but making it

⁴⁵⁵ TNA WO 32/4246 'Memorandum on the Readiness of the Territorial Army (Other Ranks) on Mobilization, 1936.'

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid. AG to Members of the Army Council, 30 April 1936.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

compulsory would certainly be detrimental. In outlining his intentions he believed that a leaner, more efficient organisation was preferable to a larger force, even if the latter would be easier to mobilise:

The real requirement of the Territorial Army in peace is quality and not quantity. What we require are officers, NCOs and men who will form the instructors and a nucleus for mobilization. In the event of any war to which a government is likely to commit this country, there will at once be a wonderful response in the recruiting line and this response will include all that is best of the youth of our country and this best can be trained more quickly than the less satisfactory material. In peace, in addition to training the officer and NCO instructors, we require sufficient of the rank and file to exercise the officers, etc. in command and leadership.

Post-mobilization recruits must be accepted for all contingents. The effects of the recent concessions coupled with adequate recruiting propaganda will not be such that peace establishments can be raised and maintained throughout the Territorial Army, and in view of what I envisage the correct role of the Territorial Army to be, I do not consider that larger peace establishments are either practicable or desirable. It is an undoubted fact that large numbers on our present strength are men who are physically unfit for service.⁴⁵⁸

Neither did Deverell think that the military benefits of divisional nomination outweighed the considerable psychological drawbacks.⁴⁵⁹ He had not been privy to the Army Council's discussion on the subject but he had been present at the Staff Conference in 1935, when it was decided that divisions should only be nominated once mobilisation was imminent:

I am not aware of the reasons which induced the Army Council ... to accept the principle of nomination of Territorial Army divisions, but from the point of view of one who has recently had under his command several Territorial divisions, I am not prepared to endorse without further conviction such a recommendation which would have serious repercussions in the Territorial Army.⁴⁶⁰

Deverell's interjection split the unanimity previously shown by the Military Members. The QMG and MGO both soon sided with the CIGS, the latter now agreeing that the focus should be on improving quality, especially as he confessed to 'a feeling of anxiety in regard to the quality of the personnel of the TA, and I cannot but think that it is possibly this defect in quality which is to a large extent a deterrent to personnel of a better quality from entering.'⁴⁶¹ Both also felt that the real limiting factor in the TA's readiness to mobilise was its lack of equipment, and an increase in strength would do little to ameliorate Cabinet's decision to defer its modernisation for several years.⁴⁶² As the MGO warned:

The two requirements of equipment and personnel must go hand in hand, and the guiding factor, for some years to come at all events, is certainly going to be that of equipment.⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid. Minute by CIGS, 6 May 1936.

⁴⁵⁹ TNA CAB 53/6 COS 193rd Meeting, 19 Jan 1937 and 'Role of the British Army – Memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.'

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ TNA WO 32/4246 MGO to AG, 21 May 1936.

⁴⁶² Ibid. QMG to AG, 18 May 1936.

⁴⁶³ Ibid. MGO to AG, 21 May 1936.

The DGTA attempted to bring in some balance by pointing out that ‘quantity was not necessarily the enemy of quality,’ and that the reverse was often the case, whereby oversubscribed units could encourage fierce competition due to the fact they could pick and choose personnel. As a result Kirke was keen to allow over-recruitment, especially as ‘under the voluntary system we have to take men when we can get them, and “go whilst the going is good.”’ He also stressed the advantages of securing the men before the equipment, as under peacetime training it also took several years to make an efficient Territorial. As he was keen to point out, ‘the qualities of a soldier can be learned just as well with a Lewis gun as with a Brenn [sic].’⁴⁶⁴

Furthermore, Kirke could not guarantee that the Territorial Army would not be required to mobilise at short notice in an emergency, and in this case it needed to be as well manned as possible. The Adjutant-General also stuck to his argument that nomination and higher establishments were essential to this, and agreed with Kirke that quantity was not the enemy of quality. He pointed out that they could never train leaders without the men to practice with, and it was surely undesirable in a voluntary army to turn away men who were willing to serve. Moreover, there would be serious repercussions if they did not take every measure to prepare the TA for mobilisation:

We have to remember that the necessity for war preparation is very different now to what it was even two years ago. ... If we cannot have a higher establishment, we must be content with untrained troops going abroad or we must be prepared to retard the date of dispatch of the second contingent.⁴⁶⁵

For Knox this issue boiled down to how seriously the Council took the TA and its commitment to reinforcing the Field Force:

The main point at issue is the acceptance of the Territorial Army as a fighting force. If this is accepted ... it will be necessary to prepare the TA in peace in similar manner to the Regular Army. This implies nomination and reserve service. Whether it is equally essential to increase peace establishments depends on the dates fixed for Contingents to proceed overseas. If Z plus 4 months is to be accepted for the 2nd Contingent, then units must be prepared to commence training at Z plus 14 days. This can be achieved only if war requirements in personnel are available in peace.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid. Minute by AG, 25 June 1936.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid. ‘Notes on the important factors affecting the readiness of the Territorial Army on mobilization,’ 1936.

Despite Knox's clear reasoning, Deverell succeeded in getting a decision on nomination and increased peace establishments postponed. Despite a feeling that the response would be disappointing, a TA Reserve was eventually established, but now on an unpaid, purely voluntary basis.⁴⁶⁷

To understand why the new CIGS sought to go against the direction of existing War Office intentions one has to recognise that Deverell viewed the Territorial Army in a fundamentally different way than Montgomery-Massingberd. He did not disagree with overall policy for the force, and he continued most of the other programmes he inherited from Montgomery-Massingberd.⁴⁶⁸ However, his priorities in implementing this policy did differ from his predecessor, as did his approach to how the Territorial Army should be readied.

In 1935 Montgomery-Massingberd aimed at readying the twelve divisions of the Territorial Army for war, working out how they could be mobilised between four and ten months as a body of effective, cohesive formations. He wanted them to constitute a true second line Reserve Army to support the Field Force in the important build-up phase following an initial mobile campaign. This followed his conception of how a war would develop on the Continent

Deverell, on the other hand, subscribed to an alternative approach. At the 1933 and 1934 Staff Conferences he had argued for a 'specialist' TA, with less infantry and more support arms organised purely for a national war. He believed that there was a real danger of more being expected from the TA than was warranted by its existing conditions of service and training. Territorial units would have to absorb a huge number of new recruits on mobilisation, and would struggle to do so even with considerable Regular training support.⁴⁶⁹ He was worried by a general trend he identified in discussions over the TA which suggested that Territorials could exert a decisive influence in the first year of war – he refuted that they had been able to in 1914 or were capable of doing so in 1934.

⁴⁶⁷ TNA WO 32/9700 'Note on the Sixth Meeting of the TA Advisory Committee,' 14 Oct 1936; WO 32/4246 Minute by Duff Cooper, 15 Nov 1936; Extract from Army Council 388th Meeting, 16 Dec 1936; Extract from Army Council 389th Meeting, 8 March 1937.

⁴⁶⁸ J.P. Harris, (1986) p.207.

⁴⁶⁹ WO 33/1308 Supplementary Report on the Staff Conference, Camberley, 9 to 11 Jan 1933.

Deverell believed that the basis for improvement for the TA was in the revision of its organisation and constitution. Differentiating between the role of the Regular Army, designed for immediate service in any part of the world, and the TA, which he saw as exclusively for a national war, he proposed remodeling the TA as a force of specialists, commanders and instructors. Accordingly, instead of mirroring the Regular Army in balanced formations, Deverell saw the TA organised according to the requirements of a national war, forming specialised support battalions and tank units whilst expanding the technical arms at the expense of the infantry.

In pursuing this aim Deverell wanted to see the TA organised into cadres, focused on producing leaders and instructors with only sufficient rank and file to practice them in command. He railed against what he called the ‘fetish of numbers,’ arguing that they ought to be pursuing quality and not quantity in their personnel if they wanted to facilitate mobilisation and train a wartime National Army. The key to mobilisation was therefore improving the TA’s readiness for intensive training rather than expanding the manpower pool.⁴⁷⁰

Set apart by their aspirations to see the TA primarily as either a self-contained, high-readiness reserve or an expandable cadre of specialists, what this disagreement illustrates is that there was no real consensus on how to prepare the TA to fulfil its role. While the main impediments to its mobilisation had been quickly identified, actually improving the TA’s readiness and raising its efficiency in a practical sense proved a more difficult task. The ongoing debate over whether the recruiting focus should be on quality or quantity, and the reticence to openly nominate formations in peace, shows that there were still divergences of opinion regarding how far they could push reform on the Territorials. Coupled with the indecision over the TA’s position in broader rearmament policy, this inevitably led to a certain degree of confusion as to the direction in which the Territorial Army should be developed.

Evaluation

The Territorial Army’s expeditionary role was a factor of fundamental importance in the development of British rearmament policy during the mid 1930s. As the focus shifted away from a minor imperial

⁴⁷⁰ TNA WO 32/4246 Minute by CIGS, 6 May 1936.

war and back towards a major European conflagration, the TA's role as the intermediate source of reinforcements for the Field Force, as well as its function as the framework for expansion, gave it renewed significance. This was reflected in the General Staff's vision for the British Army's future capabilities, which identified the availability of an efficient Territorial reserve as integral to mobilisation planning.

In order to achieve this role the TA had to be ready for any eventuality, ranging from a potential European war involving all the nation's resources down to a limited war somewhere in the periphery of Empire. With the Western Plan prioritising the accelerated reinforcement of the Field Force, the TA had to be maintained at a higher state of peacetime preparedness. This entailed the nomination in advance of those divisions earmarked to deploy, and their prioritisation in manpower, equipment and training, as well as the expansion of the Territorial cadre organisation. It also necessitated an increase in efficiency amongst all ranks and a higher level of training within TA units and formations.

However, as the dispute between Montgomery-Massingberd and Deverell has shown, there was no enduring formula for preparing the TA for its responsibilities. Yet a choice between an organisation of formations or one of cadres had to be made because the TA was simply incapable of functioning effectively and simultaneously as both. Deverell's objections ensured that any comparatively radical re-organisation plans were dropped and replaced with a more elastic approach to Territorial mobilisation.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of unanimity over the TA's functional role and the doubt that was cast over its ability to mobilise, the War Office remained committed throughout this period to its improvement, even at the expense of some Regular Army capability. Moreover, it recognised that voluntary efforts alone would not be enough and that any further progress depended on securing a higher degree of Government support and investment. The most important first step to this would be for the Government to formally commit itself to a firm policy for the TA and then determine its priority within Britain's rearmament programme.

Throughout this period, however, the TA lacked such a firm Government commitment. In spite of consistent lobbying by the War Office and the Chiefs of Staff, a decision to modernise the Territorial Army and thus give it a degree of practical support was repeatedly deferred. Although this was ostensibly on the grounds of expense and industrial capacity, the debate it sparked illustrated the emerging differences of opinion over the direction of strategic policy. Under the patronage of the influential Chancellor, Neville Chamberlain, the idea that Britain could adopt a policy of 'limited liability' in a future war began to gain credence. The Territorials as a framework for a large-scale land commitment had little value in his focus on deterrent air power and economic strength. For Chamberlain re-arming the TA meant tacitly accepting a repeat of the First World War. As a result it is hardly surprising that the demand to acknowledge and support the Territorial Army's European role was the issue that led to the acceptance of a 'limited liability' and the wholesale re-evaluation of Britain's defence priorities away from a continental commitment.

Chapter Five.

A Question of Efficiency: The Organisation, Direction and Standard of Training in the Territorial Army, 1921-1937.

Introduction

Early in 1933 the War Office asked the ‘Lessons of the Great War’ committee to review how the Army could avoid repeating the mobilisation errors of 1914. In response the committee wholeheartedly reaffirmed the advantage of having a definite peacetime framework for expansion. However, in their opinion the TA of 1933 was no more capable of mobilising than Kitchener’s New Armies. Although the shortfall in Territorial manpower was an obvious problem, the apprehension that Territorials were incapable of attaining the professional standard necessary for modern war remained a key concern.⁴⁷¹

Accordingly, the committee concluded that the only way of avoiding the mistakes of 1914 was to significantly increase the Territorial Army’s professional efficiency, which in turn required maximising the potential of its training. In advocating this the committee was largely pushing at an open door. Territorial efficiency had always been a point of concern and the General Staff had already conceded that raising the TA to a deployable standard represented a ‘very difficult problem.’⁴⁷² Yet whether Territorial personnel and their units could attain the required level of efficiency was seen as the keystone requirement and primary determinant of any successful mobilisation

Consequently, during the interwar years improving the TA’s training efficiency was taken seriously, and the Army was well aware of the consequences of failing to do so.⁴⁷³ As the DGTA pointed out in 1935:

The Territorial Army can be employed only in war. It exists for war only. Its standard of efficiency must be judged therefore solely in relation to the duties and responsibilities it will be called upon to

⁴⁷¹ TNA WO 33/1308 Supplementary Report on the Staff Conference, 9-11 Jan 1933: ‘Statement by the representative of the Kirke Committee.’

⁴⁷² Ibid. Appendix – ‘Territorial Army Mobilization.’

⁴⁷³ TNA WO 33/1376 Report on the Staff Conference, 7-10 Jan 1935: ‘Opening Remarks by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.’

undertake in war ... [But] the Territorial Army, serving under its present condition, never can be and never will be in a position to undertake successfully the very heavy responsibilities that have been placed upon it.⁴⁷⁴

There is little doubt that the General Staff was eager to enhance the TA's efficiency, and that to do so they were willing to take advice from both external and internal sources. For example, the methods adopted by other citizen forces were studied for inspiration, particularly the Australian experience after it reverted to a voluntary militia in 1929 and the manner in which the Canadian Non-Permanent Militia managed the training of its widely dispersed personnel.⁴⁷⁵ Some of these observations were even implemented, such as the introduction of correspondence classes after their popularity had been noted amongst the US National Guard.⁴⁷⁶ Yet raising the TA's efficiency in any meaningful sense continued to prove difficult throughout this period.

This chapter will explore how the Territorial Army's training efficiency related to its capacity to carry out its role. It will do so by studying three main areas. The first concerns policy, and whether the TA was given a clear direction in which to conduct its training. Primarily this will deal with how the TA's role was interpreted, and whether it implied a tactical organisation of formations or a training organisation of cadres, or indeed a hybrid of both. The second area of study seeks to assess the effectiveness of Territorial training at the individual and collective level, through an assessment of the selection and preparation of Territorial leaders, instructors and specialists, as well as their collective ability when training as formed units. The third will look at the assistance offered by the Regular Army to support Territorial training, and the relationship and integration that existed between professional and amateur. From this it will be possible to conclude with greater clarity whether the Territorial Army was capable of reaching a sufficient standard of training to allow it to successfully carry out its role.

The Direction and Organisation of Training Policy

To be effective, training had to be structured according to a clear and coherent policy, organised in line with the precepts of existing doctrine. Yet many Territorials were unsure as to what immediate

⁴⁷⁴ TNA WO 32/2679 'Report on the Territorial Army by the Director General,' Oct 1935.

⁴⁷⁵ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Marshal.

⁴⁷⁶ TNA WO 279/65 Report on the Staff Conference, 14-17 Jan 1929: Comment by Brig. Luckock.

ends they were training for, and had similar doubts as to what standards they had to achieve during the annual training cycle.⁴⁷⁷ As a result there was a wide disparity of opinion over how the force should be organised, and how training should be carried out.

During the interwar period the General Staff avoided dictating set procedures and objectives, and assumed that commanding officers could be relied upon to train their troops in line with the correct interpretation of doctrine.⁴⁷⁸ However, this meant that the Army's approach to training remained, as Brian Bond concluded, 'thoroughly idiosyncratic – driven by individuals rather than a coherent, well-thought-out program.'⁴⁷⁹ As a result Territorials, in the opinion of one divisional commander, were 'all inclined to train in water tight compartments and do not know the progress that others are making.'⁴⁸⁰

As Territorial personnel only served part-time and were relatively inexperienced, it was generally argued that a flexible approach should be taken to their training, and that standards should be lower than those expected from Regulars.⁴⁸¹ However, initially the *Training Regulations* insisted that Territorial training be organised along the exact same lines as the Regular Army.⁴⁸² In 1930 the Director of Military Training, Maj.-Gen. Hugh Knox, adumbrated the official view that, in principle at least, Territorial and Regular soldiers were viewed as one and the same:

The general policy of training the Territorial Army is that the regulars and territorials are trained on exactly similar lines. The Territorial Army use the same books; they use the same schools so far as they can. So far as opportunity permits we make no difference at all in the training of the Regular Army and the Territorial Army; the Territorial Army is part of the defensive organization of the Empire.⁴⁸³

⁴⁷⁷ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934; WO 32/2679 'Report on the Territorial Army by the Director General,' Oct 1935.

⁴⁷⁸ D. French, 'Doctrine and Organization in the British Army, 1919-1932,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol.44 No.2 (June, 2001) pp.513-515; *Parl. Papers* (1907) xxxix. CD.3515 'Principles to be kept in view in training the Territorial Force and the Special Contingent,' TNA WO 279/65 Report on the Staff Conference, 14-17 Jan 1929: Comment by CIGS; War Office, *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations 1923*, para.8; WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by CIGS.

⁴⁷⁹ B. Bond, 'The British Armed Forces, 1918-39,' in Murray and Millett (eds) *Military Effectiveness Vol.2: The Interwar Period*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, 2010) p.121.

⁴⁸⁰ D. French, 'Big Wars and Small Wars between the Wars,' in H. Strachan (ed.), *Big Wars and Small Wars: The British Army and the Lessons of War in the 20th Century*, (Abingdon, 2006) pp.40-42; War Office, *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations 1923*, (London, 1923), p.10; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/249/9 Duncan to Liddell Hart, 13 Aug 1926.

⁴⁸¹ I. Maxse, (1926) p.666.

⁴⁸² War Office, *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations 1923*, (London, 1923) para.9.

⁴⁸³ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by DMT. This reflected existing policy as laid down in War Office, *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations 1923*, para.8.

This remained War Office policy into the 1930s, and even extended to a formal prohibition on the use of unofficial primers, which were often the only way that Territorial officers could garner practical advice on how to devise effective training programmes or prepare for promotion.⁴⁸⁴

In fact it was not until 1929 that attempts began to be made to define distinct training objectives for the TA, and they were not fully codified until the mid 1930s.⁴⁸⁵ With the caveat that the Army's world-wide responsibilities left 'no single predominant objective towards which the training of the Army can be categorically directed,' the possible commitments were nevertheless limited to 'four broad categories: Imperial policing; Minor expeditions, possibly on peace establishments; Major expeditions, which may or may not include the Territorial Army; A national war.'⁴⁸⁶ This, therefore, identified the latter two scenarios as the eventualities whereby Territorial troops could expect to be mobilised.

As a result it was not until 1932 onwards that the *Training Regulations* began to include a specified role, or rather dual-role, for the Territorials. Formalised in 1934, this stated that 'the role of the Territorial Army, in addition to that of providing the sole means of expansion to form a national army, includes the liability of supporting the Regular Army overseas in the event of war.'⁴⁸⁷ However, it was clear these two tasks required quite different approaches, and the General Staff initially offered little guidance as to how the TA was to manage its dual role. For example, while instructing the TA to concentrate on the training of its cadres of leaders, instructors and specialists made sense for its role as the means of expansion, a skeleton framework did little to meet the TA's additional 'liability of supporting the Regular Army overseas,' which required balanced formations of fully equipped and trained men.

⁴⁸⁴ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/249/5 Duncan to Liddell Hart, 24 Jan 1925; Letter from Montgomery to Liddell Hart, 2 Aug 1924, quoted in N. Hamilton, *Monty: The Making of a General*, (London, 1981) p.171; TNA WO 279/65 Report on the Staff Conference, 14-17 Jan 1929: Comment by CIGS.

⁴⁸⁵ War Office, *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations 1923: Amendment (No.3)* August 1929; *Training Regulations 1934* para.1.

⁴⁸⁶ War Office, *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations 1923: Amendment (No.5)* May 1932.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*; War Office, *Training Regulations 1934*, Chap.1, Sec.4, para.15.

The War Office clearly preferred to keep both options open, but nevertheless placed the greater emphasis on the TA's cadre function. Accordingly, in 1934 the object of the TA's peacetime training was clarified as being the provision of 'a framework and machinery for the expansion and training of the TA on mobilisation.'⁴⁸⁸ This prioritised a system of cadres. Yet, in order to form these cadres, units had to possess a high level of discipline, *esprit de corps* and soldierly efficiency, and these attributes could only be fostered in formed units. After all, a pool of instructors and leaders would be ineffective without a trained body of men to practice with, or from which to generate additional instructors and leaders.⁴⁸⁹

To achieve both objectives it was thus necessary to create a hybrid organisation, consisting of balanced second line units shaped around a core of strong cadres. However, the consensus was that the TA was incapable of accomplishing both of these aims simultaneously. The training dilemma was therefore how to focus training on officers and NCOs without losing the necessary rank and file.⁴⁹⁰ Yet, without official guidance, efforts to implement this policy had led to confusion, inconsistency and, in the opinion of Scottish Command, provided 'easy-going units with an excuse for retaining antiquated methods or even for having very little "method" at all.'⁴⁹¹

As a result the General Staff finally conceded that closer centralised control had to be exercised over the design and coordination of Territorial training. 1934 saw the issue of the 'Instructions as a General Guide to the Training of the Territorial Army Infantry,' which emphasised the importance of progression and outlined a specimen training year divided into four specific phases, starting in the autumn and building towards the annual camp.⁴⁹² This guidance was augmented in 1937 when each

⁴⁸⁸ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: 'Argument issued by the War Office as a basis for the discussion.'

⁴⁸⁹ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comments by Lt.-Col Cuthbertson and Maj.-Gen. Deedes.

⁴⁹⁰ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Dick-Cunyngham; War Office, *Training Regulations 1934*, Chap.1, Sec.4, para.17.

⁴⁹¹ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: 'Argument issued by the War Office as a basis for the discussion;' Comment by Maj.-Gen. Burnett of Leys

⁴⁹² TNA WO 231/228 Army Training Memorandum (ATM) No.12: Individual Training Period, 1933-34: 'Instructions as a General Guide to the Training of the Territorial Army Infantry.'

sub-unit was given a definite standard of efficiency to aim at during the pre-camp period, with the first two or three days of annual training set aside to test whether this standard had been attained.⁴⁹³

Therefore, by the late 1930s the General Staff was more willing to intervene in what had previously been regarded as individual unit prerogatives. However, they stepped back from any measures that appeared to make Territorial training look less demanding, or that artificially raised the level of efficiency by lowering the standard. For example, a recommendation by the 'Lessons of the Great War' committee to introduce a shortened syllabus for each Territorial arm divided the Commands.⁴⁹⁴ Although London District supported the proposal, Northern and Scottish Command argued that if the object of the TA was to fight alongside the Regulars it had to train according to the same manuals and doctrine.⁴⁹⁵

The Standard of Territorial Efficiency

The issue of simplifying training leads us to the question of what standard was actually expected from the Territorial Army, as there was no one empirical factor that could be measured. For example, although increasing the TA's 'efficiency' was seen as the key there was no accepted definition of what this constituted. To gain his Bounty/Proficiency Grant a Territorial was required to meet certain training and attendance targets in order to be qualified as 'efficient.' However this monetary award was itself misleading as, in the words of one CO, 'the last thing it denotes is proficiency. It might be better to look upon it as a slight contribution towards expenses incurred for attendance at drills, wear and tear of clothing, &c.'⁴⁹⁶

Neither was 'efficiency' equivalent to a measurement of deployable readiness, as this was simply unachievable under the constraints of peacetime training. Rather, it was more a measure of the ability of a Territorial or unit to conduct a programme of intensive training after embodiment.⁴⁹⁷ It was only

⁴⁹³ TNA WO 231/233 ATM No.17 January 1937.

⁴⁹⁴ LHCMA Kirke MSS 4/30 'Report of the Committee on the Lessons of the Great War,' 13 Oct 1932.

⁴⁹⁵ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comments by Maj.-Gen. Marshall; Maj.-Gen. Burnett of Leys and Gen. Gathorne-Hardy; Comment by Col. Watts.

⁴⁹⁶ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Lt.-Col Cuthbertson.

⁴⁹⁷ War Office, *Training Regulations 1934* Chap.1, Sec.4, para.16.

after this period of post-mobilisation training that a Territorial could be classed 'efficient for war' in the fullest sense.⁴⁹⁸

Yet, once again, there was little indication as to how such 'efficiency' was classified, as the regulations only stated that a unit should 'attain the highest standards of training possible in peace, so that it shall be ready to undertake this liability as soon as possible.'⁴⁹⁹ The part-time, voluntary nature of their service meant that Territorials could not realistically be expected to achieve the same standard as their Regular equivalents.⁵⁰⁰ Yet the different levels of proficiency between Territorial units themselves also meant that specific objectives and standards were hard to set, even within the organisation. As one Territorial commander informed the General Staff:

The establishment of any but the most general principles of training for Territorial Army units is extremely difficult, on account of the diversity of circumstances under which each has to labour. Some units are widely scattered, others are concentrated. Some are richly endowed in cash or in kind, other perpetually struggling to make both ends meet. Local public opinion is sometimes very much in favour of, or very often very much against volunteer service. Some have come to be known as "class" units, and might even be of more value if definitely recognized as potential Officers Training Corps: others have to be recruited from almost the casual labourer or unemployed class, &c. So a Territorial Army commanding officer takes on himself a great responsibility and must be allowed latitude to make the best of the means at his disposal, and of local conditions, which are best known to himself.⁵⁰¹

The corollary of this was that no real uniformity of standard could be achieved.

This is not to say that the General Staff lacked a mechanism to assess each Territorial unit individually. Regulations stipulated that every unit was to be inspected annually, and that this would assess not only the efficiency and aptitude of its commander, but also the readiness of the unit for mobilisation and war.⁵⁰² Therefore the General Staff and each link in the chain of command had a reasonably detailed breakdown of the standard a unit was achieving, allowing them to identify key failings and recommend improvements. However, the ability to remedy these problems remained, of course, an entirely separate issue. As a result Territorial training policy during the interwar period

⁴⁹⁸ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Oldman; J.K. Dunlop, *The Problems and Responsibilities of the Territorial Army*, (London, 1935) p.73.

⁴⁹⁹ War Office, *Training Regulations 1934*, Chap.1, Sec.4, para.16.

⁵⁰⁰ G.R. Codrington, *What is the Territorial Army?* (London, 1933) pp.vii-ix; TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Maj. Lorie.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid. Comment by Lt.-Col. Cuthbertson.

⁵⁰² War Office, *Regulations for the Territorial Army 1929*, para.430-431; 1936, para.432-433; TNA WO 32/11793 'Army Form E.657: Part I Annual Report on the Training of a TA Unit; Part II Annual Report on the Administration of a TA Unit; Part III Nominal Roll and Confidential Report on Officers.'

remained organised on a largely decentralised and ad hoc basis, and although the situation improved by the mid 1930s with the focus on cadres and the issue of more detailed guidance and clearer regulations, there was never a clear consensus on Territorial training policy or its direction.

Efficiency in the Cadres: Leaders, Instructors and Specialists

During the interwar period the selection and training of Territorial leaders, specialists and instructors was regarded as a key peacetime task.⁵⁰³ These cadres comprised the enablers essential to prepare the organisation for mobilisation and war and as such could not be improvised in an emergency. This meant units had to identify suitable men in peace through an appropriate selection process, and provide them with a programme of further training that would develop their skill and ability throughout their Territorial careers. However, whether the interwar TA was entirely successful in achieving this is doubtful. In order to further explore this issue the following section will assess the efficiency of the Territorial cadres through a study of its commissioned and non-commissioned officers, as well as its instructors and specialist personnel.

By 1920 over 200,000 officers had been demobilised from the Army, and the reconstituted TA relied heavily on attracting war-experienced leaders back into service.⁵⁰⁴ In many cases the men that did return proved instrumental in re-establishing their units, but their influence was predominantly limited to the early 1920s, as many elected to resign after only a few years.⁵⁰⁵ Others lingered on in absenteeism or were found to be incapable or unwilling to embrace new lessons outside of their wartime experiences.⁵⁰⁶ Consequently by the mid 1920s the TA's junior commanders were predominantly young men without war service. These men relied on the training they received subsequently and their own aptitude to be effective.

⁵⁰³ War Office, *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations 1923*, (London, 1923) para.9; *Training Regulations 1934*, chap.1 sec.4 para.17.

⁵⁰⁴ M. Pether, "'Temporary Gentlemen' in the Aftermath of the Great War: Rank, Status and the Ex-Officer Problem,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol.37 No.1 (1994) p.127; G. Sheffield, (2000) pp.29-30.

⁵⁰⁵ Maj. L.I. Cowper, Gold Medal (Military) Prize Essay for 1924', *RUSI Journal*, Vol.70 (1925) p.212; Capt. E.G. Godfrey, *"The Cast-Iron Sixth" – A History of the Sixth Battalion London Regiment (The City of London Rifles)*, (London, 1938) p.259; A.T.M Durand and R.H.S. Hastings, *The London Rifle Brigade, 1919-1950* (Aldershot, 1952) pp.20-21.

⁵⁰⁶ J. Beach, (ed.) *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam, 1910-1942*, (Stroud, History Press, 2010) Diary Entry for 2 June 1921, p.252, 28 April 1926, p.275; Lord Silsoe, *Sixty Years a Welsh Territorial*, (Llandysul, Gomer Press, 1976) p.115, 124; TNA WO 32/4743 MS.2.T to PS to S of S, 29 March 1923; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/249/4 Duncan to Liddell Hart, 8 August 1925; 15/3/103 'Notes on Training,' n.d. but c.1926.

The preference was to recruit Territorial officers from the same narrow ‘officer class’ as the Regular Army, and the notion of the ‘gentleman-officer’ remained the aspiration, although it was accepted that the lack of ‘public school types’ made casting a broader net unavoidable.⁵⁰⁷ Therefore, although the Territorial officer/other rank relationship was generally less formal than in the Regular Army, social hierarchies still remained firmly established. As such the TA officer cadre mainly consisted of middle and upper-middle class professionals, or those with a family tradition of local military service.⁵⁰⁸ Indeed, it has been claimed that a Territorial commission was considered more a badge of social respectability for the aspiring lower middle-classes, and that the rank structure in some Territorial units simply replicated the rigid hierarchy of their shared workplace.⁵⁰⁹

As far as suitability was concerned, a public school education and instruction in an Officers Training Corps were regarded as the prerequisites for successful military leadership, a belief shared by Territorial and Regulars alike.⁵¹⁰ However, unlike the admission requirements for the RMC Sandhurst or RMA Woolwich, there was no entry examination or scientific selection process for a Territorial commission. A candidate merely had to be nominated either by the President of the County Association or, more normally, by his chosen unit’s Commanding Officer.⁵¹¹ The selection process was informal, the decision being made usually via interviews with the Adjutant and CO.⁵¹²

As Shelford Bidwell reflected:

[Territorial] officers were not selected for any specifically military aptitude ... but for their willingness to serve and also for their acceptability to the other officers. Selection for command was by a process of taking soundings and obtaining a consensus of opinion.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁷ D. French, (2005) pp.31-32; C.B. Ottley, ‘The Social Origin of British Army Officers,’ *Sociological Review*, Vol.18 (1970) p.225; C.B. Ottley, ‘The Educational Background of British Army Officers,’ *Sociology*, Vol.7 (1973) p.197; TNA WO 163/456 ‘Committee on the Supply of Officers,’ March 1937; K.W. Mitchinson, (2008) p.106; G.D. Sheffield, (2000) pp.15-16, 176; Brevet Col. R.A.E. Voysey, ‘Wastage in the Territorial Army,’ *The Army, Navy and Air Force Gazette*, (22 June 1933) p.503; Capt. G.E. Grimsdale, ‘The Territorial Army and its Expansion for War,’ *Army Quarterly*, Vol.X No.2 (July, 1925) p.360.

⁵⁰⁸ A. Converse, (2011) p.39; W. Saunders, *Dunkirk Diary of a Very Young Soldier*, (Birmingham, 1989) p.5.

⁵⁰⁹ D. French, (2005) p.209; R. McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951*, (Oxford, 1998) p.88.

⁵¹⁰ D. French, (2000) p.50; J. Crang, *The British Army and the People’s War 1939-1945*, (Manchester, 2000) pp.21-22; TNA WO 279/70 Report of the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Appendix A – ‘Standard of Education’; Capt. G.E. Grimsdale, ‘The Territorial Army and its Expansion for War,’ *Army Quarterly*, Vol.X No.2 (July, 1925) p.360; TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Lt.-Col. Newth.

⁵¹¹ G. Codrington, (1933) p.20.

⁵¹² TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Col. Flemming; War Office, *Regulations for the Territorial Army 1929*, para.52.

⁵¹³ S. Bidwell, *Gunners at War*, revised edn. (London, 1972) p.124.

With this being the basis of selection it was rare (although not impossible) for experienced Territorials to rise from the ranks.⁵¹⁴ Direct commissions from the ranks were discouraged by the Army Council, and even in 1938 the DGTA was advising against taking any ‘drastic measures to attract a new class of officer, whose entry in any considerable numbers would probably have the effect of curtailing the existing supply from the superior classes.’⁵¹⁵ As a result, out of the total commissions awarded each year in the 1930s only between five to ten per cent went to Territorial Other Ranks.⁵¹⁶ Admittedly this was more than in the Regular Army.⁵¹⁷ Nevertheless, it was assumed that the vast majority of peacetime Other Ranks had no Field Marshal’s baton in his haversack, and Territorial units continued to source their officers from the same limited pool as the Regulars.⁵¹⁸

This social and character-based selection process was generally accepted, and most Commanding Officers regarded a combination of appearance, attitude, personality and the ability to mix socially as the attributes of a good subaltern.⁵¹⁹ Therefore, evidence of military ability or leadership was not necessarily a *sine qua non*, and in any case the standard was not set particularly high, as the criteria for a Territorial commission was considered to be lower than that of a Regular.⁵²⁰

Therefore the efficacy of his individual training was vital, especially by the early 1930s when the experience gap between war-service senior and junior officers widened.⁵²¹ Unfortunately the initial training requirements for a Territorial subaltern were not overly taxing. Despite initial plans for promotion to be governed by a series of compulsory examinations and attachments, by 1923 the only training a candidate had to achieve was the Officers’ Training Corps Certificate ‘A’ exam within 12 months of commissioning.⁵²² By 1927 this period of grace had been extended to three years, but even then it was found that few young officers adequately prepared themselves for the written paper, while

⁵¹⁴ For example, in 1933 Lt.-Col. Cannon assumed command of the 6th London Regt, after serving in every rank since enlisting as a boy in the band. See E.G. Godfrey, (1938) p.262.

⁵¹⁵ J. Crang, (2000) p.22; G. Spillan, (1985) p.207; TNA WO 32/4461 Minute by Kirke, 19 Jan 1938.

⁵¹⁶ See Table XIII.

⁵¹⁷ G. D. Sheffield, (2000) p.175; G. Spillan, (1985) pp.125-6.

⁵¹⁸ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Col. Newth.

⁵¹⁹ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7: Maj. Boggis to Dunlop, 1 March 1937. A number of letters of application are preserved in this file. LHCMA GB0099 Houghton-Brown MSS: ‘Soldier Farmer,’ unpublished memoir (c.1945), p.104.

⁵²⁰ R. Holmes, (2011) p.110.

⁵²¹ Capt. S.L.C. Lane, ‘The Tactical Education of Junior Officers of the Territorial Army,’ *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXVII No.1, (Oct, 1933), p.134; Lt.-Col. J.K. Dunlop, ‘The Territorial Army (lecture),’ *RUSI Journal*, Vol.80 (1935) p.310.

⁵²² ‘Army Notes – Age limits for Officers,’ *RUSI Journal*, Vol.68 (1923) p.720.

the practical examination was considered too simple and, as the candidate was instructed and tested by his own Adjutant, the assessment method itself was flawed.⁵²³

As a result, by the mid 1920s the promotion of subalterns was being weighted more on informal recommendations rather than formal assessments.⁵²⁴ By 1928 a young officer no longer had to sit the written part of the exam and the requirement to attend a centralised course or attachment to an affiliated Regular unit had been dropped.⁵²⁵ Although they continued to be encouraged, voluntary attachments soon dwindled to a very low percentage.⁵²⁶ It did not help that when a young officer did attend he could find himself employed on mundane tasks, such as calculating mess bills or undertaking recruit training, rather than being given the opportunity to practice command.⁵²⁷

Further promotion did require formal assessments, and 'middle piece' officers had to sit an examination covering their relevant Duties in the Field, consisting of a practical and oral test involving a combined arms Tactical Exercise Without Troops (TEWT).⁵²⁸ Specialist arms, such as the RA, RE and RASC, had additional branch-specific tests, and all exam papers were set to the same standard as for the equivalent Regular rank.⁵²⁹ However, the bar was not set particularly high, as a Territorial only required fifty per cent of the maximum marks to pass (conversely, a Regular had to achieve sixty per cent in the same exam).⁵³⁰ This helped to make promotion in the TA at least twice as rapid as in the Regular Army, especially as officers seldom failed their exams, a fact mainly attributed to the clemency of the promotion boards.⁵³¹ In the opinion of one Territorial Colonel, this

⁵²³ 'Army Notes,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.72 (1927) p.212; TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Maj. Lorie; Capt. S.L.C. Lane, ('The Tactical Education of Junior Officers of the Territorial Army,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXVII No.1 (Oct, 1933) p.138; War Office, *Training Regulations 1934*, Chap.II Sec.16; B.H. Liddell Hart, 'This Territorial Year,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXI No2, (Jan, 1931) p.256.

⁵²⁴ G. Codrington, (1933) p.75; Army Notes – Promotion of Officers,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.69 (1924) p.781.

⁵²⁵ War Office, *Regulations for the Territorial Army, 1924*: Amendment No.14 (30 April 1928); Army Notes – Promotion of Officers and NCOs,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.70 (1925) p.790.

⁵²⁶ Lord Silsoe, (1976) p.130; TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Hildyard.

⁵²⁷ LHCMA Kirke MSS 'The Territorial Army in Peace: Notes by Col. Liardet' c.1937; J. Verney, *Going to the Wars*, (Harmondsworth, 1958) p.100.

⁵²⁸ War Office, *Regulations for the Territorial Army 1936*, Appendix VI: II - Syllabus of Examination Subjects.

⁵²⁹ Ibid. para.352; *King's Regulations 1935*, Appendix XI: II – Syllabus of Examination Subjects.

⁵³⁰ War Office, *Regulations for the Territorial Army 1936*, Appendix VI: IV – Standard of Qualification; *King's Regulations 1935*, Appendix XI: IV – Standard of Qualification.

⁵³¹ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Maj. Lorie.

made promotion up to field rank 'more or less automatic – a major has to be a real dud to be passed over.'⁵³²

In an effort to improve standards new requirements were added to the promotion syllabus throughout the 1930s. The automatic advance of subalterns was slowed to three years to ensure a 2/Lieutenant received a thorough grounding in his responsibilities, and after 1934 he was required to attend a Young Officers' Course, either at Sandhurst or Woolwich.⁵³³ A similar course for captains was instituted in 1936.⁵³⁴ From 1934 units were also given definite instructions on the standard their subalterns should be reaching at set points in their career.⁵³⁵

Nevertheless, training remained the responsibility of individual Commanding Officers, and for their knowledge and confidence officers depended mainly on instruction within their own units. The quality of this depended largely on the Adjutant, who himself may have been a heavily overworked officer with comparatively little service.⁵³⁶ Some formations did establish centralised training packages, for example in the 68th (South Midland) Field Brigade, RA (TA), where officers were expected to attend dedicated training nights at their headquarters, and a weekend exercise, covering combined-arms tactics, organisation and administration, once a year.⁵³⁷ Equally, however, such training was not always handled effectively. Commenting on the approach in one division, a Regular staff officer noted a tendency to rely on fixed drills and routines that failed to encourage the mental flexibility necessary to consider alternative courses of action. The object and purpose of a lesson was often not confirmed and after some TEWTs young officers were left 'with only a vague idea of what has been taught.'⁵³⁸ Most importantly, officers simply lacked the opportunity to practice command, as

⁵³² LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/25 Brevet Col. R.A.E. Voysey, TA Res. 'Wastage in the Territorial Army', *The Army, Navy and Air Force Gazette*, 22 June 1933 p.503.

⁵³³ War Office, *Regulations for the Territorial Army*, 1936, para.113, 336, Appendix IX.

⁵³⁴ LHCMA Kirke MSS 5/2/8 'Note for RMC Journal' c.1937.

⁵³⁵ TNA WO 231/228 ATM No.12: Individual Training Period, 1933-34: 'Instructions as a General Guide to the Training of the Territorial Army Infantry.'

⁵³⁶ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference held at the Staff College, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Col. Newth; Capt. S.L.C. Lane, (1933), p.135.

⁵³⁷ N.D.G. James, *Before the Echoes Die Away: The story of a Warwickshire Gunner Regiment, 1892-1969*, (Privately Published, 1980) p.70.

⁵³⁸ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/111 '48th (SM) 'Training Instruction No.3 – 1937/1938,' issued by Lt.-Col. Roderick Macleod, General Staff, 48th (SM) Division, 6 Dec 1937.

during the non-camp training period it was claimed that units devoted ninety per cent of their energy on training their men and only ten per cent on their officers.⁵³⁹

As the man responsible for the direction of leadership and training, the ability of the Commanding Officer was often considered the key determinant of a unit's efficiency. As J.K. Dunlop remarked:

The prestige of the whole Territorial Army, that prestige which plays so vital a part in its well-being, is, to a very great extent dependent on the military ability of its senior officers. If these get slack, or out-of-date, if 'TA Colonels' becomes a gibe as 'Militia Colonels' was once upon a time, then the prestige of the force with the War Office and the Regular Army will go away down hill.⁵⁴⁰

Again, however, the efficiency of Territorial senior commanders was a prominent concern. Although the majority of battalion commanders throughout the 1930s had served in the First World War, they did not necessarily have experience of senior command. Moreover, for most of the interwar period there was no requirement to pass a specific course or practical assessment before an officer could be promoted to command.⁵⁴¹

Consequently the quality of Territorial COs could vary a great deal, particularly where it came to directing effective training. As one divisional commander commented, 'Many COs at heart are of the old Volunteer type – they really like drill, sports, competition, etc. and only accept training as a necessary evil. A few of course are training enthusiasts. A very few are not much good at anything.'⁵⁴² Such 'Volunteer types,' rusty in their knowledge, ignorant of modern developments or lacking in their own confidence as trainers, were accused of divesting themselves of their responsibilities, leaving command effectively to their adjutants and failing to train their own subordinates, thus exacerbating the TA's training problem.⁵⁴³ Moreover, some COs insisted on extending their appointment up to the eight-year maximum, blocking promotion and the injection of fresh leadership.⁵⁴⁴

⁵³⁹ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Lt.-Col. Brooke.

⁵⁴⁰ Maj. J.K. Dunlop, 'The Territorial Army', *The Army, Navy and Air Force Gazette*, 1 December 1932 p.967.

⁵⁴¹ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Col. Newth.

⁵⁴² LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/111 'Extract of Letter From Major-General Russell Mortimer Luckock, commanding 54th East Anglian Division on the state of Territorial Army Training, 1938.'

⁵⁴³ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Lt.-Col. Banks; LHCMA LH 1/115/75 'Notes on BHL's [sic] Articles,' 21 May 1939.

⁵⁴⁴ *Hansard*, HC Deb 18 March 1935 vol.299 c.926.

Therefore, Territorial commanders not only had to be good leaders but they also had to be effective trainers. The paucity of men with both these skills, particularly for the purposes of expansion, remained a primary concern. One representative from the Lessons of the Great War Committee, noting the difficulties they faced in 1914, doubted whether they were in any better position nearly twenty years later:

We know how rare the first-class trainer is in regular units – how can we expect to find him in the Territorial Army except in small quantities? The framing of its tactical schemes, umpiring and the general organization of collective training appear to be beyond the scope of the average Territorial Army unit.⁵⁴⁵

As the CIGS dolefully concluded, ‘There are too many who through no fault of their own have no tactical experience and who are not able to train their units.’⁵⁴⁶ As a result interest throughout the force was being killed, quite unintentionally, through ‘untrained amateur direction.’⁵⁴⁷

Improving the standard of Territorial unit commanders proved difficult. They were eligible to attend the Regular course at the Senior Officers’ School at Sheerness, but it was not compulsory and, being three months in duration, most could not spare the time to do so.⁵⁴⁸ As a result most of their own tactical training was in the form of TEWTs, and the only real opportunity to handle their commands (usually heavily under-strength) came during the occasional brigade day at camp.⁵⁴⁹ These, by official dictate, were reduced to a minimum to allow for the focus on junior leaders, so it was possible for a CO to spend his entire tenure without ever actually experiencing command of a complete battalion.⁵⁵⁰ It also ensured that combined arms exercises were rare events.⁵⁵¹ Even if a commander was competent in all regards, the limitations of his subordinates and signals personnel meant that when a larger exercise was held it could be of little value to him.⁵⁵² As one representative from

⁵⁴⁵ TNA WO 33/1308 Supplementary Report on the Staff Conference, 9-11 Jan 1933: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Armitage.

⁵⁴⁶ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS Liddell Hart MSS 1/232/16, Deverell to Liddell Hart, 29 Dec 1936.

⁵⁴⁷ TNA WO 32/2680 The Organization and Administration of the Territorial Army,’ c.Oct 1935.

⁵⁴⁸ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Lt.-Col. Banks; D. French, (2000) p.63; Col. Claude Liardet, at considerable inconvenience and personal expense, attended the course in 1931. He was the only Territorial in that intake. See LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/445 Liardet to Liddell Hart, 26 May 1932.

⁵⁴⁹ LHCMA Kirke MSS 19/4 ‘The Territorial Army in Peace: Notes by Col. Liardet,’ c.1936; TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Maj. Lorie; WO 32/2680 The Organization and Administration of the Territorial Army,’ c.Oct 1935.

⁵⁵⁰ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Cameron.

⁵⁵¹ Ibid. Comment by Lt.-Col Tozer.

⁵⁵² Col. P.A. Hall, ‘The Training of Junior Leaders in a County Territorial Battalion,’ *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol.77 (Nov, 1932) p.586.

London District put it, 'he would be like a skilled chauffeur at the wheel of a car which was not in proper working order.'⁵⁵³

Efforts were made throughout the 1930s to broaden the opportunities for training, and the Senior Officers' School ran the first shorter TA course in 1930, which was both well-attended and regarded as a success.⁵⁵⁴ Those living near the capital could also benefit from the staff course specifically convened for Territorial and OTC officers by Sir Frederick Maurice at the University of London, or the staff exercises held by London District in the gymnasium of Wellington Barracks.⁵⁵⁵ Similar courses were also run at the School of Artillery.⁵⁵⁶ Furthermore, from 1937 onwards training policy declared that at least one battalion exercise had to be carried out in camp, according to a scheme set by the brigade, in order to give COs the opportunity to actually command.⁵⁵⁷

Importantly, however, no real effort was undertaken throughout the period to prepare senior officers for the actualities of mobilisation, and there was little in the scheme of training to fit officers for their duties in war.⁵⁵⁸ Accordingly, as one Territorial commentator noticed, for most of the decade the actual embodiment and mobilisation of the Territorial Army would 'undoubtedly find many senior officers but vaguely informed of what was likely to happen and what their duties would be.'⁵⁵⁹

Yet the greatest deficiency amongst Territorial officers was the lack of strong leadership. Instruction in leadership theory was seen as the hardest element to teach a Territorial, and the least well done.⁵⁶⁰ The commander of 144th Infantry Brigade admitted in 1935 that the standard of leadership and the ability of its instructors fell short of what was required, but although he could increase the standard of the latter through courses and extra training, he could do little to inculcate leadership which, given the

⁵⁵³ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Oldman.

⁵⁵⁴ TNA WO 231/220 ATM No.4: Collective Training Period 1931.

⁵⁵⁵ Maj. J.K. Dunlop, 'The Territorial Army', *The Army, Navy and Air Force Gazette*, 1 December (1932) p.967.

⁵⁵⁶ TNA WO 231/221 ATM No.5: Collective Training Period 1931 (Supplementary).

⁵⁵⁷ TNA WO 231/233 ATM No.17: January 1937.

⁵⁵⁸ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Dick-Cunyngham.

⁵⁵⁹ Lt.-Col. J.K. Dunlop, 'The Territorial Army (lecture)', *RUSI Journal*, Vol.80 (1935) p.316.

⁵⁶⁰ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Col. Clive.

necessary military knowledge, became largely a matter of practice.⁵⁶¹ The lack of confidence shown by some Territorial officers in handling men led to an assumption that Territorial commanders could never be expected to reach a war standard of training in peace.⁵⁶²

Factors such as these inevitably resulted in an uneven standard amongst junior and middle-piece officers. Undoubtedly there were some talented men who were passionate about military affairs, gifted instructors and keen leaders. For example, Liddell Hart championed Maj.-Gen. John Brown as a capable commander and trainer, whose units he claimed showed a higher tactical standard than most Regular battalions.⁵⁶³ However, the diversity of motivation, standard and ability amongst officers is clear from Col. Liardet's own identification of four graded types, namely the 'War-trained'; the 'Enthusiast'; the 'Average Worker'; and the 'Slacker'.⁵⁶⁴ Inefficient officers could be a particularly corrosive problem as under the existing regulations it was very difficult to remove them from their positions.⁵⁶⁵ This could be exasperating for commanders seeking to improve Territorial efficiency. As one Divisional commanders lamented:

The average TA officer has NO imagination – though a few can draw up a simple exercise reasonably well, they are nearly always spoilt by the men starting off from an impossible situation. They cannot picture a situation and I am d-----d if I know how to make them do it.⁵⁶⁶

As a result it is hardly surprising that some attributed the general inefficiency of organisation in the TA to their officers, as the successful planning and management of training required, 'a degree of intelligence, initiative and executive ability which seems unfortunately to be lacking in most of the officers in whose hands the matter rests.'⁵⁶⁷

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⁵⁶¹ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/110 "Training – Annual Camp," Col. A.L.W. Newth to HQ, 48th (SM) Division, 18 Nov 1935.

⁵⁶² TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Maj. Lorie.

⁵⁶³ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/115/11 'Notes by LH on John Brown.' See also Liddell Hart's response to Brown's obituary in *The Times*, 18 Aug 1958. Lionel Wigram, who pioneered Battle Drill as a wartime training technique, was also an interwar Territorial. See T. Harrison Place, 'Lionel Wigram, Battle Drill and the British Army in the Second World War,' *War in History*, Vol.7 No.4 (2000) pp.442-462.

⁵⁶⁴ LHCMA Kirke MSS 19/4 'The Territorial Army in Peace: Notes by Col. Liardet' c.1936.

⁵⁶⁵ TNA WO 32/2680 GOC London District to U.S. of S., 27 Nov 1935.

⁵⁶⁶ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/111 'Extract of Letter From Major-General Russell Mortimer Luckock, commanding 54th East Anglian Division on the state of Territorial Army Training, 1938'

⁵⁶⁷ TNA WO 32/4610 'Memorandum on the London Division of the Territorial Army,' n.d. but May 1938.

Equal in importance to the development of the officer corps was the selection and training of NCOs, instructors and specialist personnel. These men formed the cadres that would provide the instructive and leadership structure necessary to absorb the anticipated influx of wartime recruits. They would also act to stiffen these unpracticed sub-units once mobilised.

Despite their importance, the TA always struggled to recruit enough of these men, and when it did the standard they achieved was often disappointing.⁵⁶⁸ NCOs were selected from what was available in the broader manpower pool, and although sitting a practical and oral promotion exam was compulsory there was no fixed pass mark, as the unit itself dictated the standard.⁵⁶⁹ As a result NCOs were usually chosen from those who attended their drill halls on a regular basis, as ‘a non-efficient trier will serve you in the end better than an efficient absentee,’ but this policy meant command appointments did not necessarily go to the best men.⁵⁷⁰

Becoming a capable leader entailed a higher level of commitment, and it was generally believed that a Territorial NCO had to put in at least double the time he was obliged to in order to become efficient.⁵⁷¹ However, some aspects could not be taught, and it was accepted that some NCOs knew their manuals back to front but, similarly to officers, failed when it came to leadership.⁵⁷²

It was also recognised that effective leaders or administrators did not necessarily make good instructors.⁵⁷³ Gaining competence required training and continuous practice, which was not always possible under the Territorial system. To take one example, the full Regimental Instructors’ Course at the School of Signals was fourteen weeks long, which few men could find the time to attend. On the other hand, the School’s concentrated three-week course was deemed inadequate, as it only covered

⁵⁶⁸ TNA WO 231/207 Memorandum on Training carried out during the collective training period 1925; WO 231/208 Memorandum on Army Training: Collective training period 1926, 29 Nov 1926; WO 231/210 Memorandum on Army Training: Collective Training Period 1927.

⁵⁶⁹ War Office, *Territorial Army Regulations* 1936, para.356.

⁵⁷⁰ TNA WO 32/4610 GOCinC Scottish Command to War Office, 25 Nov 1938; Maj. F.M. Bladon, ‘Arma Tuentur Pacem,’ *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXXI No.1 (Oct, 1938) pp.55-56.

⁵⁷¹ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Col. Clive.

⁵⁷² Ibid. Comment by Col. Flemming.

⁵⁷³ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Col. Clive.

the basic groundwork of an instructor's duties.⁵⁷⁴ Neither was it necessarily possible for Territorials to attend refresher courses, which meant that the instruction given was often out of date.⁵⁷⁵ Although from 1937 each instructor had to pass an annual review to remain qualified, their limited abilities and lack of numbers only exacerbated the frustrations of the increasing number of educated and motivated men volunteering by the late 1930s.⁵⁷⁶

Alongside leaders and instructors, specialists represented the third key category of cadre personnel. Yet during the interwar period the TA particularly struggled to recruit men willing to specialise, especially signallers, range-takers and certain categories of machine gunners. Gaining these qualifications also required attendance at a large number of extra drills, but the lack of financial incentives meant that most men of the right stamp preferred to opt for promotion courses instead.⁵⁷⁷ The General Staff responded by encouraging the use of paid courses to raise efficiency, but the main problem was that units were failing to attract sufficient men of good education and intelligence, and instead were posting incapable men solely to boost figures.⁵⁷⁸ There was also a tendency for specialists to be trained as separate entities, and their lack of integration and ability led the General Staff to believe most specialists were incapable of taking part in tactical exercises.⁵⁷⁹

Once again, improvements were attempted. In order to encourage signalling the Dartmouth Cup was allotted to that specialism between 1926 and 1928, and competitions within brigades were encouraged.⁵⁸⁰ More training courses were organised and in 1932 a new, more practical classification test was laid down for signallers, although too many still failed it.⁵⁸¹ However more success was met

⁵⁷⁴ Lt. R.L.K. Allen, 'The Training of Specialists in the Territorial Army,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.72 (1927) p.735.

⁵⁷⁵ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Dick-Cunyngham.

⁵⁷⁶ TNA WO 231/234 ATM No.18, April 1937; WO 32/4610 'Memorandum on the London Division of the Territorial Army,' n.d. but May 1938.

⁵⁷⁷ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Dick-Cunyngham.

⁵⁷⁸ TNA WO 231/224 ATM No.8 Collective Training Period 1932 (Supplementary).

⁵⁷⁹ TNA WO 231/208 'Memorandum on Army Training: Collective training period 1926,' 29 Nov 1926; WO 231/210 'Memorandum on Army Training: Collective Training Period 1927'; WO 231/207 'Memorandum on Training carried out during the collective training period 1925'; Lt. R.L.K. Allen, 'The Training of Specialists in the Territorial Army,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.72 (1927) p.737; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/104 '156th (West Scottish) Infantry Brigade, TA Signal Exercise, Fairlie Camp, 27th and 28th July 1927'; WO 231/220 Army Training Memorandum, No.4: Collective Training Period 1931; Capt. J.C. Latter, 'The Training of the Territorial Army,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXX No.2 (July, 1935) p.275.

⁵⁸⁰ TNA WO 32/4525 Jeudwine to Lord Dartmouth, 14 Oct 1925.

⁵⁸¹ TNA WO 231/211 'Supplementary Memorandum on Army Training: Collective Training Period, 1927'; WO 231/227 ATM No.11: Collective Training Period 1933 (Supplementary).

in other areas, such as the efforts made over 1929/30 to improve machine gun training consequent to the introduction of a support company, which led to a rise in 1st Class qualifications and a satisfying drop in the failure rate from 14 per cent to 5.5 per cent.⁵⁸² As shown in the figures below, this trend continued well into the later half of the decade.

Qualified Territorial Machine Gun Personnel (as a Percentage) per Year between 1931 and 1936.

Year	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936
1 st Class	55.6	58.7	74.0	79.7	82.2	82.7
Qualified	27.2	28.8	15.3	11.7	8.4	9.26
Failed	4.8	2.9	1.0	1.7	1.4	0.74
Untested	12.4	9.6	9.7	6.9	8.0	7.23

Sources: TNA WO 231/219 Army Training Memorandum (ATM) No.3 Individual Training Period 1930-31; WO 231/221 ATM No.6: Individual Training Period 1931-1932; WO 231/225 ATM No.9: Individual Training Period 1932-1933; WO 231/228 ATM No.12: Individual Training Period, 1933-1934; WO 231/230 ATM No.14 Collective Training Period 1934 (Supplementary) and Individual Training Period 1934-1935; WO 231/232 ATM No.16 May, 1936.

The War Office nevertheless struggled to raise the standard of specialists to a high level. The percentage of qualified range-takers, for example, remained disappointing, especially when compared to the figures achieved by the Regular Army, although signs of improvement were being seen by 1936.

Number of Range-takers Tested and Qualified in Units of the Regular and Territorial Armies, 1931-1936.

Year	Average Tested (Regular)	Average Qualified (Regular)	Average Tested (Territorial)	Average Qualified (Territorial)	Percentage Qualified (Regular)	Percentage Qualified (Territorial)
1930/31	10.2	5.7	4.6	2.7	55.9	58.7
1931/32	10.5	6.3	6.0	2.4	60.0	40.0
1932/33	4.5	3.3	6.4	2.4	73.3	37.5
1933/34	12.0	8.8	7.7	3.3	73.3	43.4
1934/35	13.5	11.0	8.3	3.6	81.5	43.4
1935/36	14.01	11.66	8.80	5.45	83.2	61.9

Sources: TNA WO 231/219 Army Training Memorandum (ATM) No.3 Individual Training Period 1930-31; WO 231/221 ATM No.6: Individual Training Period 1931-1932; WO 231/225 ATM No.9: Individual Training Period 1932-1933; WO 231/228 ATM No.12: Individual Training Period, 1933-1934; WO 231/230 ATM No.14 Collective Training Period 1934 (Supplementary) and Individual Training Period 1934-1935; WO 231/232 ATM No.16 May, 1936.

⁵⁸² TNA WO 231/216 Memorandum on Army Training: Individual Training Period 1929-1930.

For some the answer was to acknowledge the lower standard of Territorial personnel and reduce the difficulty of their qualifying tests, but the General Staff understandably deemed this a retrograde step.⁵⁸³ Ultimately it had to conclude that many deficiencies would have to be accepted until more intensive training could be carried out following embodiment.⁵⁸⁴

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Efficiency at the Individual Level

With the Territorial Army wedded to the cadre system, achieving a high level of individual efficiency was paramount, but defining standards proved difficult. The minimum standard and commitment required from an interwar Territorial differed between the various arms, but in general terms a recruit had to attend a minimum of only forty drills over a year to be classed as trained. Once classed as trained the requirement dropped significantly, most arms requiring about ten drills, although gunners had to attend twenty. If a Territorial achieved these minimum requirements, attended the fourteen-day annual camp and fired the annual musketry course, he would be classed as 'efficient' and qualify for the bounty/proficiency grant.⁵⁸⁵

Some Territorials attended far more drills than the required minimum. In 1934 Eastern Command estimated they could expect up to fifty drills on average from their NCOs, while Northern Command expected around sixty drills from an NCO and well over a hundred for an officer.⁵⁸⁶ However, most Commands reported that they could not expect men to attend more drills than they were obligated, and they had no way to compel them. This explains the importance given by Territorial commanders to fostering a 'club' atmosphere and unit *esprit de corps* as their only tool for encouraging attendance.⁵⁸⁷ The only device a CO had to punish poor or non-attendance was to withhold the bounty/proficiency grant, the threat of which became less compelling as the amount was progressively

⁵⁸³ TNA WO 231/232 ATM No.16 May, 1936.

⁵⁸⁴ TNA WO 231/227 ATM No.11: Collective Training Period 1933 (Supplementary).

⁵⁸⁵ War Office, *Regulations for the Territorial Army 1924*: Appendix VIII; 1929 Appendix X; 1936 Appendix X.

⁵⁸⁶ TNA WO 279/75 Report of the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comments by Maj.-Gen. Marshall and Lt.-Col. Tozer.

⁵⁸⁷ G.D. Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: officer-man relations, morale and discipline in the British Army in the era of the First World War*, (Basingstoke, 2000) pp.13-28, 175-176; D. French, (2000) p.128; D. French, *Military Identities*, (Oxford, 2005) pp.218-221.

reduced.⁵⁸⁸ Therefore Territorials had to be encouraged to train through effective leadership, and man-management was seen as ‘the rock on which the Territorial Army is built. ... You cannot drive a territorial a yard.’⁵⁸⁹

Yet whether men were willing or able to undertake additional training depended on a wide variety of conditions, of which leadership, local employment levels and the conveniences of drill halls were all contributory factors.⁵⁹⁰ In fact, due to the way travelling expenses were calculated until the mid 1930s, a keen Territorial who wanted to attend extra drills would have to pay for the privilege.⁵⁹¹ It was also argued that the proficiency grant was no incentive, as it remained the same no matter if the bare minimum or double the number of drills were undertaken.⁵⁹² Efforts were made to encourage men to turn out by making training more interesting and accessible, for example by promoting the use of weekend ‘charabanc’ exercises, although their expense meant that weekend camps in scattered formations like Scottish and Western Command had both fallen into abeyance by 1934.⁵⁹³ Most Territorial commanders were therefore forced to accept that the many differences between employment conditions, the distance and expense of travel, and family pressures made additional training and even regular attendance impossible to guarantee.⁵⁹⁴

These difficulties meant that efforts to implement a systematic and progressive level of training often failed, as units could never count on the attendance of enough trained men on any given date.⁵⁹⁵ As such a unit’s paper training programme was often entirely divorced from the improvised and unrecorded training that was actually going on.⁵⁹⁶ This problem of continuity was compounded by the constant turnover in personnel. 1925 witnessed an exodus of men as the first post-war engagements

⁵⁸⁸ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, Camberley, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Hildyard; G.R. Codrington, (1933) p.60.

⁵⁸⁹ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Col. Clive.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid. Comments by Maj.-Gen. Burnett and Maj.-Gen. Grant.

⁵⁹¹ TNA WO 32/2680 CRA, 47th Division, TA to War Office, 14 Nov 1935.

⁵⁹² TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Oldman.

⁵⁹³ TNA WO 231/220 ATM No.4: Collective Training Period 1931; WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Col. Clive; War Office, *Training Regulations 1934*, para.21; .WO 231/221 ATM No.5: Collective Training Period 1931 (Supplementary); WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comments by Maj.-Gen. Dick-Cunyngham and Lt.-Col. Geddes.

⁵⁹⁴ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Lt.-Col. Newth; WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Col. Hay.

⁵⁹⁵ Ibid. Comment by Maj.-Gen. Marshall; WO 32/4610 GOCinC Scottish Command to War Office, 25 Nov 1938.

⁵⁹⁶ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comments by Lt.-Col. Hay and Maj.-Gen Grant.

expired, with some 19,206 Territorials declining to re-engage, and in total the TA only saw a net increase of 2,636.⁵⁹⁷ A further 16,210 time-expired men left the following year, reducing the net increase to 1,021, and 16,844 over 1926-27, the TA over that year witnessing a net decrease of 7,079.⁵⁹⁸ This set a pattern that was to remain until the recruiting situation began to improve in 1936, as before this time the TA only showed net gains in strength in 1931 and 1933.⁵⁹⁹

This drain in experience extended to Territorial commanders. For example, in the twelve months up to March 1935 801 men had been commissioned into the TA but equally 760 officers had either resigned or retired, and the turnover per year in NCOs was running at nearly 33 per cent in the early 1930s.⁶⁰⁰ This rate of turnover left some units with an ineffective fringe of old soldiers and young recruits with very little trained manpower in between.⁶⁰¹ As such units had to spend an inordinate amount of time focusing on elementary recruit training, a fact made worse by periodic disruptions to the normal training cycle, such as the cancellation of camps in 1932.⁶⁰² However, by 1934 the War Office had formally accepted that if individual training standards were to be increased they would have to move away from pure voluntarism and improve the Territorial 'offer.'⁶⁰³ As one Territorial pithily concluded, 'more pay, more attendance; more attendance, more efficiency.'⁶⁰⁴

Efficiency at the Collective Level

As has been seen, the standard of individual efficiency in the Territorial Army could vary but in general was decidedly limited. These existing deficiencies had a knock-on effect on a unit's collective efficiency. The test of this came during the two-week annual training period, but as sub-units rarely practiced it was generally assumed that the training should not aim at anything above the

⁵⁹⁷ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.2582 General Annual Report for the year ending 30 Sept 1925.

⁵⁹⁸ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.2806 General Annual Report for the year ending 30 Sept 1926; Cmd.3030 General Annual Report for the year ending 30 Sept 1927.

⁵⁹⁹ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.5104 General Annual Report for the year ending 30 Sept 1935.

⁶⁰⁰ TNA WO 287/251 Statistical Review – 'Part V: Increase and Decrease of Officers by arms during the year ending 31/3/35;' TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Col. Clive.

⁶⁰¹ J. Rowe, *The Sixth Devons and their Origins*, (Barnstaple, 1996) p.27.

⁶⁰² TNA WO 231/226 Army Training Memorandum No.10: Collective Training Period 1933; K.W. Mitchinson, *Amateur Soldiers: A History of Oldham's Volunteers and Territorials, 1859-1938*, (Oldham, 1999) p.197.

⁶⁰³ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by CIGS.

⁶⁰⁴ Maj. F.M. Bladon, 'Arma Tuentur Pacem,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXXI No.1 (Oct, 1938) p.5.

company or equivalent level.⁶⁰⁵ This was reflected officially in the *Training Regulations*, which stipulated that battalion-level training was only to be allowed if a unit was deemed sufficiently efficient, and if the training was closely controlled⁶⁰⁶ Described as ‘rarely justified,’ divisional exercises ‘inevitably entail waste of time’ and were initially forbidden.⁶⁰⁷ As a consequence the Director of Military Training, Sir Hugh Elles, assessed Territorial training in 1932 as ‘invariably of an elementary and strictly controlled nature and in no way represents what may be termed manoeuvre.’⁶⁰⁸

As a result Territorial peacetime units could not be considered as fully functioning cohesive formations. Instead, as the GOC London District described:

The territorial battalion in peace must be regarded as a number of “component parts of a machine” which, owing to the conditions of their manufacture, can never be entirely satisfactorily assembled. Some “parts,” such as the rifle and machine-gun platoons, may be on the way to a finishing process. Others, such as the signal section, can never be more than in the rough. Others again, such as the anti-tank and intelligence sections, do not even exist. The machine as a whole can never work properly under its own power, although it may perhaps be, as it were, slowly hand operated ... It is a waste of effort to undertake training, which, under peace conditions, cannot possibly yield satisfactory results.⁶⁰⁹

Yet despite this units continually ignored General Staff guidance and attempted ambitious training schemes beyond their capabilities, which often ‘did more harm than good ... [as] it only had the effect of “browning off the men so that it was difficult to persuade them to sign on again.”⁶¹⁰

The fact that annual camps were voluntary also meant that they had to have a dual military and recreational purpose, as most COs did not believe they could rely on the allure of military training alone to ensure attendance.⁶¹¹ Therefore, as a recruiting incentive, and as partial compensation for a Territorial giving up his holiday, efforts were made to situate camps near leisure amenities, especially

⁶⁰⁵ Capt. R.L. Telfer, ‘Military Prize Essay 1937: Discuss the reorganization of the Territorial Army in the light of modern developments, such as the air menace to this country and mechanization,’ *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXXIV No.2 (July, 1937) p.219; TNA WO 279/75 Staff Conference held at the Staff College, Camberley, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Col. Hay; WO 231/207 ‘Memorandum on Training carried out during the collective training period 1925: Part III – Territorial Army.’

⁶⁰⁶ War Office, *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations 1923*, (London, HMSO, 1923) paras.8-11; *Training Regulations 1934*, para.24; TNA WO 231/207 ‘Memorandum on Training carried out during the collective training period 1925: Part III – Territorial Army.’

⁶⁰⁷ War Office, *Training and Manoeuvre Regulations 1923: Amendment (No.5)*, May 1932.

⁶⁰⁸ TNA WO 32/2713 DMT to CIGS, 1 Jan 1932.

⁶⁰⁹ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Oldman.

⁶¹⁰ Capt. J.C. Latter, ‘The Training of the Territorial Army,’ *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXX No.2 (July, 1935) p.274; TNA WO 279/75 Staff Conference held at the Staff College, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Gen. Deverell; LHCMA GB0099 Houghton-Brown MSS: ‘Soldier Farmer,’ unpublished memoir (c.1945) p.107.

⁶¹¹ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Lt.-Col Cuthbertson; Capt. J.C. Latter, ‘The Training of the Territorial Army,’ *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXX No.2 (July, 1935) pp.280-282; WO 231/226 ATM No.10: Collective Training Period 1933; WO 231/231 ATM No.15 Collective Training Period 1935.

seaside resorts. However, rarely were such sites also near good tactical training grounds.⁶¹² One brigade commander calculated that on an average day, once inspections and movements to such areas were taken into account, only three hours were actually spent on tactical exercises.⁶¹³

In addition once they got to an area there was no guarantee the training would be effective, as most TA officers lacked the time and experience to properly reconnoiter and select new ground or formulate appropriate training schemes.⁶¹⁴ Training could also be easily upset by factors outside of their control. The Territorials had no influence, for example, over the weather, which on several occasions forced units to cancel all training.⁶¹⁵ Some areas, such as the artillery ranges at Okehampton and Trawsfynydd, were notorious for their variable climate and attendance there was 'viewed as almost equivalent to a sojourn in a penal settlement.'⁶¹⁶ Neither could they do anything about local landowners refusing access, areas declared out of bounds or prohibitions on movement due to outbreaks of foot and mouth.⁶¹⁷

Nevertheless, there is evidence that shows that some Territorials were enthusiastic trainers, keen to plan their training around modern tactical problems and considerations. For example, Col. John Brown, a Territorial who commanded the 162nd (East Midland) Infantry Brigade during the 1920s and was later appointed Deputy DGTA, had a reputation as a tough tactical enthusiast who insisted on realistic training through as many as thirty weekend tactical exercises each year.⁶¹⁸ Other Territorials were also keen to embrace modern combined-arms techniques, and the GOC of 48th (South Midland) Division was anxious that as many officers as possible attended TEWTs held by other arms, in order

⁶¹² B. Liddell Hart, *When Britain goes to War*, (London, 1935) p.320; B.H. Liddell Hart, 'This Territorial Year,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXI No2, (Jan, 1931) p.255.

⁶¹³ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/110 'Outline Programme of Training for the Instruction of Junior Officers and NCOs (Territorial Army) during Annual Camp' by Col A.L.W. Newth, commanding 144 Infantry Brigade to HQ, 48th (SM) Division, 18 Nov 1935.

⁶¹⁴ Capt. J.C. Latter, (1935) p.274; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/110 '132nd (Middlesex & Kent) Infantry Brigade: Training Instruction 1935,' 15 May 1935.

⁶¹⁵ K.W. Mitchinson, (1999) p.198.

⁶¹⁶ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Lt.-Col. Church; B.H. Liddell Hart, 'This Territorial Year,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXI No2, (Jan, 1931) p.245.

⁶¹⁷ Lt.-Col. Sir R. Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry 1898-1967*, (Birkenhead, 1971) p.188; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 5/3/110 '167th Infantry Brigade: Collective Training: Camp - Foedean 1935' issued by Capt. R.B.K. Colvin, Brigade Major, 21 June 1935.

⁶¹⁸ B. Bond, 'The Territorial Army in Peace and War,' *History Today*, Vol.16 No.3 (Mar, 1966) p.162; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/102 'Broadcast Talk on Territorials on Manoeuvres,' 14 October 1925'; 1/115/2 Brown to Liddell Hart, 4 Jan 1926; 1/249/8 Duncan to Liddell Hart, 14 Feb 1926.

to encourage mutual 'team work' and so they may understand intimately the workings, capabilities and limitations of arms other than their own.⁶¹⁹

Yet how well this translated into tactical training on the ground is debatable, and to be truly successful training had to be realistic. Much of this was down to how exercises were controlled. Effective umpiring was essential if an exercise was to have any value.⁶²⁰ Unfortunately, the provision of efficient umpires was another clearly identified weakness in the TA, and one colonel claimed not to know a single Territorial officer who could do it.⁶²¹ As a result the TA relied heavily on Regular units for their provision.⁶²²

These factors led to the common accusation that Territorial training was poorly managed and particularly unrealistic. Partly this was due to shortages in resources and training aids. The Army in general lacked modern equipment but Territorial needs were low in priority for rearmament. One commentator in 1937 considered how:

It was pathetic to note the pride and pleasure of commanders in stating that they actually had 2 trucks of their own per battalion and were able to hire civilian transport for the fortnight in camp; also in one case where they had a demonstration with gas masks and real gas, and in another where they were able for the first time to practice the sending and receiving of W.T. messages in the field in the course of an exercise. ONE Bren gun has occasionally been on exhibit closely guarded by a demonstrator as if it was a priceless piece of pottery from the Ming dynasty, mortars are conspicuous by their absence, as is also training equipment for the Signals and heavy machine gun companies.⁶²³

Lack of training ammunition meant that artillery units had only one opportunity to fire live every second year, and in one infantry unit the Company Training Scheme allocated just five rounds of blank ammunition per day to the attacking force.⁶²⁴ Another division issued a pocket-size aide memoire to help commanders decipher what was meant by the bewildering combination of coloured

⁶¹⁹ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/111 '48th (SM) 'Training Instruction No.3 – 1937/1938,' issued by Lt.-Col. Roderick Macleod, General Staff, 48th (SM) Division, 6 Dec 1937.

⁶²⁰ T. Harrison Place, *Military Training in the British Army, 1940-1944: From Dunkirk to D-Day*, (London, 2000) pp.19-25; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/110 '47th (2nd London) Division TA: Training Instruction No.1 of 1935' issued by Lt.-Col. R. Macleod, General Staff 47th Division, Feb 1935.

⁶²¹ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Col. Flemming; B.H. Liddell Hart, 'This Territorial Year,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXI No2, (Jan, 1931) p.249.

⁶²² TNA WO 231/217 ATM No.1A Collective Training Period 1930: report on the "Territorial Army Year" 1930-31; WO 231/215 Memorandum on Army Training: Collective Training Period 1929; TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Deedes.

⁶²³ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/116 G. Budden, 'Observations on OTC and Territorial Summer Training, 15 August 1937.'

⁶²⁴ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Lt.-Col Church; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/107 'D Coy, Artists' Rifles: Routine and Training Instructions for Collective Training,' July 1932.

screens, flags, rattles, lamps signals, flares and smoke candles used on exercises.⁶²⁵ As Major Astor, the influential owner of *The Times*, rhetorically asked his fellow MPs:

How many hours has a Territorial infantryman to spend lying flat on the grass opposite a man with a flag, who he is told represents a machine gun, or army corps of the enemy? What does he know about the Division except that he and his friends are expected to take it on themselves? No wonder that sometimes he looks rather discouraged.⁶²⁶

In 1936 the General Staff called for a more realistic approach, and therefore wanted the use of flags, for example, to be reduced to a minimum.⁶²⁷ Yet without an adequate number of men there was little other way of denoting missing sub-units. This led to some units adopting a skeleton organisation to complete their order of battle.⁶²⁸ Others experimented with amalgamating their strength and only fielding two companies in the field, although generally Territorial officers deprecated breaking up sub-units and nullifying the *esprit de corps* fostered during the training year.⁶²⁹

This resulted in the standard of tactical ability varying markedly. In the 1930s Territorial troops were still exhibiting an alarming tendency to conduct frontal attacks over open ground without the cover of artillery or smoke, and a general ignorance of the threat of air attack or the need for flank protection.⁶³⁰ Yet the weakness they showed in utilising a combined-arms approach is understandable given that opportunities to co-operate with other units were rare.⁶³¹ When joint exercises were attempted the results were often disappointing, a fact that encouraged Scottish Command into believing that peacetime Territorials could never be trained to a high enough standard to justify them.⁶³²

⁶²⁵ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/108 47th (2nd London) Division, TA: Casualty Screens (1933 Edition).

⁶²⁶ *Hansard*, HC Deb 12 March 1936 vol.309 c.2425.

⁶²⁷ TNA WO 231/232 ATM No.16 May, 1936.

⁶²⁸ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/107 'D Coy, Artists' Rifles: Routine and Training Instructions for Collective Training,' July 1932.

⁶²⁹ "CO", 'The Training of a Territorial Battalion before its Annual Period in Camp,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XI No.1 (Oct, 1925) p.136; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/110 "Training – Annual Camp" by Col A.L.W. Newth, commanding 144 Infantry Brigade to HQ, 48th (SM) Division, 18 Nov 1935.

⁶³⁰ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/110 '132nd (Middlesex & Kent) Infantry Brigade: Training Instruction 1935,'; 'Tactical Schemes,' General Staff, 48th (SM) Division, 12 Dec 1935; B.H. Liddell Hart, 'This Territorial Year,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXI No.2, (Jan, 1931) pp.252-253; TNA WO 231/226 ATM No.10: Collective Training Period 1933; WO 232/229 ATM No.13 Collective Training Period 1934.

⁶³¹ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Maj. Lorie.

⁶³² TNA WO 279/75 Staff Conference held at the Staff College, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Burnett of Leys.

The Value of Regular Assistance

Throughout the interwar years it was accepted that the TA's efficiency depended in large part on the assistance it received from its professional counterparts.⁶³³ Moreover it was seen as a way of 'tightening the bonds' between professional and amateur and of giving the Regular more instructional experience, whilst broadening his general education, thus making him less 'barrack-bound in his mentality.'⁶³⁴ Staff College students, for example, were encouraged to attend Territorial training as a way of educating them in the organisation that would form the Army's framework on mobilisation.⁶³⁵

Regular assistance to the Territorial Army came in three main forms: the provision of Permanent Staff Instructors and Adjutants; courses run at depots and central army schools; and practical assistance during annual training. As most instruction in the Territorial Army was undertaken within the unit, the skill and aptitude of the Regular Adjutant and his Permanent Staff Instructors (PSIs) was vital and it was considered imperative to only appoint the best men to these posts.⁶³⁶ Yet whether they did so or not is debatable.

Ideally adjutants needed to be adept and inspirational instructors, capable of adjusting their mindset to get the best out of part-time amateurs.⁶³⁷ As Gen. Ivor Maxse commented:

To post adjutants who are merely looking out for a sedentary job, a quiet family life which would allow them to read for the Staff College, is a grave mistake. I would prefer successful "training cadre" commanders of whom there are plenty.⁶³⁸

Similarly, as one Territorial CO informed the General Staff, they did not expect 'supermen, but equally they did not want the type of officer who only applied for the appointment in order to avoid

⁶³³ I. Maxse, (1926) p.655.

⁶³⁴ War Office, *Training Regulations 1934*, para.27; LHCMA Kirke MSS 4/30 'Report of the Committee on the Lessons of the Great War, 13 October 1932'; TNA WO 279 /65 Report on the Staff Conference, 14-17 Jan 1929: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Elles.

⁶³⁵ TNA WO 231/212 Memorandum on Army Training: Collective Training Period 1928.

WO 231/221 ATM No.5: Collective Training Period 1931 (Supplementary); LHCMA Kirke MSS 19/4 'The Territorial Army in Peace: Notes by Col. Liardet' c.1936; TNA WO 279/75 Staff Conference held at the Staff College, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Lt.-Col. Tupper; Lt.-Col. C. Headlam, 'Editorial', *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XX No.1 (Apr, 1930).

⁶³⁶ Capt. C.N. Littleboy, 'The Problems of a Territorial Company Commander,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.70 (1925) p.534; TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by the AG.

⁶³⁷ I. Maxse, (1926) p.666.

⁶³⁸ Ibid., Capt. R.M. Rodwell, 'An Infantry Brigade of the Territorial Army at Training: An Impression,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.X No.1 (Apr, 1925) pp.116-117.

foreign service, or to get back from foreign service, or because he wished to hunt.⁶³⁹ Yet in some cases this is exactly the type of officer they got. During this period a Territorial adjutancy was often seen as a career backwater, or only a limited commitment away from the monotony of their parent unit.⁶⁴⁰ Therefore the realities of the workload and nature of their duties could come as an unwelcome surprise. One officer even claimed that if every prospective Territorial adjutant knew the magnitude of the task in advance he would instantly resign his commission.⁶⁴¹

This was made worse by the complaint that Regular units were consistently offloading their undesirable officers onto the TA, and holding back their best men.⁶⁴² Milne always strenuously denied this, although in private Montgomery-Massingberd conceded that the TA was certainly not getting the best candidates and the AG admitted to struggling to find adjutants for some unpopular postings. As a result some officers did have to be sent to the TA against their will.⁶⁴³

Nevertheless, some Territorial Adjutants welcomed their appointments for the relative independence and responsibilities they conferred, and it seems probable that the majority of Territorial Adjutants worked hard to raise the efficiency of their units.⁶⁴⁴ Yet many were undoubtedly heavily overcommitted with administrative and other tasks, especially as COs often delegated to them their own responsibilities, particularly the training of junior officers, as well.⁶⁴⁵ As one adjutant recalled, he was expected to be 'a jack-of-all-trades, organise training, set week-end tactical exercises, run boxing shows, dances, tattoos, have an intimate knowledge of the many regulations which governed the Territorial Army, and act as a sort of father confessor to the officers and men about their civilian occupations.'⁶⁴⁶ Such pressures meant a Territorial adjutancy was considered far more demanding

⁶³⁹ TNA WO 297/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Lt.-Col. Newth.

⁶⁴⁰ Anon. [but Bt. Maj. B.L. Montgomery], 'A Letter of Advice to a newly appointed Adjutant in the Territorial Army,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.IX No.1 (Oct, 1924) p.118; IWM 919 Douglas Forster; R. Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry 1898-1967*, (Birkenhead, 1971) p.199.

⁶⁴¹ Capt. G.G.R. Williams, 'The Territorial Adjutant and his Work,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.76 (Nov, 1931) p.615.

⁶⁴² TNA WO 279/65 Report on Staff Conference, 1929: Comment by Col. Kelly; Col. M. Ansell, (1973) p.63; WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comments by the AG and CIGS.

⁶⁴³ TNA WO 32/2679 CIGS to U.S. of S., 29 Nov 1935; AG to U.S. of S., 21 Jan 1936.

⁶⁴⁴ Maj.-Gen. B.P. Hughes (ed.) *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery: between the Wars 1919-1939*, (Brassey's, London, 1992) p.74; B. Horrocks, *A Full Life*, (London, 1960) p.68.

⁶⁴⁵ Capt. S.L.C. Lane, 'The Tactical Education of Junior Officers of the Territorial Army,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXVII No.1, (Oct, 1933), p.135.

⁶⁴⁶ B. Horrocks, (1960) p.68.

than one in the Regular Army, and his many responsibilities often left him incapable of carrying out his primary task in directing technical and tactical training.⁶⁴⁷

A similar problem was faced with the provision of Permanent Staff Instructors. Again these NCO instructors were considered to be an essential prerequisite to effective training. Equally, though, there was the accusation that Regular units were not sending their best men, and instead were posting those close to retirement with little motivation to do well.⁶⁴⁸ Some were also clearly misallocated, such as horse-trained PSIs being sent to mechanised artillery brigades, and others who were first-rate NCOs proved to be poor teachers when it came to training Territorials.⁶⁴⁹ By the late 1920s the General Staff believed that some were not even qualified to be PSIs and were more of a handicap to the efficiency of their units.⁶⁵⁰ There was also the valid argument that making the PSI a storeman, cleaner, clerk and recruit trainer, in addition to his official duties as instructor and training supervisor and local Regular Army recruiting agent, inevitably made it an unpopular posting.⁶⁵¹

However, the biggest concern over Regular instructors was that there were simply not enough of them. Permanent Staff were a common target for savings and by 1930 their establishment had already been reduced, especially in the infantry.⁶⁵² Although numbers were gradually increased thereafter this was mainly to augment converted units, and there were still no additional PSIs for the teeth arms.⁶⁵³ Furthermore, subsequent increases in permanent staff still failed to keep pace with the rising strength of the TA in the latter part of the decade. In 1927 the ratio of PSIs to Territorials was 1:94, for example, but by 1938 it had actually decreased to 1:100, despite there being a higher establishment.⁶⁵⁴

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⁶⁴⁷ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/23 Lt.-Col Baker, CO, 8th Bn. The Middlesex Regt to Liddell Hart, 13 July 1937 and Report to Middlesex TA & AF Association, 23 June 1937.

⁶⁴⁸ Capt. C.N. Littleboy, (1925) p.534; *Hansard*, HC Deb 16 March 1925 vol.181 c.1991.

⁶⁴⁹ Col. P.A. Hall, 'The Training of Junior Leaders in a County Territorial Battalion,' *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol.77 (Nov, 1932) p.586; TNA WO 32/2680 'The Organization and Administration of the Territorial Army - Appendix 'D': Notes on Training Requirements' c.Oct 1935.

⁶⁵⁰ TNA WO 231/210 Memorandum on Army Training: Collective Training Period 1927.

⁶⁵¹ *Hansard*, HL Deb 26 March 1930 vol.76 c.1038; TNA WO 32/4610 GOCinC Western Command to U.S. of S., 17 Feb 1939.

⁶⁵² *Hansard*, HL Deb 26 March 1930 vol.76 c.1046.

⁶⁵³ TNA WO 32/2679 CIGS to U.S. of S., 29 Nov 1935; TNA WO 32/2679 Creedy to Strathcona, 21 March 1936; For the statistics see TNA WO 390/19, 1932-1939.

⁶⁵⁴ TNA WO 32/4610 'Notes on the 12th Commanders' Conference,' 23 Feb 1939.

After instruction by their own permanent staff, the General Staff considered that the most effective way of teaching Territorials was through permanently established Regular Army Schools, as the instruction they offered was far better than any given by itinerant instructors or locally arranged classes.⁶⁵⁵ A particular model for emulation was the London School of Instruction, which grew steadily over the interwar period, from taking in 16 officers and 51 other ranks in 1921, to 450 officers and 642 NCOs over 1932/33, to a total of 2,401 over 1937/38.⁶⁵⁶ Courses were run for all units in London District and Eastern Command, covering tactics, map reading, drill, weapon and machine gun training and signalling, and during the mid 1930s they had also established an artillery wing.⁶⁵⁷ By 1937 the list of courses had expanded considerably, and the GOC London District hoped it could function as a 'Woolwich and Sandhurst' for the TA.⁶⁵⁸

The School undoubtedly offered good value for money and an effective method of instruction for those Territorials living in London, and these facts encouraged a general movement to set up similar schools in each Command.⁶⁵⁹ However, what was found suitable in the capital was not for other areas, and most Formation or Command Schools were subsequently found to be of only limited value. Although it was accepted that they gave the best instruction, particularly for specialists, most courses were run during the week and men could not secure the required leave from employment. As a result it was usually only the unemployed officer or NCO who could attend, rather than the most competent.⁶⁶⁰ Units also had a tendency to dispatch unsuitable students without adequate preparation. By 1938 the London School was having to waste time and money taking junior NCOs through remedial training on subjects they should have been taught at their units. Units also sent men on

⁶⁵⁵ TNA WO 231/211 Supplementary Memorandum on Army Training: Collective Training Period, 1927; WO 231/217 ATM No.1A Collective Training Period 1930: report on the "Territorial Army Year" 1930-31; TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934.

⁶⁵⁶ TNA WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Grant; WO 32/4610 Commandant, London District School of Instruction to GOC London District, 21 July 1938.

⁶⁵⁷ TNA WO 279/65 Report on the Staff Conference, 14-17 Jan 1929: Comment by Col.Kelly.

⁶⁵⁸ TNA WO 32/4610 Commandant, London District School of Instruction to GOC London District, 21 July 1938.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid.; WO 279/75 Report on Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Cameron.

⁶⁶⁰ B.H. Liddell Hart, 'This Territorial Year,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXI No.2, (Jan, 1931) p.256; TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Col. Clive; WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Burnett of Leys, Maj.-Gen. Dick-Cunyngham.

inappropriate courses, such as acting Lance Corporals to attend Instructor Courses, and 2nd Lieutenants on the Company Commanders' Tactics Course.⁶⁶¹

Additionally, in areas responsible for dispersed formations, as was the case in Western and Scottish Command, it was prohibitively expensive to send men regularly to a centralised School.⁶⁶² Moreover, the instruction undertaken at these courses was almost entirely confined to theory, and only taught, for example, the mechanics of a weapon but little of its tactical employment.⁶⁶³ These factors meant that some courses were not well attended. For example, over 1927/28 only eight officers had registered to attend courses in Southern Command.⁶⁶⁴ Thereafter evening classes became more popular, held either at a unit's headquarters or at nearby regimental depots. However, these courses were also less than ideal, due to the limited syllabus that was taught by most depots and the fact that, by spreading the course over many evenings, it took a very long time to teach very little.⁶⁶⁵

The hard work of Adjutants and PSIs and the availability of centralised courses, regardless of their value, could only go so far to raise standards of efficiency. Definite improvements were thought to require additional larger-scale injections of Regular assistance. Throughout the 1920s Regular units provided Brigade Majors and Machine Gun and Signals officers, as well as specialist NCO instructors. Demonstration platoons and depot training cadres were also regularly attached.⁶⁶⁶ However, despite Commands being actively encouraged to increase their level of assistance to Territorial camps, in 1925 the War Office declared that it did not intend to regularise attachments or make their provision compulsory.⁶⁶⁷ As a result the measure of assistance varied considerably between units.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶¹ TNA WO 32/4610 Commandant, London District School of Instruction to GOC London District, 21 July 1938.

⁶⁶² WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Lt.-Gen. Kirke and Maj.-Gen. Burnett of Leys.

⁶⁶³ TNA WO 279/65 Report on the Staff Conference, 14-17 Jan 1929: Comment by Col. Kelly.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid. Comment by Brig. Luckock.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ TNA WO 231/206 Memorandum on Training carried out during the collective training period 1924.

⁶⁶⁷ TNA WO 231/207 Memorandum on Training carried out during the collective training period 1925.

⁶⁶⁸ TNA WO 231/210 Memorandum on Army Training: Collective Training Period 1927.

By 1929 it was decided that this policy should be reversed and that the War Office should in fact seek to broaden and formalise this assistance. At that year's Staff Conference a proposal was put forward which would dedicate the Regular Army's training resources to the TA every third year. Even though such a plan would effectively cancel the Army's higher training for that year, the CIGS was keen to see it implemented.⁶⁶⁹ As a result 1930 was declared a 'Territorial Year.' The nature of the assistance differed but usually involved the establishment of Territorial-specific courses at Regular depots, or travelling detachments visiting Territorial units, or the attachment of an expanded body of Regular instructors for a given period.⁶⁷⁰ The bonds between Regimental units were also tightened with the introduction of a formal system of affiliation between Regular and Territorial units, and joint camps and training events were encouraged.⁶⁷¹

In all, the 1930 'Territorial Year' trial was judged a success and the conviction that Territorial efficiency relied on Regular assistance was reinforced.⁶⁷² Admittedly, the practical impact of such support could vary. For some units there was no appreciable difference, whilst in others there was a surfeit, which tended to 'swamp' training, either through an excess of demonstrations at the expense of actual training, or by Regulars effectively taking over and leaving the Territorial as a 'spectator instead of an instructor.'⁶⁷³ As a result the General Staff had to remind Regular participants that assistance had to be carefully handled, and that Territorials should be left responsible for preparing and managing their own training schemes.⁶⁷⁴

Although not on so lavish a scale as 1930, later years saw a continuation of this policy, which had, in the eyes of one Territorial Colonel, improved the standard of training by some fifty per cent.⁶⁷⁵

However, this demand also put a great strain on the Regular Army. The amount of assistance given in

⁶⁶⁹ TNA WO 279/65 Report on the Staff Conference, 14-17 Jan 1929: Comments by Maj. Skaife and CIGS.

⁶⁷⁰ TNA WO 231/215 Memorandum on Army Training: Collective Training Period 1929; WO 231/217 ATM No.1A Collective Training Period 1930: report on the "Territorial Army Year" 1930-31.

⁶⁷¹ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by DMT.

⁶⁷² B.H. Liddell Hart, 'This Territorial Year,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXI No2, (Jan, 1931) p.247; 'A Territorial Officer' (J.K. Dunlop), 'The Prestige of the Territorial Army,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXI No.1 (Oct, 1930) p.336; WO 231/217 ATM No.1A Collective Training Period 1930: report on the "Territorial Army Year" 1930-31.

⁶⁷³ B.H. Liddell Hart, 'This Territorial Year,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXI No2, (Jan, 1931) p.248; TNA WO 279/75 Report of the Staff Conference, 8-12 January 1934: Comment by Lt.-Col. Geddes.

⁶⁷⁴ TNA WO 279/75 Staff Conference held at the Staff College, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Maj.-Gen. Burnett of Leys; WO 231/221 ATM No.5: Collective Training Period 1931 (Supplementary).

⁶⁷⁵ TNA WO 231/220 ATM No.4: Collective Training Period 1931; *Hansard*, HC Deb 12 March 1936 vol.309 c.2419.

1930 was considered to be far too generous, and unsustainable if applied on an annual basis.⁶⁷⁶ Many Regular units were hard pressed to offer assistance, especially given their weak home strengths.⁶⁷⁷ For example, 2nd Bn. Gloucestershire Regt. had to furnish instructors for no less than three affiliated Territorial battalions, and this prevented it from undertaking any training of its own.⁶⁷⁸ As Gen. Burnett-Stuart explained in Southern Command's annual report for 1936/37, this was an ever-increasing problem:

The TA demands get larger and larger as Regular resources get less and less. It is a good system and of great value to the TA; but it has got to the stage of interfering seriously with the training of the Regular Army and it will have to be drastically cut down until times get better.⁶⁷⁹

By the late 1930s the Regular Army was at full stretch preparing itself for war, and had few resources available to dedicate to the Territorial Army. As rearmament and recruitment gained apace this problem was exacerbated, leading the General Staff in 1938 to assert that there were definite limits to the level of assistance they could offer.⁶⁸⁰

Integration remained a keystone for the peacetime Territorial Army, and the potential that Territorial and Regular units could train together at the same standard had always been a key (albeit distant) ambition. Therefore a great deal of publicity was given to the Territorial 162nd Infantry Brigade's inclusion in the 1925 manoeuvres (although they only participated in the final exercise due to the personal intervention of the Under Secretary of State for War).⁶⁸¹ In 1929 the General Staff further experimented with amalgamating battalions of the Territorial 133rd Infantry Brigade with four regular battalions of the 10th and 12th Infantry Brigades at Dover and Shorncliffe, and similar trials were carried out during the following 'Territorial Year,' with generally favourable results.⁶⁸²

⁶⁷⁶ TNA WO 231/227 ATM No.11: Collective Training Period 1933 (Supplementary).

⁶⁷⁷ D. French, 'Big Wars and Small Wars between the Wars,' in H. Strachan (ed.), *Big Wars and Small Wars*, (Abingdon, 2006) p.47.

⁶⁷⁸ TNA WO 279/70 Report on the Staff Conference, 13-16 Jan 1930: Comment by Lt.-Col. Newth.

⁶⁷⁹ LHCMA Burnett Stuart MSS: 'Southern Command: Annual Report on Training of the Regular Army 1936/1937,' Nov. 1937.

⁶⁸⁰ TNA WO 231/236 ATM No.20, April 1938.

⁶⁸¹ Surrey History Centre: 5th Earl of Onslow MSS 5447/11/(25) 'Unpublished Memoir'; the official report is contained in TNA WO 279/56 'Report on Army Manoeuvres 1925.'

⁶⁸² TNA WO 231/215 Memorandum on Army Training: Collective Training Period 1929; WO 231/217 ATM No.1A Collective Training Period 1930: report on the "Territorial Army Year" 1930-31.

As a result of these experiments proposals to combine Territorial and Regular training appeared periodically during the 1930s.⁶⁸³ Deverell toyed with the idea of holding joint exercises at Aldershot or Salisbury Plain in 1933, although by the following year he had changed his mind.⁶⁸⁴ However, when the idea of expanding the interchange of Territorial and Regular troops was mooted at the General Staff's 1934 conference it was strongly rejected. This reason for such reticence is probably illustrated by their experience during the 1935 Army Manoeuvres. During this large-scale, three-day exercise the 160th Infantry Brigade, TA was attached to the Regular 1st Division and charged with establishing a bridgehead over the River Test in Hampshire. However, after being engaged on the first night of the operation the 160th Brigade is not mentioned again in the exercise report until the last day, when it was involved in a minor defensive action.⁶⁸⁵ Although the CIGS eulogised their contribution in his final address, it would appear that their divisional commander, Maj.-Gen. Kennedy, gave a more honest opinion of their performance. Confiding to Liddell Hart, he admitted that the Territorial Brigade's performance had been 'very poor – low physique and had gone to pieces within the first 24 hours.'⁶⁸⁶

Evaluation

The TA's ability to fulfil its role was largely contingent on the efficacy of its training, but the standard it achieved between the wars was rarely regarded as anything more than mediocre. During the 1920s the TA remained under-strength and unprepared, as Territorials lacked guidance on how to organise their efforts and were even unsure what they were meant to be training for. Although instructed to concentrate on strengthening a corps of leaders, instructors and specialist personnel, in both size and ability these cadres were of only limited effectiveness. By the early 1930s the War Office had accepted that improving the TA's efficiency was essential if the Army was to mobilise effectively. As a result a consistent effort was made to assess what needed to be done and to introduce a number of measures to enhance Territorial efficiency.

⁶⁸³ Maj. M.K. Wardle, 'Notes on the Territorial Army in Erewhon,' *Army Quarterly*, Vol.XXXIII No.2 (Jan, 1937) p.241; TNA WO 231/231 ATM No.15 Collective Training Period 1935.

⁶⁸⁴ TNA WO 33/1308 Supplementary Report on the Staff Conference, 9-11 Jan 1933; WO 279/75 Report on the Staff Conference, 8-12 Jan 1934: Comment by Gen. Deverell.

⁶⁸⁵ TNA WO 279/76 Report on Army Manoeuvres 1935: 'Outline Narrative of the Operations.'

⁶⁸⁶ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1935/94 Talk with Maj.-Gen. J. Kennedy, 25 Sept 1935; See also P.K. Kemp, *The History of the 4th Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry (TA)*, (Shrewsbury, 1955) p.49.

However, the inherent weaknesses of the Territorial system, many of which were unavoidable corollaries of its voluntary identity, ensured that training standards remained comparatively limited. As such it was impossible for the peacetime Territorial Army as a whole to have been maintained at a high state of readiness, as far as efficiency was concerned. This made the post-mobilisation period of intensive training essential. If the TA had been called upon to deploy even a limited contingent in a short period of time it would have struggled to do so without resorting to a radical re-organisation of the existing divisional structure. As a result it was, perhaps, better suited organisationally to its role as a framework for expansion but, as the efforts to absorb an increasing number of volunteers from 1937 were to show, its weaknesses still prevented it from managing even this limited expansion effectively.

Chapter Six.

Preparing for War: The Role and Efficiency of the Territorial Army in Military Planning, 1937-1939.

Introduction

By the latter half of 1937 the future of the Territorial Army remained uncertain. Rearmament was gaining pace but the Army still lacked a firm policy to guide its preparations. This was largely due to the existing state of flux in British strategy, which meant that, although preparations to fight a modern war were being made, there was no consensus over what the priorities for rearmament should be. The ensuing debate over whether policy should embrace a ‘continental commitment’ or restrain itself to a more ‘limited liability’ has been well covered by historians, but the centrality of the Territorial Army has often been underplayed. In fact, British military policy over 1937 to 1939 chiefly revolved around the priority afforded to preparing the TA for its various roles. It remains true that the initial home defence focus entailed a massive expansion in the Territorial air defence formations.⁶⁸⁷ However, preparing the Territorial field army for a modern, continental war became both a military and political imperative once it became clear that Britain had to make a commitment to Europe. Consequently, the manner in which the authorities approached the TA’s role provides an illustrative reflection of the broader priorities and direction of British defence planning over this period.

As the TA’s responsibility for home defence is detailed elsewhere in this thesis, the following chapter will concentrate on the role of the expeditionary Territorial field army. Primarily, it will trace the development of its role and precedence within wider defence policy, and take note of the shifts in priority as this policy evolved. Secondly, an assessment will be made as to how the TA was prepared to meet its responsibilities as war approached, from the perspective of its administration, its organisation and training, and the state of affairs regarding its manpower and equipment. Thereafter it will be possible to explain how important the Territorial Army was to British military planning during this period, and assess whether or not it was capable of fulfilling its role on the eve of the Second World War.

⁶⁸⁷ See Chapter Nine.

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The Inskip Review and the Move towards a ‘Limited Liability’

After Duff Cooper’s departure from the War Office his requests to confirm the Territorial Army’s role were left largely unanswered. Initially his successor, Leslie Hore-Belisha, continued his efforts to obtain a greater degree of certainty over the TA’s position. Soon after taking office he pushed the Treasury to confirm a timetable that would equip the TA with its quota of training equipment by 1940/41, pointing out that the lack of such sanction was dangerously retarding the Army’s rearmament schedule.

This met with little sympathy, coinciding as it did with rapidly hardening attitudes within the Treasury towards the cumulative effects of piecemeal increases to the service estimates. A recent internal review of defence expenditure had recommended postponing any further spending until each services’ priorities had been identified. These would then be graded according to their perceived value in strengthening Britain’s defences and the nation’s financial and industrial capacity to meet them.⁶⁸⁸ Consideration of Hore-Belisha’s request for the TA was thus postponed until this broader re-examination had taken place.⁶⁸⁹

Conducted over the winter of 1937/38, this subsequent review, established under the Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip, broadly supported the strategic narrative and spending priorities preferred by Chamberlain.⁶⁹⁰ The Treasury was keen to prevent defence expenditure exceeding Britain’s productive capacity or upsetting the orthodox balance-of-payments equilibrium.

⁶⁸⁸ TNA CAB 24/270 CP.165(37) Memorandum on Defence Expenditure, 25 June 1937.

⁶⁸⁹ N.H. Gibbs, (1976) p.465; R.J. Minney, *The Private Papers of Hore-Belisha*, (London, 1960) p.35; G.C. Peden, (1979) p.136; B. Bond, (1980) p.247; R.P. Shay, (1977) pp.159-164.

⁶⁹⁰ For Chamberlain’s approach to strategy, see R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War*, (Basingstoke, 1993); F. McDonough, *Neville Chamberlain, Appeasement and the British Road to War*, (Manchester, 1998); R.J. Caputi, *Neville Chamberlain and Appeasement*, (Cranbury NJ, 2000); R. Self, *Neville Chamberlain: A Biography*, (Aldershot, 2006); B.J.C. McKercher, ‘Deterrence and the European Balance of Power: The Field Force and British Grand Strategy, 1934-1938,’ *English Historical Review*, Vol.CXXII No.500, (Feb, 2006) pp.125-127.

As a result Inskip's report emphasised the deterrent value of financial strength and economic stability as Britain's 'fourth arm of defence.'⁶⁹¹

This is not to say that the review was entirely driven by financial considerations, as Inskip also sought to underpin his review with a clear strategic vision, ranked according to the relative importance given to Britain's domestic, imperial and European commitments. The technical development of aircraft ensured the security of the home base was placed first, as a decisive 'knock out blow' from the air was a genuine (albeit flawed) concern. As an island nation Britain was dependent on imports of food and raw materials and her position as an imperial power, although a source of long-term strength, made her vulnerable in the short-term to a number of foreign threats.⁶⁹² Inskip therefore decided that Britain's first and main priority was its own protection against air attack, followed by the preservation of the trade routes on which the nation depended. The third aimed at maintaining overseas territories. This pushed military co-operation in defence of an ally as the last priority, which could 'only be provided after the other objectives have been met.'⁶⁹³

Inskip's re-orientation of strategic priority away from the continent was reflected in his recommendations for the Army. The Regular Army's primary role was now re-defined as one of imperial defence, including anti-aircraft defence at home, rather than preparing for a European war. As a result the Field Force was capped at a single corps and the Territorial Army largely lost its expeditionary purpose. For the first time during the interwar period the TA's home defence role was given precedence, and the Territorial anti-aircraft programme was to be substantially enlarged. For this Inskip recommended the further conversion of two Territorial divisions and the probable diversion of Territorial troops for maintaining order and essential services in case of air attack. A pool of equipment would be created to enable either two Territorial or Regular divisions to take the field after four months, but the Field Force could not expect further Territorial reinforcement until the

⁶⁹¹ R.P. Shay, (1977) p.167.

⁶⁹² TNA CAB 24/273 CP.296(37) COS 'Comparison of the Strength of Great Britain with that of Other Nations as at January 1938,' 12 Nov 1937; CAB 53/34 COS 644.JP, 'Planning for War with Germany,' 13 Nov 1937.

⁶⁹³ TNA CAB 24/273/41 'Defence Expenditure in Future Years: Interim Report,' 15 Dec 1937.

eighth or tenth month of war.⁶⁹⁴ Although this may have sufficed for a limited imperial expedition, the reduction in Territorial preparedness effectively ruled out a meaningful British intervention in Europe.

Consequently by the winter of 1937 there was almost no support in Whitehall for a continental role for the Field Force or the Territorials.⁶⁹⁵ In addition, the Chiefs of Staff no longer presented a united front on the issue. The Air Staff was reluctant to support a ground commitment that competed with its own plans and Sir Ernle Chatfield, the First Lord of the Admiralty and chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, no longer thought that Britain could afford a large army as well as the air and naval forces essential for home and imperial defence.⁶⁹⁶ Inskip was no strategist and relied heavily on Treasury advice, as well as that given by Maurice Hankey.⁶⁹⁷ Hankey had previously been a staunch defender of the Army's continental role, but by November 1937 the fear of triggering another recession had altered his viewpoint. He now advised Inskip to base the future role of the Field Force on imperial defence, cancel any additional provision to equip it for a continental role and no longer regard the TA as a reserve for a European war.⁶⁹⁸ Inskip himself appeared to understand the risks of abandoning a continental capability, as if an Army did have to be sent to support the French the Government would obviously be criticised for 'having neglected to provide against so obvious a contingency.'⁶⁹⁹ Nevertheless, on the whole his paper met with no vigorous opposition by those in government.⁷⁰⁰

Inskip was also fortunate to have the enthusiastic assistance of the Minister for War, who by the autumn of 1937 had become increasingly reliant on his 'partnership' with Basil Liddell Hart, an active

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid; CAB 24/274 CP.24(38) 'Further Report by the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence,' 8 Feb 1938.

⁶⁹⁵ B. Bond, (1980) p.257.

⁶⁹⁶ G.C. Peden, (1979) p.138; TNA AIR 9/8 'The Potential Dangers to the Security of the British Empire,' 15 Jan 1936; M. Smith, 'Rearmament and Deterrence in Britain in the 1930s,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.1 No.3, (1978) p.324.

⁶⁹⁷ S. Greenwood, "'Caligula's Horse'" revisited: Sir Thomas Inskip as Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, 1936-1939,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.17 No.2 (1994) pp.25-27; See also S. Greenwood, 'Sir Thomas Inskip as Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, 1936-39,' in P. Smith (ed.), *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain, 1856-1990*, (London, 1996) pp.155-189; R.P Shay, (1977) p.165; TNA CAB 64/30 Records of the meetings of Inskip Committee.

⁶⁹⁸ TNA T 161/855/3 'Role of the British Army,' 23 Nov 1937; B. Bond, (1980) p.257; G.C. Peden, (1979) p.138 Peden sees Hankey's advice as the decisive factor in shaping Inskip's priorities.

⁶⁹⁹ TNA CAB 24/273/41 'Defence Expenditure in Future Years: Interim Report,' 15 Dec 1937; B. Bond, (1972) p.129.

⁷⁰⁰ S. Greenwood, (1994) pp.32-33. Eden and Halifax both questioned the advisability of this defensive posture but did not challenge Inskip's priorities.

proponent of a 'limited liability' strategy.⁷⁰¹ Following a visit to the French military manoeuvres and the Maginot Line fortifications in September 1937, Hore-Belisha began to seriously consider whether France needed the commitment of a large British Expeditionary Force.⁷⁰² By November he was reporting his new beliefs to Chamberlain:

My view... is that our Army should be organised to defend this country and the Empire, that to organise it with a military prepossession in favour of a Continental commitment is wrong. The CIGS, although he may overtly accept this view, does not accept it in fact or in practice, and he had told me that he is unable to advise any modification in our organization.⁷⁰³

This latter issue spurred Hore-Belisha to 'purge' the Army Council, ostensibly to make way for younger men but actually to remove those, such as Devereux and Knox, who he considered to be deliberately blocking strategic reform.⁷⁰⁴ As a result Hore-Belisha welcomed the Inskip review and set about reformulating a 'New Army Policy' or 'New Conspectus' that reflected its findings.⁷⁰⁵

Issued in March 1938, this new policy was, at least superficially, a major departure, proposing a Field Force 'more limited in scope than had ever previously been contemplated.'⁷⁰⁶ Reflecting Inskip's recommendations, the Field Force was to be reduced to four Regular divisions with the option of dispatching two more after four months, equipped from a centralised pool. Nothing more than training equipment was intended for the Territorial Army and thus Britain would be left with a very limited expeditionary capability and almost no capacity to expand in an emergency. The situation was made worse in April 1938, when an additional £70 million cut was taken mainly from the equipment pool for the two reinforcing divisions. This ensured that there would be no scope at all to furnish Territorial formations as reinforcements, without which the Regular Field Force could not be sustained once committed.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰¹ A. Danchev, (1998) p.190; B.H. Liddell Hart, *Memoirs: Vol.II*, (London, 1965) p.3; TNA WO 32/4614 'The British Army: Considerations on its Scale, Form and Functions,' 31 May 1937 and 'Suggestions on the Reorganization of the Army,' 8 July 1937; B. Bond, pp.130-132; B. Bond, (1980) p.254; J.P. Harris, 'The War Office and Rearmament, 1935-39,' (University of London, PhD thesis, 1983) p.105.

⁷⁰² R.J. Minney, (1960) p.59.

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.* p.69.

⁷⁰⁴ J.P. Harris, 'The General Staff and the Coming of War, 1933-39,' *Historical Research*, Vol.59 No.140, (Nov, 1986) p.207; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS HB/11/1937/108 Talk with Hore-Belisha, 21 Nov 1937.

⁷⁰⁵ TNA CAB 24/274 CP.26(38) 'The Organization of the Army for its Role in War: Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War,' 10 Feb 1938. Pownall believed that Hore-Belisha submitted this paper mainly to impress his colleagues in Cabinet. See B. Bond, (1972) p.130.

⁷⁰⁶ TNA WO 33/1502 The Organization of the Army for its Role in War, 10 Feb 1938.

⁷⁰⁷ TNA CAB 53/44 COS.827 'State of Preparedness of the Army in Relation to its Role,' 25 Jan 1939.

The TA's Role in the 'New Conspectus'

In Michael Howard's opinion, the Inskip review and its effects resulted in the policy of limited liability shrinking into one of 'no liability at all.'⁷⁰⁸ Others have considered that its adoption effectively cancelled all plans for an expeditionary force.⁷⁰⁹ However, although its capabilities were admittedly reduced, the Field Force did not cease to exist and, importantly, the new policy was not considered to be irreversible by those responsible for implementing it.⁷¹⁰ The War Office did recast its rearmament programme within Inskip's financial limits, but did so in accordance with the General Staff's priorities rather than those pertaining to the new policy.⁷¹¹ As Harris has noted, even Hore-Belisha's handpicked advisers did not believe in his policy, and remained in fact 'convinced Continentalists.'⁷¹² Amongst these were certainly the CIGS, his Deputy, the DGTA and the DMO&I.⁷¹³

Indeed, the best indication of how 'limited liability' was perceived in the War Office was the way in which the Territorial Army was deliberately protected from any large-scale reductions or diversion from its expeditionary support role.⁷¹⁴ Attempts to redirect the Territorials exclusively towards ARP work or the demands of the other services were always vigorously rebuffed.⁷¹⁵ The CIGS and DGTA continued to regard the TA according to its field army role, and plans for its modernisation had little to do with the requirements of imperial or home defence.⁷¹⁶ Ultimately, to paraphrase Walter Kirke, the extant 'limited liability' policy was largely viewed within the War Office as only 'a temporary

⁷⁰⁸ M. Howard, (1972) p.117.

⁷⁰⁹ B.J.C. McKercher, (2008) p.423.

⁷¹⁰ G.C. Peden, *Arms, Economics and British Strategy: from Dreadnoughts to Hydrogen Bombs*, (Cambridge, 2007) p.157; T. Imlay, *Facing the Second World War: Strategy, Politics, and Economics in Britain and France 1938-1940*, (Oxford, 2003) pp.79-84; TNA WO 32/3460 PUS to CIGS, AG, DUS and AUS, 29 Dec 1937; DSD to AUS, 21 Jan 1938.

⁷¹¹ G. Peden, 'Problems of Setting Strategic Priorities: The Inskip Defence Review of 1937-38,' *RUSI Analysis*, 19 Aug 2010 <https://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4C6D0AD6E0810/#.UzVDqChnHzI>, accessed 9 Sept 2013.

⁷¹² J.P. Harris, (1986) p.208.

⁷¹³ B. Bond (ed.) *Chief of Staff*, (1973) p.139, diary entry for 14 March 1938; J.R. Colville, *Man of Valour: Field Marshal Lord Gort VC*, (London, 1972) p.86; LHCMA Kirke MSS 9/1 Unpublished Memoir; R. Broad, *The Radical General: Sir Ronald Adam and Britain's New Model Army 1941-46*, (Stroud, 2013) pp.42-43, 53.

⁷¹⁴ TNA CAB 2/8 CID 332nd Meeting, 15 Sept 1938; CAB 23/92 Cabinet Minutes 5(38), 16 Feb 1938; B. Bond, (1980) p.270; CAB 2/6 CID 297th Meeting, 15 July 1937; CAB 24/275 DP(P)21 The Organization of the Army for its Role in War: Memorandum by the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, 8 March 1938; WO 32/4611 'Organization of the Territorial Army,' 20 July 1938.

⁷¹⁵ TNA CAB 2/8 CID 332nd Meeting, 15 Sept 1938; CAB 53/39 COS.733 'German-Czechoslovak Relations: Review of Plans for an Emergency,' 31 May 1938; CAB 54/2 DCOS 29th Meeting, 25 July 1938; CAB 54/4 DCOS.71 'Memorandum on the Home Defence Measures which could be put into force should an Emergency arise in the near future,' 12 July 1938.

⁷¹⁶ G. Spillan, (1985) p.216.

phase.’ As a consequence it was always considered to be ‘highly desirable that the mobilisation of the Territorial Army should be a practical possibility in the present state of world affairs.’⁷¹⁷

Modernising the Territorial Organisation

Indicative of the War Office’s desire to retain a large-scale expeditionary capability was the decision to remodel the TA along Field Force lines. Gort, who considered that preventing Germany from overrunning France should really be prioritised as home defence, clearly did not believe they could limit their commitment to two under-equipped and poorly manned formations. As a consequence the General Staff justified two separate planning strands within the confines of Inskip’s ‘New Conspectus.’ Involving either a deployment to the Middle East or the Continent, both plans relied upon the ability to deploy a Third Echelon, inevitably formed by the Territorial Army, as well as the capacity to expand. To achieve this the TA was to be organised again into echelons, initially of three successive corps of three divisions, with the mobile division included as soon as it was ready. Peacetime planning therefore earmarked ten TA divisions, leaving the remaining Territorial units to be formed into reinforcing formations after mobilisation.⁷¹⁸

As far as the Army was concerned, therefore, accepting a policy of ‘limited liability’ did not prevent planning for a larger commitment, especially as in the General Staff’s view war with Germany would make such a commitment unavoidable.⁷¹⁹ As a result considerable efforts were made to enhance the TA’s war fighting potential and its readiness to support the Regular Army wherever it was deployed, including against a modern enemy in Europe.⁷²⁰

By early February 1938 the CIGS, realising that the reorganisation programme for the Regular Army was proceeding apace, wanted to get a similar modernisation process started in the TA.⁷²¹ After

⁷¹⁷ TNA WO 32/4246 DGTA to AG, 14 March 1938.

⁷¹⁸ TNA WO 32/4611 ‘Note on TA Units required to complete Regular Echelons of the Field Force, and on the Composition of a Territorial Army Echelon of the Field Force,’ by SD.2, April 1938.

⁷¹⁹ TNA CAB 53/37 COS.707 ‘Staff Conversations with France and Belgium,’ 8 April 1938; CAB 53/42 COS.795 ‘Staff Conversations with France,’ 18 Nov 1938; CAB 2/8 CID 340th Meeting, 1 Dec 1938; CAB 53/40 COS.747(JP) ‘Appreciation of the Situation in the Event of War against Germany in April 1939: Note by JPC,’ 15 July 1938.

⁷²⁰ TNA WO 32/10326 ‘Limitations to the Possible Expansion of the British Army in War,’ 18 July 1938; B. Bond, (1972) p.126; D. French, (2000) p.37.

⁷²¹ TNA WO 32/4611 CIGS to DGTA, 7 Feb 1938.

preliminary discussions with Kirke, in March Gort determined that the composition of a Territorial Division had to match that of its Regular equivalent and that the TA would be a balanced force, including both infantry and mobile divisions with an appropriate proportion of Corps, GHQ and Line of Communication troops. However, the TA was limited to its existing resources and it was to be assumed that no new field units could be raised. Any required adjustments to produce a balanced organisation would have to be made by conversion.

It was intended that the DGTA would coordinate this process but he would do so in consultation with the other Military Members, and the CIGS would retain ultimate control over the form this would take.⁷²² However, this dual responsibility would become an issue, as Gort and Kirke had different ideas on how to approach the reorganisation.

It soon became clear that Kirke wanted to institute a more flexible, non-invasive programme that would not undermine the integrity and cohesion of the Territorial Army. Not only would it have to be achieved within existing budgets but he would also have to achieve it with diminishing resources, as he had to convert another five artillery brigade and fourteen infantry battalions to meet the expanded requirement of the 'Ideal' ADGB scheme.⁷²³ Consequently he steered clear of any plan that could be potentially controversial or divisive. This ruled out peacetime nomination, dismounting the Yeomanry or altering Command and Divisional boundaries, for example.⁷²⁴

Instead he recommended forming a new Territorial Mobile Division, as well as remodelling all the existing Territorial Infantry Divisions according to the Regular Army's modernisation programme. This mainly involved substituting Rifle Battalions for 'Mixed' Battalions, reducing the size of brigades and divisions, and reorganising the RA Field Brigades into smaller Regiments and the Yeomanry into mounted Cavalry Brigades. At the same time a number of new units would be raised, such as anti-tank brigades, machine-gun and tank battalions, in order to restructure the TA into a

⁷²² Ibid. CIGS to AG, QMG, DGTA, DGMP and PUS, 19 March 1938.

⁷²³ Ibid. DGTA to CIGS, 27 April 1938; DGMP to CIGS, 28 April 1938; PUS to CIGS, 3 May 1938.

⁷²⁴ Ibid. DGTA to CIGS, 27 April 1938.

modern, balanced force of one Mobile Division, two Motorised Divisions and ten Infantry Divisions.⁷²⁵

The CIGS, however, questioned whether Kirke's proposals were the best way of preparing the TA for its role. He doubted whether he had a mandate for anything more than fourteen divisions (which had to include four additional anti-aircraft divisions), and preferred to remodel the TA into a leaner field army of one mobile division, two motorised divisions and seven infantry divisions, with any surplus units left over in a pool for general employment elsewhere. He questioned the need for any more than six mounted Yeomanry Regiments, and wanted to see the rest mechanised. Whilst agreeing that nomination was undesirable in principle, Gort also wanted Territorial Divisions reorganised into Corps-sized groups. Although it was probable that seven of the ten divisions would be earmarked for ARP and home defence duties (which would nominate the remaining three for the Third Field Force Echelon automatically), the War Office still needed to know which were selected in advance so they could prepare for both commitments.⁷²⁶

Gort did not simply want the TA re-modeled superficially in imitation of the Regular Army, but he was keen to organise it so it was capable of playing an earlier role in supporting the Regular Field Force. A revised appreciation in 1938 noticed that on mobilisation the reorganised Regular Army would lack a number of key units, particularly amongst the Corps troops.⁷²⁷ Both Gort and the Field Force Committee concluded that Territorial units would have to be used to fill these gaps in the Regular Echelons. As a result some TA units would have to be kept at high readiness, set to deploy within Z+8 and Z+45 days, and long before the Third (Territorial) Echelon was due to be dispatched. Inevitably, these would have to be nominated in advance, as they would have to be maintained at a

⁷²⁵ Ibid. 'Second Paper on Reorganization of the Territorial Army,' and 'Appendix A: Proposed Orders of Battle,' 29 April 1938.

⁷²⁶ Ibid. CIGS to DGTA, 14 May 1938; see also DGMP to CIGS, 28 April 1938.

⁷²⁷ TNA WO 33/1490 'Western Plan: Composition of the Field Force and remaining formations and units not allotted to the Field Force,' 17 March 1938; CAB 53/37 COS.707 'Staff Conversations with France and Belgium,' 8 April 1938; WO 32/4611 'Note on TA Units required to complete Regular Echelons of the Field Force, and on the Composition of a Territorial Army Echelon of the Field Force,' by SD.2, April 1938.

special establishment, provided with a full quota of modern equipment and be included in the Field Force transportation plans.⁷²⁸

Gort's vision for a reconstituted Territorial Army was undoubtedly the most advantageous from a military perspective, and reorganising it into Corps-sized echelons certainly simplified mobilisation planning. Kirke, however, doubted whether such reforms were implementable within the voluntary Territorial system. In a firm response he stressed that the TA was an organisation relying on the goodwill of its members and 'psychologically is very sensitive to shocks.' Unlike the Regular Army, the TA had a strong local identity and they could not simply abolish two divisions and leave an entire geographic area without a Territorial presence. He reiterated that nomination openly in peace would be 'extremely dangerous,' and if units were to be nominated from time to time this had to be kept within the War Office.

There were more practical limitations as well. It was impossible to ready a Territorial unit for deployment within eight days, and Kirke argued that because of this all units earmarked to supplement the First Field Force Echelon and the AASF would have to be a Regular or Supplementary Reserve responsibility.⁷²⁹ He even cast doubt on the intention to despatch a self-contained Territorial Corps as the Third Echelon, preferring to build up the Field Force by attaching TA formations or units to existing Regular formations already in the field. Moreover, Kirke reminded Gort of the risks of committing the TA to an inflexible plan when military policy was still in a state of flux:

Owing to their world-wide nature, British military problems never remain constant for any length of time. They have repeatedly changed since the war and have undergone important variations no less than three times within the last year. This will inevitably happen again.

The present plan is conditioned by requirements of two outside bodies over which the War Office has no control, namely, the French General Staff and the Royal Air Force. Their requirements are apparently not yet firm and it is certain that they will be constantly changing from time to time.

⁷²⁸ TNA WO 32/4611 CIGS to DGTA, 14 May 1938.

⁷²⁹ The TA's inability to support the AASF was confirmed by the Chiefs of Staff. See TNA CAB 53/9 COS 340th Meeting, 13 June 1938.

To base the re-organization of the Territorial Army on such very unstable foundations would mean having to re-organize it at frequent intervals and this would have a fatal effect on recruiting, enthusiasm and efficiency.⁷³⁰

Instead, Kirke argued for the TA to be a 'General Purposes Army,' containing within it all the elements necessary to meet the requirements of the General Staff in all foreseeable circumstances, but conforming to the limitations inherent in the Territorial system.

In spite of his own preference, Gort accepted Kirke's line of reasoning. As such he confirmed that their principle aim would be to reorganise the TA as a balanced 'general purpose' force, maintaining its existing divisional area footprint. It would be relieved of the commitment to provide units for the AASF and the First Field Force Echelon, the Yeomanry would be retained (albeit without any extra brigade headquarters) and any nominations thought necessary for planning purposes would be done in secret.⁷³¹

In order to get this scheme implemented a small committee of Directors, chaired by the DCIGS and consisting of the DSD, DMO&I, ADTA and DRO, was set up in May 1938 to work out Kirke's outline plan. With the three new AA Divisions now regarded as supernumerary, the Territorial Field Army would be remodeled according to the latest '1938 Model' organisation.⁷³² Of the thirteen divisions, nine would be Infantry Divisions formed on the new pattern of three brigades of three infantry battalions each, plus a full complement of Divisional Troops. Another three divisions would be given an increased measure of mobility in peace and subsequently mobilise as Motorised Divisions in war, each consisting of Divisional Troops and two brigade of infantry.⁷³³ This left twenty-six surplus battalions available for conversion into the required machine-gun and motor-cycle battalions, as well as six new Anti-Tank Regiments and six Tank Battalions for the RTC.⁷³⁴

⁷³⁰ TNA WO 32/4611 DGTA to CIGS, 20 May 1938.

⁷³¹ Ibid. DCIGS to DGTA, 20 May 1938.

⁷³² D. French, (2000) pp.41-44.

⁷³³ These were earmarked as the London Division, 50th (Northumbrian) and 55th (West Lancashire) Divisions.

⁷³⁴ TNA WO 32/4611 'Outline Scheme as agreed by a Meeting of Directors held on 16th June, 1938, under the Chairmanship of DCIGS.'

Although the '1938 Model' organisation has been criticised,⁷³⁵ it was undeniably a step forward for the TA in supplanting manpower for mobility and firepower, and bringing some balance to its infantry-heavy composition. For the first time an armoured component was included and the establishment of three motorised divisions, including motorcycle reconnaissance battalions, would give the TA a flexible, mobile capability which was not found elsewhere in the Army. Reorganisation also permitted a reallocation of surplus infantry, allowing the artillery to be augmented and modernised along Regular Army lines and for dedicated anti-tank and light anti-aircraft units to be formed. Although the Yeomanry would remain mounted they would be properly organised into Cavalry Brigades, and the Armoured Car Companies converted into Light Tank Regiments to provide the mechanised cavalry for the Mobile Division and the first Territorial Echelon to the Field Force. The field army would also receive an uplift in its support elements, including additional cadres for Engineers, Signals and RASC units, and a wholesale expansion of the RAOC to reflect the technical nature of the Army, as well as an uplift in Corps and Army Troops.⁷³⁶

The next step was to get what really amounted to an expansion scheme accepted by the Government. Gort realised that the Cabinet was under the impression that any expansion in ADGB would be offset by a corresponding decrease in the overall size (and cost) of the TA.⁷³⁷ He therefore compiled a closely argued explanation for why he insisted they retain all of the Territorial divisions, stressing that although the new formations would be smaller they were responsible for a greater number of non-divisional units and pointing out that the territorial system of recruitment made it undesirable to break up the existing framework at a time when 'the nation would be likely to regard any reduction in the number of Territorial Divisions as out of keeping with the realities of the times.'⁷³⁸

⁷³⁵ D. French, (2000) pp.42-44; D. Delaney, *Corps Commanders: Five British and Canadian Generals at War, 1938-45*, (2011, Vancouver, BC) pp.66-67; S. Bidwell, *Gunners at War*, revised edn. (London, 1972) pp.129-130.

⁷³⁶ TNA WO 32/4611 'Outline Scheme as agreed by a Meeting of Directors held on 16th June, 1938, under the Chairmanship of DCIGS.'

⁷³⁷ TNA CAB 24/274 CP.26(38) 'The Organization of the Army for its Role in War,' 10 Feb 1938

⁷³⁸ TNA WO 32/4611 'Organization of the Territorial Army,' 20 July 1938. The proposals were submitted to the CID as CAB 4/28 CID 1469-B 'The Reorganization of the Territorial Army,' 26 Sept 1938.

Gort's reasoning convinced Hore-Belisha and he was backed up by the DGTA, who informed Hore-Belisha that if it was not passed he intended to resign and ventilate the matter in the press.⁷³⁹ Presented as a military necessity, the proposals nevertheless were opposed by the Secretary of State for Air, Kingsley Wood, and Samuel Hoare, the Home Secretary, who were both suspicious that it would divert resources from air defence. Fortunately, however, Hore-Belisha had the decisive support of the Treasury through Warren Fisher, who, deprecating any further reductions in the strength of the TA, ensured the plan was approved.⁷⁴⁰

Reforming the Territorial Administration

While the War Office proceeded with modernising the organisation of the Territorial Field Army, parallel efforts were also made to reform the way it was administered. As detailed above, by 1935 administrative responsibility for the TA had been transferred to the relevant Military Member of the Army Council, bringing it into line with the rest of the Army. Soon after taking over as DGTA, however, Kirke pushed to reverse this policy and restore the position of the Director General and his Directorate.⁷⁴¹ Arguing that the new system had failed to achieve its aims, Kirke pointed out that 'the average civilian, of whom the Territorial Army is composed, does not and never will understand the intricacies of the War Office organisation and regards the Director General as the person to whom he should write on almost any subject.'⁷⁴² Lacking secretarial and executive staff, the DGTA believed he was left 'chained to the War Office,' and incapable of performing his new role as inspector and advisor to the Army Council on TA matters.

Yet reversing the decision to place the TA under the Army Council members would undermine the progress made thus far and jeopardise future developments. As the AG, Lt.-Gen. Harry Knox, pointed out:

When the time comes for Territorial Army rearmament, this question will be the most important problem before the War Office Staff of the time. The present organization forms a good point of departure for the developments of 3 years hence.⁷⁴³

⁷³⁹ LHCMA Kirke MSS 9/1 Unpublished Memoir.

⁷⁴⁰ TNA CAB 2/8 CID 333rd Meeting, 6 Oct 1938.

⁷⁴¹ LHCMA Kirke MSS 9/1 Unpublished Memoir.

⁷⁴² TNA WO 32/11799 DGTA to U.S. of S., 30 June 1936.

⁷⁴³ Ibid. 'Extract from Proceedings of the 576th Military Members' Meeting held on 24 Sept 1936.'

Although the Military Members agreed to approve an increase in the DGTA's clerical staff, the delays caused by the lack of a firm Cabinet decision on TA policy caused creeping doubts as to whether they were following the right path. Strathcona and Creedy quietly pushed for a reversion to the old system and Deverell now broadly agreed.⁷⁴⁴

The plain truth is that the TA cannot be administered in peace on the same line as the Regular Army. The TA is administered by the County Associations; and, having worked with many of them, I am convinced that smoothness and efficiency can only be secured by allowing them to deal with one senior officer at the War Office, selected for his knowledge of them and the TA generally.⁷⁴⁵

Logically that senior officer had to be the DGTA, but not all of the Military Members wanted to see this happen. The AG put up a spirited defence of the new system, accusing the DGTA of having a very coloured view of the benefits of the old arrangement (of which Kirke had no experience) and that the Territorial Directorate had never been, nor ever could, act as 'a miniature War Office,' as there would still be subjects over which the DGTA would have to consult the relevant Military Member.⁷⁴⁶

However, the AG could not convince the CIGS or Hore-Belisha, especially after the latter, keen to publicise the TA as much as possible, came down in favour of magnifying the importance of the DGTA's Department. The new importance accorded to publicly enhancing the Territorial Army's profile was also made clear when the DGTA was himself raised onto the Army Council. Kirke knew that this decision was primarily intended to increase the TA's cachet, and that it was taken 'in the teeth of a good deal of opposition from [the Army Council's] existing members.'⁷⁴⁷ Indeed, Kirke had proposed the idea himself as being 'the one thing which would do more at one blow to raise the prestige of the Territorial Army than anything else.'⁷⁴⁸

However, although these decisions were applauded as an example of the renewed importance in which the War Office viewed the TA, it also ensured that the recruitment, organisation and administration of the Territorial and Regular Armies were once more separated.⁷⁴⁹ The Adjutant-General made one final effort to reverse this policy in early 1939, but faced with Kirke's steadfast

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid. PUS to S. of S., 8 June 1937; U.S. of S., 15 June 1937.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid. CIGS to S. of S., 9 July 1937.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid. Minute by AG, 26 July 1937; AG to S. of S., 5 Aug 1937.

⁷⁴⁷ LHCMA Kirke MSS 9/1 Unpublished Memoir; TNA WO 163/47 Informal Army Council 6th Meeting, 14 Oct 1937.

⁷⁴⁸ TNA WO 32/11799 DGTA to S of S, 3 Sept 1937.

⁷⁴⁹ LHCMA Adam MSS 3/2 'Paper by A.G. on Use of Manpower in the Army,' 21 Nov 1941.

opposition the revised system was upheld, although Liddell insisted they devise the means to expedite the transfer of responsibilities on mobilisation. His recommendation that they establish a separate AG.1(TA) branch within his Department to handle Territorial matters was duly approved in March 1939, but this did not prevent a great deal of disruption, as the AG always predicted, once the order to mobilise was issued six months later.⁷⁵⁰

In addition to these internal attempts at reform were more far-reaching efforts to modernise how the TA was administered at the local level, through the County Associations. The War Office was forced to accept that Associations were quasi-independent bodies, and they could not dictate on matters that lay within the latter's orbit. However, the dual system of administration was also acknowledged to be costly and inefficient. The GOC of 51st (Highland) Division, for example, had to cooperate with no less than twenty-one individual Associations, and the experience of having to deal with them and their powerful Secretaries could leave commanders exasperated.⁷⁵¹ Most Territorial officers had little contact or knowledge of their Associations, one later recounting that in his battalion they were 'usually known and referred to as "the Owners" and were thought of as some rather quaint and obscure old gentlemen who kept far too tight a grasp on the purse-strings.'⁷⁵² This lack of familiarity, on top of the financial challenges and recriminations of earlier decades, had generated an adversarial atmosphere by the late 1930s, whereby County Associations were often at odds with the Treasury, War Office and even the units they administered.⁷⁵³

Those responsible for enhancing Territorial efficiency argued that this situation could not be allowed to continue, particularly as some Associations were still accruing large surpluses, shortchanging both

⁷⁵⁰ TNA WO 163/68 CCAC Paper No.192 'Administration of the Territorial Army in the War Office,' 6 March 1939; CCAC 46th Meeting, 9 March 1939; LHCMA Adam MSS 3/2 'Paper by A.G. on Use of Manpower in the Army,' 21 Nov 1941.

⁷⁵¹ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 F. Pile, 'Review of the Anti-Aircraft Defence of London,' n.d. but c.Oct 1938; 15/3/23 'Notes on some of the Present Difficulties in the Territorial Army,' 28 Nov 1936; A.L.W. Newth to R. Macleod, 10 Jan 1938; Lt.-Gen. W.D.S. Brownrigg, 'The Development of the Territorial Army (Lecture),' *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol.83 (1938) pp.495-496; Lt.-Gen. D. Brownrigg, *Unexpected*, (London, 1942) p.112, 124. Brownrigg replaced Kirke as DGTA in July 1939.

⁷⁵² P.K. Kemp, *The History of the 4th Battalion, King's Shropshire Light Infantry (TA)*, (Shrewsbury, 1955).

⁷⁵³ R. Holmes, 'Past, Present and Future: The Territorial Army beyond SDR,' in A. Alexandrou, R. Bartle and R. Holmes, (eds.) *Human Resource Management in the British Armed Forces*, (London, 2001) p.92.

the taxpayer and the Territorial units that were the intended recipients.⁷⁵⁴ Aware of these accusations, the War Office set up a committee in December 1937 to examine the organisation and finance of the County Associations, and recommend ways to simplify administration between War Office, Associations and their units.⁷⁵⁵ Submitted in August 1938 and ranging over a broad area, its consequent report noted many of the faults in the existing system.⁷⁵⁶ However, the committee stepped back from abolishing the dual administration system, stating that the effective running of a voluntary citizen force required a diverse and elastic approach achievable only under the local, decentralised control of the Associations. Instead the committee recommended that the Associations adopt a better business approach towards their responsibilities, more along the lines of a public utility undertaking, which would take value to the consumer, i.e. the Territorial Army, as its criterion rather than profit.

Nevertheless, the way in which the Association's managed their grants was overhauled, with the most important recommendation being the transference of all travelling expenses to Commands. As a result the GOCinC was now entirely responsible for arrangements connected with training and resolved the ugly disputes between services chargeable to Association funds and the Training Grant. This streamlined the provision of expenditure on instruction outside of the camp period, which led to an increase from £223,500 in 1938 to £541,000 in 1939. Total grants for training purposes, which reflected the higher strength of the TA and included camp pay and proficiency grants, were also raised from £1,767,000 to £2,891,500.⁷⁵⁷ Despite this, however, the committee's recommendations were still rather conservative in scope, and were implemented too late to have any real influence on Territorial efficiency before war was declared.

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⁷⁵⁴ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 13/3/25 'Territorial Finance to be Reviewed,' *Daily Telegraph*, 17 Nov 1937; *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.5853 'Statement showing the Financial Position of Territorial army County Associations on 31 March 1938' showed a net surplus of £423,000.

⁷⁵⁵ *Hansard*, HC Deb 23 Nov 1937 vol.329 c.1007.

⁷⁵⁶ TNA WO 163/600 'Report of the Committee on the Territorial Army Finance and Organization,' Aug 1938.

⁷⁵⁷ *Parl. Papers* (59) Army Estimates 1939.

The Continental Commitment: The TA's Role in Military Policy and Planning, 1938-39

The approval given in late 1938 to modernise the TA was important for long-term planning, but it did little to immediately improve Territorial efficiency or develop its capabilities during a period of recurrent tension and emergencies. The Sudeten Crisis had exposed Britain's military weakness and the pessimism of the Chiefs of Staff helped to ensure that a robust foreign policy approach was not an option.⁷⁵⁸ Yet, after an initial period of complacent optimism, the realisation of the high strategic and diplomatic costs of the Munich agreement, and the mounting evidence that conciliation had failed to realise a permanent settlement, began to undermine faith in a 'limited liability.' The limits of Britain's political resolve were clear and France had been detached from her strongest Eastern European ally with little in the way of recompense. This in turn led to alarming reports that France was beginning to consider a policy of isolation, content to leave Britain to face a resurgent Germany, as well as Italy and Japan, alone.⁷⁵⁹ As the British ambassador in Paris remarked, without a greater military contribution the French could only recognise the 'antithesis between blood and sweat in constant danger on the one side and treasure and sweat in comparative security on the other.'⁷⁶⁰

The strategic consequences of the Munich agreement also alarmed the General Staff. In October they pointed out that the loss of Czechoslovakian arms and the collapse of a viable Eastern Front meant that Britain would have to make up the difference with a definite military commitment.⁷⁶¹ By this time Hore-Belisha had also largely abandoned his own policy and, convinced that the Army would have to be sent to Europe, began pressing for the expeditionary force to be prepared along more realistic, continental lines.⁷⁶²

⁷⁵⁸ B. Bond, (1980) p.277; TNA CAB 53/37 COS.698 'Military Implications of German Aggression against Czechoslovakia,' 28 March 1938; CAB 24/268 COS.765 'Appreciation of the Situation in the Event of War against Germany,' 14 Sept 1938; CAB 53/41 COS.767 'Appreciation of the Situation in the Event of War against Germany,' 4 Oct 1938; J.P. Harris, (1983) pp.134-135; R. Macleod and D. Kelly (eds.), *The Ironside Diaries, 1937-1940*, (London, 1962) p.54; CAB 53/42 COS.799 'France-British Cooperation in the Organization of National Defence,' 21 Nov 1938.

⁷⁵⁹ M. Dockrill, *British Establishment Perspective on France, 1936-40*, (London, 1999) pp.113-131; T. Imlay, (2003) p.85.

⁷⁶⁰ Quoted in T. Imlay, (2003) p.86. Imlay has also noted how the French staff, with the collaboration of their British counterparts, manipulated these fears in order to harden British policy towards a continental commitment. See. T. Imlay, 'The Making of the Anglo-French Alliance, 1938-39,' in M. Alexander and W. Philpott, *Anglo-French Defence Relations between the Wars*, (Basingstoke, 2002) pp.92-113.

⁷⁶¹ TNA CAB 21/510 'The Role of the Army in the light of the Czechoslovakian Crisis,' Oct 1938; B. Bond, (1972) diary entry for 3 Oct 1938, p.164.

⁷⁶² I. Grimwood, (2006) pp.90-91; B. Bond, (1972) pp.169-172.

Yet re-establishing this capability would largely depend on accelerating the readiness of the Territorial Army. A report compiled in October stated that the Regular Army's rearmament programme would be complete (less reserves) by August 1939, but the chronic deficiencies in the TA would leave it incapable of reinforcing a Field Force within the required timeframe.⁷⁶³ Alarmed by this prospect, the General Staff resuscitated its plans to prepare a re-scaled Regular expeditionary force at higher readiness, backed by an initial Territorial Echelon of four divisions ready after four months, and a second and third echelon at the six and eight month point respectively.⁷⁶⁴ This was a political as well as a military imperative, as the DMO&I noted:

He [Hore-Belisha] realized that very soon the TA will get wise to the fact that they are to have only about 30 per cent to 40 per cent of training equipment, and later it will emerge that they are to have no war reserves whatever – when either or both of these facts emerge there'll be the devil of a row and his head, at least, will be on the block.⁷⁶⁵

However, this proposal initially met with a lukewarm response in Cabinet. Although Hore-Belisha claimed that the General Staff only wanted to increase the effectiveness and not the size of the Army, the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, realised that what he was really asking for was a reversal of the existing policy.⁷⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Hore-Belisha was politically savvy enough to understand that, given the misgivings amongst his Ministerial colleagues, they should downplay the strategic arguments for a continental commitment.

This proved to be an astute move and Hore-Belisha presented his revised paper on 13 December.⁷⁶⁷ Carefully arguing that the Army was only considering its existing responsibilities, Hore-Belisha requested an additional £81 million in order to ensure the Field Force had the reserves to sustain itself in a modern war. Of key importance, and using the experience of 1914 as a case in point, Hore-Belisha insisted they also had to maintain a viable method of reinforcing the Field Force. For this the

⁷⁶³ TNA CAB 24/279 CP.234(38) 'Defence Preparations: forecast of supply position and basis of future policy,' 21 Oct 1938.

⁷⁶⁴ TNA CAB 27/648 Committee on Defence Programmes and their Acceleration, 4th meeting, 1 Nov 1938; B. Bond, (1980) p.290.

⁷⁶⁵ B. Bond, (1972) p.167, entry for 31 Oct 1938.

⁷⁶⁶ I. Grimwood, (2006) p.91; B. Bond, (1972) p.167, entry for 24 Oct 1938; p.169, entry for 7 Nov 1938.

⁷⁶⁷ TNA CAB 24/282 CP.27(39) 'The State of Preparedness of the Army in Relation to its Role,' 13 Dec 1938.

first four Territorial divisions had to be provided with war equipment and reserves in peace, and the remainder issued with equipment beyond the bare minimum for training.⁷⁶⁸

Taking rearmament in its entirety, Hore-Belisha's requests were rather minor considering the magnitude of the situation and the defence budget of some £2 billion.⁷⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the implications they had on policy meant they were still too contentious for the CID to agree upon.⁷⁷⁰ The issue was thereafter passed to the Chiefs of Staff, and amongst his peers Gort was able to fully convey the strategic justification behind the proposals.⁷⁷¹

He argued that a war with Germany could not be fought according to limited principles, and possessing an expeditionary force capable of shielding the Low Countries and Channel ports was vital for Britain's own defence, as well as an essential buttress to the French. Moreover, Gort recognised that the first few Regular divisions 'cannot be expected to stand up indefinitely to hammer blows without relief,' and so ensuring they were promptly reinforced by successive Territorial echelons was critical. He believed that it was perfectly possible, once sufficient war potential had been built up, to maintain and despatch all of the Territorial divisions in their respective echelons, but only as long as the necessary preparations had been made in peace.⁷⁷²

However, it was these expanded proposals for the Territorial Army that prevented the Chiefs from reaching agreement. Although Ismay and Backhouse agreed that the CIGS had a strong argument, the Chairman and Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Cyril Newall, disagreed with Gort's strategic assumptions and stated that equipping the Territorial divisions would only constitute the first step in what would become an unlimited military expansion.⁷⁷³

⁷⁶⁸ Ibid.; CAB 53/43 COS.811 'State of Preparedness of the Army: Memorandum by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff,' 2 Dec 1938.

⁷⁶⁹ TNA CAB 53/10 COS 268th Meeting, 18 Jan 1939.

⁷⁷⁰ TNA CAB 2/8 CID 341st Meeting, 15 Dec 1938.

⁷⁷¹ TNA CAB 53/43 COS.811 'Present Policy in Light of Recent Developments,' 2 Dec 1938.

⁷⁷² TNA CAB 51/10 Gort to Ismay, 21 Dec 1938.

⁷⁷³ TNA CAB 53/10 COS 265th Meeting, 21 Dec 1938; At this stage the Air Staff still believed that a strategic bombing offensive had the best chance of winning a European war, a feat the Army certainly could not achieve. See AIR 8/250 Newall to Wood, 4 Nov 1938; AIR 8/246 'The Situation of the Bomber Force in Relation to the Principle of Parity,' 2 Nov 1938.

This lack of consensus amongst the Chiefs, as well as between Ministers, shows how there were still those who preferred maintaining a limited liability. However, as 1938 passed into 1939 it became increasingly clear, as Bond has put it, that the ‘strategic arguments in favour of limited liability, whether valid or not, were fast becoming irrelevant.’⁷⁷⁴ When the Chiefs reconvened in the new year they agreed that the ability to despatch a modern, well-equipped expeditionary force was now a clear necessity.⁷⁷⁵ They accepted that at least part of the TA had to be readied for deployment early in a war, even if only to relieve Regular garrisons or partake in subsidiary operations, although they disagreed over the exact scale of the commitment. Newell, for example, wanted only four Territorial divisions to be fully equipped, and the rest of the TA used as a general reserve, whilst Backhouse thought that if the Field Force was restricted to only ten divisions they should cut the size of the TA, as retaining surplus formations without any equipment or a viable role would be a ‘sham.’

Gort, however, remained strongly opposed to any reductions, as this would only reduce the Army’s framework for its inevitable expansion in wartime. Furthermore, he reminded the Chiefs that it was not ‘practical politics to reduce the Territorial Army, which was now the emblem of patriotism for the nation. The moral effect of any such reduction would be disastrous.’⁷⁷⁶ This reasoning carried the debate and, although their subsequent report did not openly reject existing government policy, the Chiefs did clearly suggest that it was flawed and, in light of developments on the continent, now inappropriate.

Hore-Belisha could thus justify his proposals to Cabinet by stating that without the TA the Field Force could not be deployed, as it would be impossible to maintain once committed. In addition, the very act of equipping these formations would ensure that sufficient industrial war potential was built up which, once hostilities had commenced, could quickly expand to maintain and then augment that

⁷⁷⁴ B. Bond, (1980) p.296.

⁷⁷⁵ TNA CAB 53/10 COS 268th Meeting, 18 Jan 1939.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid. COS 269th Meeting, 24 Jan 1939.

force. This prior preparation, as Hore-Belisha explained, would enable them to ‘maintain a flow of troops overseas from the beginning of the war to the end.’⁷⁷⁷

Now it only remained to get authority for the TA to be re-equipped. The Chiefs argued that the limiting factor in Territorial mobilisation should be the time required to train the units, rather than the time required to produce their equipment. As the General Staff considered it would take four months of embodied training before a Territorial formation was fit to deploy, this period was considered the maximum before a contingent of the TA could take the field.⁷⁷⁸ However, under its existing, pooled equipment scales Territorial units would be incapable of training individually on embodiment and the lack of reserves alone meant that deployment would be delayed by between eight and twelve months.⁷⁷⁹ As a consequence, in early 1939 the TA was judged to be incapable of mobilising effectively, a fact that Hore-Belisha warned the Cabinet would put British soldiers in unnecessary danger once they were deployed.⁷⁸⁰

As the international situation continued to deteriorate a quick decision was vital. A ‘war scare’ in January 1939 over an imminent German attack on Holland meant that a threat to the Low Countries was now confirmed as a *casus belli*, and a consequent agreement on staff conversations with France all but constituted an alliance.⁷⁸¹ In this pressured atmosphere Chamberlain realised the need to improve Britain’s military preparations, and, although the rate in which the Field Force echelons were to be dispatched was slowed to save money, Hore-Belisha’s proposals were generally approved.⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁷ TNA CAB 23/97/8 CC.8(39) Cabinet Conclusions, 22 Feb 1939.

⁷⁷⁸ TNA CAB 53/44 COS.827 ‘State of Preparedness of the Army in Relation to its Role,’ 25 Jan 1939.

⁷⁷⁹ TNA CAB 23/97/5 CC.5(39) Cabinet Conclusions, 2 Feb 1939; CAB 53/43 COS.821 ‘Explanation of the Modification to the Army Programme,’ 9 Jan 1939; CAB 53/44 COS.831(JP) ‘European Situation 1939-1940: Note by the Joint Planning Sub-Committee,’ 26 Jan 1939.

⁷⁸⁰ TNA CAB 23/97/5 CC.5(39) Cabinet Conclusions, 2 Feb 1939.

⁷⁸¹ B. Bond, (1980) p.299; TNA CAB 53/44 COS.829 ‘German Aggression against Holland,’ 23 Jan 1939; CAB 24/282 CP.3(39) ‘Possible German Aggression against Holland: Report by Foreign Policy Committee,’ 27 Jan 1939.

⁷⁸² TNA CAB 23/97/5 CC.5(39) Cabinet Conclusions, 2 Feb 1939; CAB 23/97/8 CC.8(39) Cabinet Conclusions, 22 Feb 1939; CAB 24/283 CP.49(39) The State of Preparedness of the Army in Relation to its Role: Memorandum by the Prime Minister,’ 18 Feb 1939.

The General Staff were pleased with this result. Pownall described it as a ‘historic week’ for the Army, and a ‘great victory’ in its campaign to prepare for a continental role.⁷⁸³ Pownall was not being merely histrionic, as by authorising the preparation of the Field Force, and particularly the Territorials, Chamberlain had tacitly accepted a reversal in policy, admitting that he no longer saw an alternative. Indeed, he had already made statement in Parliament confirming that ‘any threat to the vital interests of France from whatever quarter it came must evoke the immediate co-operation of this country.’⁷⁸⁴ The formal commitment to France, embodied in the Field Force and the reconditioned TA, now gave this statement force and, although he did not similarly commit the Territorial Army, he agreed that they had to at least have the ability to despatch it, if so desired.⁷⁸⁵

Yet Bond considers that Hore-Belisha overreached himself in announcing the creation of a nineteen division Field Force without the ability to man or equip it.⁷⁸⁶ Of course, this was not viewed as an overnight process. Of greater importance was the acceptance of the principle and the establishment of a progressive scheme to increase the Army’s expeditionary potential within the limited resources available. If considered in this manner, this point in time can equally be regarded as marking the zenith of peacetime organisational planning for the Field Force. At long last the War Office had the authority to plan and equip a force according to its own design. Moreover this was a programme that was broadly feasible within the limited budgets and timescales envisaged. When complete this would provide Britain with an advantageous degree of strategic flexibility and the ability to intervene in support of its own interests as it saw fit, whether that be in defence of the Low Countries or the wider Empire. Moreover, it was not a mere token effort at providing a capability, as was the case with the ‘Intermediate Contingent’ proposed by the architects of limited liability. In preparing the first Territorial echelon in peace the Field Force was assured a degree of depth and resilience, and the decision would also pave the way for further expansion, should full-scale war prove unavoidable.

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⁷⁸³ B. Bond, (1972) p.189, entry for 20 Feb 1939.

⁷⁸⁴ *Hansard*, HC Deb 6 Feb 1939 vol.343 c.623.

⁷⁸⁵ TNA CAB 23/97/8 CC.8(39) Cabinet Conclusions, 22 Feb 1939.

⁷⁸⁶ B. Bond, (1980) p.303.

Accelerating Readiness: Addressing the Practical Limitations of Territorial Mobilisation

As the War Office succeeded in getting the need to increase Territorial readiness recognised in policy, it also began a programme of more practical reform. The first stage involved accelerating the call out process itself. Under existing regulations the TA could not be embodied until a Royal Proclamation had been issued, calling out the Army Reserve. As a result, it was expected to take at least four days to fully embody the TA and for its units to concentrate at their respective headquarters.⁷⁸⁷ By the late 1930s this arrangement was considered wholly inadequate, particularly as the TA had to prepare to assist the civil power in the event of an aerial ‘knock out blow,’ in which case units had to be at their war stations within twelve hours of receiving the order.

The General Staff therefore pushed for the Field Force to assume the same embodiment obligation already undertaken by the Anti-Aircraft and Coast Defence Territorials. This would allow the entire TA to be called out under the authority of the Secretary of State, without the necessity for a Proclamation or calling out the Army Reserve first. It was consequently proposed to invite those serving to accept this liability and to make it a condition of all future engagements, and to put this measure into effect *pari passu* with the reorganisation scheme.⁷⁸⁸

Hore-Belisha agreed, informing the Coordinating Committee of the CID that nominally the obligation would be voluntary, but in practice no future recruit would be accepted unless he undertook it on enlistment. However, this represented a departure from one of the key safeguards inserted during the reconstitution, specifically the need for the War Office to attain prior Parliamentary sanction.⁷⁸⁹

Although this represented a major breach of constitutional control, the Deputy Chiefs of Staff still believed that such concerns were outweighed by the pressing need to speed up embodiment.⁷⁹⁰

Accordingly, they recommended devolving the power to embody the TA to the War Office, as part of a package of measures designed to accelerate the whole process, including the organisation of

⁷⁸⁷ TNA WO 32/4611 ‘The Role of the Territorial Army: Memorandum by the Adjutant-General to the Forces,’ 18 July 1938.

⁷⁸⁸ TNA WO 32/4611 ‘Note on the Re-organization of the Territorial Army,’ Sept 1938.

⁷⁸⁹ TNA CAB 2/8 CID 333rd Meeting, 6 Oct 1938.

⁷⁹⁰ TNA CAB 54/2 DCOS 32nd Meeting, 10 Jan 1939; CAB 2/8 CID 333rd Meeting, 6 Oct 1938; CAB 54/2 DCOS 33rd Meeting, 30 Jan 1939.

advanced 'key parties' and the preparation of medical examination and documentation checks in peace.⁷⁹¹ As a result by April the extension of the ADGB call-out liability to all Territorials had been formally sanctioned.⁷⁹²

This decision was both sensible and necessary if the Territorial Army was to be quickly mobilised. Every Territorial now served under the same call out liability, and the newly streamlined embodiment procedure simplified what had been an unnecessarily complicated process. The instruction to designate a proportion of personnel into 'key parties' ensured units could avoid being tied up in bureaucracy during the critical first few days after embodiment. All administrative arrangement would be in place by the time the bulk of a unit's personnel reported for duty, and each man knew what documentation he had to bring with him.⁷⁹³ In addition, the issue of draft orders, initiating various stages of embodiment via a list of coded telegrams, meant that any or all of the TA could be called out swiftly and with little disruptive fanfare.⁷⁹⁴

With the embodiment process itself rationalised, the War Office next sought to address another main determinant of Territorial mobilisation, the wide difference between the TA's authorised establishment in peace and the strength it required for war. By mid-1938 the Adjutant-General, Lt.-Gen. Clive Liddell, was becoming increasingly concerned over this disparity.⁷⁹⁵ He accepted that most of the Territorial Army was not required until after at least ten months of war, but he was also aware that the TA was expected to field two Army Field Regiments and three Light AA Regiments, along with their signal sections and light aid detachments, as well as a formed Corps Signals for the Second Echelon within forty days of mobilisation. These were then to be followed by a complete Territorial Corps of three divisions between three and four months of the outbreak of war.

⁷⁹¹ TNA CAB 54/5 DCOS.79 'Acceleration of Mobilisation – Army,' 21 Jan 1939.

⁷⁹² TNA CAB 53/44 COS 838(DC) 'Acceleration of Mobilisation – Draft Report,' 6 Feb 1939; CAB 2/8 CID 347th Meeting, 16 Feb 1939; CAB 4/29 CID Paper No.1526-B 'Acceleration of Mobilisation,' Feb 1939; CAB 54/2 DCOS 33rd Meeting, 30 Jan 1939; WO 32/4652 War Office to all Commands and TA Associations, 3 April 1939; CAB 4/29 CID Paper No.1538-B 'Acceleration of Mobilisation,' 9 March 1939; WO 32/4682 'Memo by the Minister for Co-ordination [of Defence],' 24 Feb 1939.

⁷⁹³ TNA WO 32/4652 War Office to all Commands and TA Associations, 3 April 1939.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid. C.2 to TA.2, 17 April 1939.

⁷⁹⁵ TNA WO 32/4611 'The Role of the Territorial Army: Memorandum by the Adjutant-General to the Forces,' 18 July 1938.

On reviewing the existing mobilisation assumptions he realised this rate of despatch was not possible unless two key decisions were made. The first pressed for greater certainty regarding the process towards reaching War Establishments. He expected the TA to be flooded by around 120,000 volunteers in the first fortnight of war, but the Mobilisation Regulations prevented him from immediately expanding units to their war strengths. He thus wanted authority for expansion to be initiated as soon as war was declared, and for units to automatically throw off new cadres to absorb them. Secondly, he wanted those units earmarked to accompany the Second Echelon nominated in peace so their establishments could be raised in advance, and the first Territorial Corps to be designated, at least within the War Office, so they could ensure its units could be trained and reinforced by other affiliated Territorial units.⁷⁹⁶

Although the TA's primary role on embodiment at this point was still to assist the 'home front,' the Coordinating Committee of the Army Council agreed to Liddell's first proposal. However, Kirke's continuing aversion to selection in peace led him once more to oppose nomination. Instead he assured the AG that if they rid themselves of the residual limitations contained in the 'pledge' it would be possible to augment the required units by 'milking' the personnel from units assigned to later contingents.⁷⁹⁷ The issue was put aside temporarily, but the panic over the Sudeten Crisis revealed another key issue, over how to extract those under deployable age or those who could not be spared from industry or the existing civil organisation. This led the War Office to conclude that it would be a waste of money and resources to train any reservists who could not actually be called out in an emergency, and Kirke thereafter expected to lose as many as 15,000 Territorials on the outbreak of war.⁷⁹⁸

Liddell strongly opposed any laissez-faire approach to manpower policy. Fearing it would seriously compromise the Army's readiness, he wanted to discharge all those Territorials in reserved occupations as soon as they could be replaced, to rigidly impose Regular Army medical standards,

⁷⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁹⁷ Ibid. Notes on the CCAC 20th Meeting, 20 July 1938.

⁷⁹⁸ TNA WO 32/4682 'Reserve and Territorial Army Personnel: Co-ordination of Military and Civil Obligations,' 6 Dec 1938; WO 32/4611 DGTA to PUS, 16 Dec 1938.

and to endeavour to maintain the TA at War Establishment in peace.⁷⁹⁹ Gort entirely agreed with this proposal, but Kirke was moved to point out that an overly rigorous selection process could kill off the enthusiasm for enlistment, and discharging volunteers would cause resentment amongst the Territorials and their employers. For these reasons Kirke believed quantity had its own value above quality, and he saw the solution to be in producing a more flexible manpower organisation through removing the limitations of the 'pledge' and freeing up the transfer of Territorial personnel.⁸⁰⁰

With Kirke and Liddell unable to agree, these issues were passed to the other members of the Army Council's Co-coordinating Committee to decide.⁸⁰¹ Noting that the loss of men to industry and the unfit would already have a considerable impact on the readiness of the force, they were unanimous that no more key men should be enlisted and that medical standards should be strictly adhered to. Furthermore, the committee recommended that the TA should aim to bring all RE, RA, Signals, Infantry and RTC units up to their War Establishment strengths in peace, including a fifteen per cent surplus to cover uneven recruitment, and that the RASC, RAOC and RAMC should also be brought to a higher peace establishment.⁸⁰²

Meanwhile, the DGTA continued his campaign to abolish the last vestiges of the 'pledge,' although he knew he could not simply disregard an assurance clearly presented in the TA Regulations that all Territorials would be sent overseas in their own units.⁸⁰³ Yet from his own enquiries he believed that the average Territorial was unaware of his 'pledged' status, but they were aware that they signed a form agreeing that Parliament may sanction their use for General Service after embodiment, and that they were therefore liable to be transferred to any Corps in the Army. As a result Kirke could see 'no possible reason for not doing what every man knows is the Government's expressed intention.'⁸⁰⁴

⁷⁹⁹ TNA WO 32/4682 AG to CIGS and DGTA, 10 Nov 1938.

⁸⁰⁰ Ibid. DGTA to AG, 18 Nov 1938.

⁸⁰¹ Ibid. 'Extract from the Minutes of CCAC 36th Meeting, 21 Dec 1938.

⁸⁰² Ibid. 'Minutes of a Meeting to discuss Proposals for Raising TA to War Establishment in Peace or on Embodiment,' 20 Jan 1939 and 'Report on Proposals to Maintain the Territorial Army at War Establishment,' 30 Jan 1939.

⁸⁰³ TNA WO 32/4246 PUS to AG, 10 June 1936.

⁸⁰⁴ TNA WO 32/4527 DGTA to DRO, 8 Oct 1937.

Therefore, by late 1937 Kirke began pressing the DRO, Maj.-Gen. Michael Barker, to withdraw this commitment, on the grounds that honouring it would nullify the Territorial accepted General Service liability:

We cannot allow all our mobilization arrangements and our ability to send units organized ad hoc in case of emergency, as may be necessary soon after mobilization, to be stultified by a pledge which in present conditions is unnecessary and which, in my opinion, has no effect on recruiting one way or the other.

Since all peace establishments of TA units of the Field Force are much below war establishments, it is obvious that so long as the pledge exists we cannot send a single unit at war establishment overseas until post-war recruits have been trained.⁸⁰⁵

It is clear that the remaining 'pledge' was no longer seen as a particularly contentious issue. Barker, consulting Maj.-Gen. John Brown for his opinion as a Territorial, found that the latter agreed that the liability for General Service and the 'pledge' on unit integrity was contradictory, and the latter should be removed to avoid the inevitable confusion it would cause on mobilisation.⁸⁰⁶

As the formulation of military policy entered a period of flux over the winter of 1937, the DRO did not press the issue any further. However, Kirke returned to his argument the following May, pushing that removing the anomaly of the 'pledge' merely gave effect to the resolution passed unanimously by the Associations five years previously.⁸⁰⁷ Bringing forth his argument in front of the Council of County Territorial Associations (CCTA) in June, Kirke informed them that it was 'morally certain' that the 'pledge' could not be upheld and therefore, 'it was only common honesty to say that now and remove para.17, which hampers the War Office whilst offering no real protection to anyone.'⁸⁰⁸

Kirke's argument was undeniable and was duly accepted by the CCTA, as long as the TA would not be re-modeled as a draft finding organisation for the Regulars. In fact, the Council was willing to go much further, agreeing to invite pre-1933 men to accept a common General Service liability as a condition of re-engagement, despite Kirke's decision to leave this diminishing group with their existing pledged obligations.⁸⁰⁹ As a result he could triumphantly inform Hore-Belisha that this

⁸⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid. DDGTA to DRO, 11 Nov 1937.

⁸⁰⁷ TNA WO 32/4526 DGTA to S. of S. (through AG and PUS), 31 May 1938.

⁸⁰⁸ TNA WO 32/4562 'Draft for Speech by DGTA at CCTA Meeting, 8 June 1938'; P. Dennis, (1987) p.222.

⁸⁰⁹ TNA WO 32/4527 DGTA to DRO, 8 Oct 1937.

represented a 'satisfactory termination to a long-standing difficulty,' and that any dissenters could be informed that the amended regulations simply brought all Territorials into line with the same terms of service.⁸¹⁰ The real benefit was that the War Office could regard the TA's mobilisation as a realistic proposition. As he commented to Lt.-Gen. Liddell:

The net result will be the removal of the difficulty as regards reinforcements which is hampering the Adjutant-General's branch at the present time owing to the absence of any reserves with which to bring units required for early employment up to war establishment.

Practically every man in the Territorial Army will be available, if the resolution is put into force, as a reinforcement for any other unit.⁸¹¹

However, on studying the legal practicalities it was found that they could not simply delete the paragraph and withdraw the assurance unilaterally from the men already 'pledged.'⁸¹² The only way to get around it was to induce every man who had enlisted since October 1933 to individually consent to an abrogation of his rights. If they only withdrew the 'pledge' from all future enlistments they would then have three classes of Territorials serving simultaneously, one being of pre-1933 enlistees pledged to only serve in their own units overseas, another that enlisted after that date which would at any rate have to be dispatched initially with their own units, and a third of unpledged men who had enlisted recently.⁸¹³ As Kirke saw it, forcing Territorials to either accept the new terms or be discharged would create a public grievance that could undermine the TA's recruitment success.⁸¹⁴

This legal obstacle meant the issue was again put aside until the Sudeten Crisis re-focused attentions, whereupon the AG once again brought it up.⁸¹⁵ As things stood increasing numbers of men were still being enlisted under the current liabilities and so Creedy and Kirke both urged Hore-Belisha to immediately abrogate it. By capitalising on the heightened state of public feeling after Munich they believed there would be little opposition.⁸¹⁶

⁸¹⁰ TNA WO 32/4562 DGTA to S. of S., 23 June 1938.

⁸¹¹ Ibid. DGTA to AG and PUS, 10 June 1938.

⁸¹² Ibid. JAG to DPS, 20 July 1938.

⁸¹³ Ibid. Minute by PUS, 30 July 1938.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid. Minute by DGTA, 4 Aug 1938.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid. AG to DGTA, 28 Sept 1938; DGTA to FM (through AG), 28 Sept 1938.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid. PUS to S. of S., 7 Oct 1938; DGTA to S. of S., 2 Nov 1938; CCTA to War Office, 3 Nov 1938.

The Secretary of State agreed but, finely attuned to publicity and possibly missing the urgency of the proposal, he preferred to wait until he could announce the ‘pledge’s’ abolition as part of his Estimates Speech the following March. As a result he did not air the issue in Cabinet until February 1939, and the regulations were not amended until April.⁸¹⁷ This delay was unnecessary and a decision should undoubtedly have been made sooner, but the eventual abolition of the ‘pledge’ did finally set right a misguided assurance that had undermined the TA’s employability throughout the interwar period.

Admittedly, it did not result in a comprehensive solution, as the War Office proved reluctant to discharge in peacetime those who refused to agree to the new conditions, but it did mark a new resolve to ensure that in a war the Army would not be encumbered with a multitude of specific obligations to individual servicemen. Both Creedy and Liddell also used the opportunity to amend the regulations to dilute one of the other long-held assurances, that the TA would not be used to provide drafts to Regular units, which again could not be guaranteed under wartime pressures.⁸¹⁸ Liddell proposed to alter the relevant sentence and leave it ‘so worded as not to leave us open to a breach of faith if war time action differs from peace time intention,’ and accordingly it only went so far as to state only that it was not intended to use Territorial units as draft finding units, thus providing no binding guarantee that they would not.⁸¹⁹ This merely reflected the reality that in a modern war it was not possible to restrict the movement of manpower without also compromising efficiency.

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Upholding the Voluntary Principle: Manpower Planning and the Expansion of the Territorial Army, 1939

As a result of these reforms, by early 1939 the War Office had significantly accelerated the initial process for mobilising Territorials and removed most of the residual limitations placed on their use. However, the positive results of these reforms were considerably undermined from mid 1939 onwards. This was largely due to the fact that during this period the War Office lost full control over

⁸¹⁷ TNA CAB 23/283 CP.53(39) ‘Proposals to secure the removal of a restrictive undertaking affecting service in the Territorial Army,’ 24 February 1939; *Hansard*, HC Deb 08 March 1939 vol.344 c.2181; P. Dennis, (1987) p.244.

⁸¹⁸ TNA WO 32/4562 PUS to S. of S., 17 March 1939.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid. AG to S. of S., 31 March 1939; ‘War Office to GOsCinC Home Commands, GOC AA Command and GOC London and Northern Ireland Districts - Appendix D: Territorial Army Regulations,’ 3 April 1939.

the TA's expansion programme. At the same time the organisational flaws inherent in the voluntary Territorial system were becoming increasingly apparent, and during 1939 the underlying basis of the TA was being challenged by the new demands to sustain Britain's defences on a compulsory basis.

The stimulus behind the hurried attempt to accelerate rearmament in the last nine months of peace was largely political. As the international situation continued to deteriorate throughout 1939 the Government was under increasing pressure to prove its resolve. As Chamberlain's dual deterrence policy balanced on the edge of failure Britain made a number of gestures, including the diplomatic guarantees made to Warsaw, Athens and Bucharest, as well as declaring an intention to broaden and accelerate its defence preparations. For many this signalling, intended mainly to placate domestic opinion and respond to increasingly clamorous French demands for an *effort du sang*, were only realistic if backed up by greater military efforts, notably conscription.⁸²⁰ Supporters for the latter measure included several key men in Government, including Halifax and Hore-Belisha, who were now certain that the situation was grave enough to seriously countenance it.⁸²¹

However, at this stage Chamberlain, having re-affirmed Baldwin's pledge not to introduce conscription in peacetime while vigorously opposing the establishment of a Ministry of Supply and a National Register, was still committed to the voluntary principle.⁸²² It is therefore hardly surprising that Chamberlain chose to utilise the TA, which extolled the virtues of voluntarism, as the vehicle with which to make this gesture of resolve.⁸²³ By this point Hore-Belisha had already concluded that Britain may have to 'modify its military tradition,' and was toying with the idea of establishing by

⁸²⁰ D. Hucker, 'Franco-British Relations and the Question of Conscription in Britain, 1938-1939,' *Contemporary European History*, Vol.17 No.4, (2008) p.449; T.C. Imlay, (2003) pp.84-100; T.C. Imlay, (2002) p.110; M. Dockrill, (1999) pp.124-125; P. Jackson, 'British Power and French Security, 1919-1939,' in K. Neilson and G. Kennedy, (eds.) *The British Way in Warfare: Power and the International System, 1856-1956* (Farnham, 2010) pp.132-133.

⁸²¹ R. J. Minney, (1960) p.187, diary entry for 28 March 1939; TNA CAB 27/624 Cabinet Committee on Foreign Policy, 14 Nov 1938; D. Dilks (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-45*, (London, 1971) p.164, diary entry for 28 March 1939; D. Hucker, (2008) p.450.

⁸²² P. Wainwright, 'The National Service Debate: The Government, Conscription and the Peace Movement in Britain, 1936-1942,' (Stanford University, PhD thesis, 1993) pp.49-58; D. Hucker, 'The Role of Public Opinion in the Formulation of British and French Foreign Policy, 1938-1939' (University of Wales, Aberystwyth, PhD thesis, 2006) pp.124-129; R.P. Shay, (1977) pp.261-271; P. Dennis, *Decision by Default: Peacetime Conscription and British Defence, 1919-39*, (London, 1972) p.163-165. The handbook was, however, mostly aimed at passive civil defence, which caused the AG to lament how the needs of the Army were relegated behind midwives and the Women's Land Army. See TNA WO 32/4649 Liddell to Eady, 30 Nov 1938.

⁸²³ TNA PREM 1/296 Wilson to Hore-Belisha, 28 March 1939; R.J. Minney, (1960) p.186.

compulsion a force to be given six months military training, plus a further liability for three years in the TA Reserve.⁸²⁴ Yet Chamberlain was unwilling to accept a policy that he thought would ‘have the effect of “killing” the Territorial Army.’ As an alternative Hore-Belisha suggested expanding its organisational framework by raising it to its new establishment of 170,000, and then doubling it to 340,000, a suggestion Chamberlain accepted with alacrity.⁸²⁵

In the shadow of the Prague coup Chamberlain was keen to announce this latest signal of resolve as soon as possible. It was left to the Treasury to point out that the proposal radically departed from what they believed was the Army’s accepted function. Quite apart from the cost and the difficulty of finding the men, the new Territorial formations would have no immediate military value and would take at least twelve to eighteen months to train, and even then it was doubtful they could be equipped.⁸²⁶ As Sir Richard Hopkins concluded:

This plan has been invented in the space of a few hours. It cannot be related to anything in particular, and must, *prima facie*, be full of flaws which will reveal themselves in the course of time ... Not for the first time the need for some plan which will augment the immediate strength of the country is lacking, and its place is taken by something which may become effective in a distant future.⁸²⁷

Political necessity was, nevertheless, the stronger influence, and the Treasury’s opposition was muted after the Chancellor, Sir John Simon, concluded that in the circumstances they had to consider the issue in broader terms. As Halifax thought duplication would operate as ‘a severe, but unprovocative, warning to Germany of our fixed determination to resist aggression,’ Simon did not want to contest it financially.⁸²⁸ The duplication scheme accordingly received unequivocal support in the Cabinet and, after quietly canvassing the deputy Labour leader, Arthur Greenwood, for his support, Chamberlain himself announced the proposal to the Commons on the 29 March, only twenty-four hours from the idea first being suggested.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.* Wilson to Chamberlain, 28 March 1939; R.J. Minney, (1960) p.187.

⁸²⁵ TNA CAB 23/98/5 CC.15(39) Cabinet Minutes, 29 March 1939; PREM 1/296 Note by Wilson, 29 March 1939.

⁸²⁶ TNA T 175/104 Memorandum by Barlow, 28 March 1939; PREM 1/296 ‘Proposals to Double the Territorial Field Army,’ note by the Treasury, nd. but 28 March 1939; G.C Peden, (1979) p.149.

⁸²⁷ *Ibid.* Minute by Hopkins, 28 March 1939.

⁸²⁸ TNA PREM 1/296 Note by Wilson, 29 March 1939; CAB 23/98 15(39) Cabinet Conclusions, 29 March 1939.

⁸²⁹ *Hansard*, HC Deb 29 March 1939 vol.345 c.2048.

Historians have generally denigrated the decision to duplicate the TA. A small minority have defended the decision on the grounds that it indicated a new level of British resolve and reflected the strength of public opinion after the annexation of Czechoslovakia.⁸³⁰ These were certainly motivating factors for the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, who at this point was anxious to demonstrate to the European powers a tangible measure of Britain's military determination.⁸³¹ However, in the main it has been seen as a hastily conceived and poorly implemented scheme, with little thought being given to practical military realities.⁸³² Hore-Belisha in particular has been blamed for his failure to consult any member of the CID or the General Staff, the scheme being seen more as an example of his penchant for gaining the 'maximum political advantage for his personal standing from such beguiling statistical sleights-of-hand.'⁸³³ Ultimately the decision has been seen, in the words of Liddell Hart, as 'one of the most flagrant pieces of political window-dressing or wish-thinking on record,' which even then singularly failed to impress either French or German opinion.⁸³⁴ As J.P. Harris agreed, 'these were measures to grab headlines. They were also necessary in the long run. They did little, however, to increase the Army's readiness in the immediate future.'⁸³⁵

These accusations are not entirely without foundation. However, no one at the time thought duplication would immediately change the balance, least of all Hore-Belisha.⁸³⁶ Even when he first brought up the idea with Chamberlain he stressed the huge difficulties they faced and he was also careful to inform the press not to expect any real improvements for at least a year.⁸³⁷ It is also clear

⁸³⁰ D. Cameron Watt, *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War 1938-1939*, (London, 1989) p.182; M. Howard, (1972) p.129; R.J. Minney, (1960) p.188; P. Wainwright, (1993) p.113.

⁸³¹ S. Walker, *Role Theory and the Cognitive Architecture of British Appeasement Decisions: Symbolic and Strategic Interaction in World Politics*, (London, 2013) pp.170-172.

⁸³² P. Dennis (1972); I. Beckett, (2011) p.257; W. Philpott and M. Alexander, 'The French and the British Field Force: Moral Support or Material Contribution?' *The Journal of Military History*, Vol.72 No.3, (July, 2007) p.765; M. Dockrill, (1999) pp.132-133; B. Bond, 'Leslie Hore-Belisha at the War Office,' in I. Beckett and J. Gooch (eds.), *Politicians and Defence: Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy, 1845-1970*, (Manchester, 1981) p.122; B. Bond, 'The Army between the Two World Wars 1918-1939,' in D. Chandler and I. Beckett, (eds.) *The Oxford History of the British Army*, (Oxford, 1994) p.267; B. Bond, (1980) p.306.

⁸³³ M. Alexander, "'Fighting to the Last Frenchman?'" Reflections on the BEF Deployment to France and the Strains in the Franco-British Alliance, 1939-1940,' in J. Blatt, (ed.) *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments*, (Oxford, 1998) p.304.

⁸³⁴ B.H. Liddell Hart, *Memoirs*, Vol.2, (London, 1965) p.229; D. Hucker, *Public Opinion and the end of Appeasement in Britain and France*, (Farnham, 2011) p.139.

⁸³⁵ J.P. Harris, 'Obstacles to Innovation and Readiness: the British Army's experience 1918-1939,' in W. Murray and R.H. Sinnreich, *Past as Prologue: The Importance of History to the Military Profession*, (Cambridge, 2006) p.210.

⁸³⁶ Pownall estimated it would take between 18 months and two years before 'this paper Army is an Army in the flesh.' See B. Bond (ed.), *Chief of Staff*, (1973) p.200, entry for 17 April 1939.

⁸³⁷ R.J. Minney, (1960) p.187; IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 'Notes of Speech by Secretary of State to Lobby Journalists on 29 March 1939.'

that it was Chamberlain, not Hore-Belisha, who was the driving force behind the haste with which it was implemented.⁸³⁸

Equally, the idea of simply doubling the TA is not as arbitrary as has been suggested, as what the proposal really amounted to was bringing forward into peacetime the organisational expansion that was set to occur anyway on embodiment. In this case each unit would have to throw off a second-line duplicate, and doing so in peacetime would be easier than attempting it during the first rush of war.⁸³⁹ As Liddell Hart conceded, from a military point of view duplication would ultimately provide the Army with greater depth and allow it throw a greater weight into the military balance rather than being constrained to token support.⁸⁴⁰ Despite the difficulties it faced, the War Office realised that the decision had given credibility to the TA's role and presented the War Office with a stronger voice in the plans to prepare it for modern war, albeit over a long time period.⁸⁴¹

Others involved in implementing the scheme have also offered a more balanced appraisal. Francis de Guingand, who acted as military assistant to Hore-Belisha around this time, recognised that duplication was a politically necessary 'means to an end' towards conscription. He also thought that the Cabinet's approval helped loosen the Treasury purse strings, allowing the War Office to gain financial approval for extra accommodation, weapons and equipment, which was undoubtedly true.⁸⁴² As he believed lack of equipment was the major limiting factor in mobilisation, he concluded that 'the plan did not really interfere with the production of trained formations as much as some people made out.'⁸⁴³ Maj.-Gen. John Kennedy, the Deputy Director of Military Operations and later Director of Plans, also conceded that, although it was not the soundest decision from a military point of view, it did have political value as a way of bolstering public opinion and pleasing the French. It also led to a

⁸³⁸ TNA PREM 1/296 Wilson to Chamberlain, 28 March 1939.

⁸³⁹ B. Bond, (ed.) *Chief of Staff*, (1973) p.197, entry for 3 April 1939.

⁸⁴⁰ B. Liddell Hart, *The Defence of Britain*, (London, 1939) p.428.

⁸⁴¹ Brig. K.J. Drewienkiewicz, 'Examine the build-up, early training and employment of the Territorial Army in the lead-up to, and the early days of, the Second World War,' (Royal College of Defence Studies dissertation, 1992) p.8.

⁸⁴² G.C. Peden, (1979) p.176.

⁸⁴³ F. de Guingand, *Operation Victory*, (London, 1947) p.26.

bigger and faster programme for the despatch of the Field Force overseas, and a more effective, if still not ideal, scheme for expanding the Army.⁸⁴⁴

There is one other aspect that has not often been discussed, which centers on the embarrassing realisation in 1938 that an increasing number of Territorial volunteers were being turned away at the drill hall door.⁸⁴⁵ This reflected the generally positive fact that from 1936 onwards the TA was attracting more volunteers than ever before.⁸⁴⁶ For example, the last three months of 1938 saw 25,617 men come forward, compared with 9,564 over the same period in 1937, and these figures were more than twice the recruiting average of the late 1920s.⁸⁴⁷ As a result some popular units had to start turning men away owing to the fact that they had already reached their establishments. These men were effectively lost to the TA, as the majority would only consider enlisting with specific units or their friends, and would not join at all if they were prevented from doing so.⁸⁴⁸

Having to turn down volunteers after the Government had embarked on a highly publicised recruiting drive was acutely embarrassing for the War Office. It also ran against policy, which included an all-inclusive attitude to recruitment that actively discouraged rejection.⁸⁴⁹ The authorised peace establishment had already been increased over 1935/36 and the recruiting establishment had also been gradually raised, before being abolished altogether in 1937, but this was not enough to absorb the numbers coming forward.⁸⁵⁰ In response Hore-Belisha and Kirke agreed they needed to immediately authorise another increase in the TA's establishment in order to allow every man who came forward to enlist. As Hore-Belisha observed:

I really think it will be lamentable if we put a check on the flowing tide of Recruiting. We have broken our backs trying to get this result and I am sure the Treasury at a time of accelerated rearmament will not let us lose men. It is this kind of inflexibility which the ordinary man cannot understand... It isn't as if the whole army were over establishment. A trained man in time saves nine.⁸⁵¹

⁸⁴⁴ J. Kennedy, *The Business of War* (London, 1957) p.8.

⁸⁴⁵ TNA PREM 1/296 Wilson to Hore-Belisha, 28 March 1939; R.J. Minney, (1960) p.186.

⁸⁴⁶ G. Spillan, (1985) p.228.

⁸⁴⁷ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.5950 General Annual Report on the British Army (for the year ending 31 December 1938), Feb 1939, p.5.

⁸⁴⁸ TNA WO 32/4650 DGTA to S. of S., c. June 1938.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ibid.* Minute by S of S., 10 June 1938; WO 32/4651 DGTA to AG and PUS, 21 April 1939.

⁸⁵⁰ G. Spillan, (1985) p.228.

⁸⁵¹ TNA WO 32/4650 Minute by S. of S., 10 June 1938.

As a result Kirke proposed to allow infantry units to quietly exceed their establishments by thirty per cent, while anti-aircraft units were to be allowed to do so as well, in order to help cover the initial shortfall of 35,000 men that would be created once the new ADGB units were raised in November.

As he explained in July 1938:

In a voluntary Army one must have sufficient elasticity to take the men where one can get them, otherwise we should be constantly faced with redistribution problems which would be extremely costly and take a long time to put into effect.⁸⁵²

Indeed, whilst Kirke understandably preferred to have all his units at full strength he knew that this was ‘an ideal impossible to achieve in practice.’⁸⁵³

The War Office was also unsure as to how far into the future it could rely on men coming forward. Units had found themselves inundated with recruits during the various crises of 1938/39, but once tensions had died down many subsequently withdrew their applications, only to reapply when another emergency threatened. This led to the belief that the TA was riding a recruiting high that may turn out to be transitory, and in 1939 a wastage rate of ten to fifteen per cent was predicted for that year, rising to twenty to twenty five per cent the following year if peace continued.⁸⁵⁴ It was considered imperative, therefore, to accept a volunteer’s choice of where he served, even if it bore no relation to broader manpower requirements.

As a result units were allowed to exceed their establishments by up to twenty per cent (or thirty in the case of ADGB and Yeomanry units) without the need to obtain permission, and the ensuing influx in numbers meant that by October 1938 all but three of the Territorial Field Force Divisions were over ninety per cent of their peace establishments, and all of the formations continued to increase in strength over the winter.⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁵² Ibid. DGTA to DUS, 29 July 1938.

⁸⁵³ Ibid. DGTA to PUS, 14 Nov 1938.

⁸⁵⁴ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/6 Minutes of Recruiting Committee for Greater London, 9 May 1939.

⁸⁵⁵ TNA WO 32/4650 Rae to Strathcona, 29 Sept 1938; DGTA to S. of S., 7 Oct 1938; DGTA to PUS, 16 Dec 1938; Rae to Strathcona, 27 Jan 1939; *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.5944 Statement relating to Defence, Feb 1939, p.11.

Comparative Strengths of the Territorial Divisions (all ranks) on 1 Oct 1938.

Division	Peace Est.	Strength	Strength to Est. (%)
55 th (West Lancs)	9,500	9,601	101.1
51 st (Highland)	9,906	9,977	100.7
49 th (West Riding)	9,864	9,590	97.2
50 th (Northumbrian)	8,875	8,566	96.5
42 nd (East Lancs)	9,857	9,476	96.1
48 th (South Midland)	9,242	8,678	93.9
53 rd (Welsh)	9,857	9,225	93.6
52 nd (Lowland)	9,879	9,127	93.4
54 th (East Anglian)	9,856	9,060	91.9
London Division	9,991	8,937	89.5
43 rd (Wessex)	9,099	8,030	88.2
44 th (Home Counties)	9,772	8,066	82.5
1 st Anti-Aircraft	22,669	21,401	94.4
2 nd Anti-Aircraft	25,529	20,721	81.2
Total TA Divs.	163,896	150,455	91.8

Source: 'Army Notes,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.84 (1939) p.884.

However, as the establishment figure was gradually raised and the entire organisation was duplicated Territorial recruitment struggled to keep pace, despite the apparent high numbers of volunteers. In the twelve months leading up to January 1939 the total establishment for the TA (including anti-aircraft divisions) had gradually risen, from 199,658 to 224,039. This meant that, despite increasing its strength by 28.3 per cent, the TA was still deficient by some 20,030 by the end of the year.⁸⁵⁶

As a result recruitment had to be encouraged by every means possible, but this exacerbated the unequal distribution of much of the Territorial Army's manpower. As noted above, popular units continued to fill their ranks far quicker than others, and so in May 1939 these units were told to direct any additional applicants towards under-strength units nearby. No waiting lists could be formed until all local units were full and 'the fact that would be recruits prefer a certain type of unit will not be taken into consideration in the formation of these lists.'⁸⁵⁷

Yet, as the GOC London Division noted, 'you are not going to get boys who earmark themselves for the London Rifle Brigade to go to the Tower Hamlets.'⁸⁵⁸ This fact illustrates how the War Office

⁸⁵⁶ Ibid. pp.13-14.

⁸⁵⁷ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 D.DGTA to GOCinCs All Commands, 11 May 1939.

⁸⁵⁸ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/6 Minutes of Recruiting Committee for Greater London, 9 May 1939.

had almost no influence over the actual distribution of Territorial manpower, and by 1938 the TA organisation was becoming increasingly unbalanced. For example, despite many of the 'corps d'elite' units, such as the London Scottish and certain Yeomanry units, being flooded with recruits, there still existed a national shortfall of some 6,529 men amongst RE Searchlight units, 4,000 in the RASC, RAMC and RAOC and over 6,000 in the infantry.⁸⁵⁹

Spillan has identified this tendency as being 'the fundamental flaw of the voluntary recruiting system: the impossibility of ensuring that the recruits it had obtained were directed into the areas where they were most needed.'⁸⁶⁰ The difficulties of transferring manpower between units and arms of service was well understood and made the implementation of scientific manpower planning impossible to achieve.⁸⁶¹

This had a considerable impact, for instance, on the balance of specialist tradesmen. The Army's main manpower priority by 1938/39 was to find skilled recruits for the new larger RAOC, RASC and RAMC establishments and tradesmen to cover more specialist roles. This was a manpower bottleneck that was not easy to solve. For example, Maj.-Gen. Liardet, the GOC London Division, had 500 positions to fill that could only be done so by skilled engineers. As he reminded the Greater London Recruiting Committee, 'You cannot enlist a bookmaker's clerk to be a fitter; he must be a fitter; it is no good trying to rush the thing, just for the sake of saying we are full up, and I will not have it.'⁸⁶² However, a considerable proportion of skilled men were found to have joined the teeth arms where their trade skills were not required, and the failure to attract such men into specialist units meant that for some the wide disparity between their strengths and establishments was too much to make up in too short a period.⁸⁶³ For example, the 44th Divisional Engineers was already far below its peace strength in 1939 and a number of its key units, particularly Field Park Companies, did not actually

⁸⁵⁹ TNA WO 32/4650 DGTA to DUS, 29 July 1938.

⁸⁶⁰ G. Spillan, (1985) p.230.

⁸⁶¹ TNA WO 277/12 'Manpower Problems 1939-1945,' (London, 1949) p.2.

⁸⁶² IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/6 Minutes of Recruiting Committee for Greater London, 9 May 1939.

⁸⁶³ LHCMA Adam MSS 3/2 'Paper by AG on the Use of Manpower in the Army,' 21 Nov 1941; IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/6 Minutes of Recruiting Committee for Greater London, 9 May 1939.

exist. In effect this meant that each unit had to recruit more than three times its own strength before it could even begin to expand.⁸⁶⁴

In an attempt to promote enlistments into these specialist arms the War Office raised their age limit to 45 and specifically instructed the newly established Local Public Relations Officers to direct skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen towards technical units wherever possible.⁸⁶⁵ However, the need to meet manpower targets and absorb the influx of recruits meant that by 1939 even specialist units consisted of a variety of skilled and unskilled personnel, which made the efficacy of their training all the more important.⁸⁶⁶

The shortage in specialist manpower was also replicated at the organisational level. This was due to the fact that, although the reorganisation scheme in 1938 had aimed at balancing the Territorial Army's Order of Battle, it had only gone so far by the point duplication was announced. The General Staff decided to expand the existing organisation in its own kind, deciding that units could be converted into different roles later.⁸⁶⁷ This created a surfeit of infantry units, many of which would not be needed for a year or so after mobilisation.⁸⁶⁸ At the same time there was a large deficit amongst the support arms and services, resulting in a dangerous organisational imbalance between the combat and support arms. For example, although Territorial RASC and RAOC units were brought up to their full war establishment, they were not subsequently doubled.⁸⁶⁹ In other cases requirements still had not been worked out, such as those concerning the considerable expansion of RAOC Light Aid Detachments.⁸⁷⁰ This led to a serious shortage of administrative services on mobilisation and the

⁸⁶⁴ Col. L.F. Morling, *Sussex Sappers: A History of the Sussex Volunteer and Territorial Army Royal Engineer Units from 1890 to 1967*, (Seaford, 1972) p.48.

⁸⁶⁵ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 'Notes on 2nd Meeting held in DGTA's Room on Wednesday, 19 April,' by TA.1, 20 April 1939; 'Notes for the Guidance of Local Public Relations Officers, TA: No.1 8th April 1939.'

⁸⁶⁶ TNA WO 231/238 ATM No.22 Collective Training Period 1939; W. Saunders, *Dunkirk Diary of a Very Young Soldier*, (Birmingham, 1989) p.5.

⁸⁶⁷ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 'Expansion of Territorial Army Field Force: Notes of Meeting held in DGTA's Room on 30th March 1939' by TA.1, 3 April 1939.

⁸⁶⁸ TNA WO 32/4651 'Man Power in Relation to War: Memorandum by AG, 16 May 1939.'

⁸⁶⁹ LHCMA Adam MSS 3/2 'Paper by AG on the Use of Manpower in the Army,' 21 Nov 1941.

⁸⁷⁰ TNA WO 32/4650 TISC: War Office Memo No.712 'Raising the Territorial Army to War Establishment,' 27 March 1939.

absence of several key specialist Corps and Army Troops, as well as forcing the General Staff to strip later contingents of their artillery in order to field the First Territorial Echelon.⁸⁷¹

Fortunately in one example the General Staff took a tighter control of duplication. In May 1939 the requirement for horsed regiments had been lowered to only seven for the Cavalry Division, leaving eight Yeomanry regiments surplus to requirements.⁸⁷² Kirke doubted that he could get them to agree to convert to heavy artillery or the RASC, and therefore lobbied to retain them, arguing that ‘as a general principle, I would suggest that 16 Horsed Regiments in an Army of 400,000 is not perhaps an over-insurance for possible requirements in secondary theatres.’⁸⁷³ Luckily for Kirke the DCIGS agreed. Citing recent examples from Spain and China, he considered that such experiences indicated horsed cavalry still had a use over suitable terrain, and in planning for a future war they should not forget their prior wartime experiences in Macedonia and Palestine. As a result he agreed to keep the remaining Yeomanry Regiments in the UK as part of the War Office Reserve, but they were specifically excluded from the duplication scheme.⁸⁷⁴

One other pivotal issue concerning specialists was the latent danger posed by those employed in reserved occupations. After companies began asking the War Office for its policy regarding the enlistment of men vital to industry it soon became apparent that none existed.⁸⁷⁵ Indeed, the TA had been encouraging firms to raise complete units or sub-units from their workforce, despite the fact that much of their personnel would be exempt from service on the declaration of war.⁸⁷⁶ Therefore, although the War Office accepted that key men would be released to industry on mobilisation, it continued to encourage their unregulated enlistment into the TA.⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷¹ TNA WO 32/4651 ‘Man Power in Relation to War: Memorandum by AG, 16 May 1939.’

⁸⁷² IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 ‘Expansion of Territorial Army Field Force: Notes of Meeting held in DGTA’s Room on 30th March 1939’ by TA.1, 3 April 1939.

⁸⁷³ TNA WO 32/16617 DGTA to DCIGS, 1 May 1939.

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid. DCIGS to DGTA, 11 May 1939.

⁸⁷⁵ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/3 ‘Statement for the Inspector of Recruiting and the DGTA for week-ending Saturday, June 13th,’ by AG10, 17 June 1936.

⁸⁷⁶ LHCMA Adam MSS 3/2 ‘Paper by AG on the Use of Manpower in the Army,’ 21 Nov 1941.

⁸⁷⁷ *Hansard*, HC Deb, 22 Feb 1938 vol.332 c.177.

Similarly, the TA continued to actively enlist youths under deployable age. The normal lower age limit for the TA was 18, but regulations allowed volunteers to enlist at 17 with parental consent, and boys as young as 14 could train as musicians or trainee specialists. Although the Army Council recognised the risk that the under-age could be exposed to front-line duties, especially in anti-aircraft units, the practice was allowed to continue.⁸⁷⁸

Initially the War Office had no formal process for weeding out these exempted Territorials on mobilisation. In fact, when the Schedule of Reserved Occupations was finally published the TA was told that it did not apply retrospectively to men already enlisted.⁸⁷⁹ Nevertheless, by April 1939 the War Office had decided to compile a nominal roll of all those affected, but this omitted all personnel with certain military qualifications, as well as all officers and NCOs. Territorials employed in certain occupations, including clerks, shop assistants, labourers and agricultural workers, were also to be listed separately and the Ministry of Labour were to decide whom of these to 'comb-out' on an individual basis.⁸⁸⁰ This left them in an unworkable position whereby employers had been given a pledge that their key men would be released on mobilisation but Commanding Officers were still freely recruiting them without any restriction.

This was not an arrangement the AG was willing to countenance. His department had calculated that on mobilisation they would lose some 30,000 serving Territorials to the industrial 'comb-out,' and this stood to get worse as the TA continued to process an unregulated flood of volunteers. He again recommended that they immediately cease the enlistment of volunteers on the schedule, and discharge the fifteen per cent of serving Territorials who in wartime would be claimed by industry.⁸⁸¹ Kirke agreed that Territorial enlistment policy had to be remodelled in line with the Schedule of Reserved Occupations, but Hore-Belisha was set against the imposition of any limitations on voluntary enlistment.⁸⁸²

⁸⁷⁸ TNA WO 163/42 Army Council Précis No.1404 'Enlistment of boys into the Territorial Army,' 1936.

⁸⁷⁹ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 DAG(T) to AG, nd. but Nov 1939.

⁸⁸⁰ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 War Office to GOsCinC all Commands, 1 April 1939.

⁸⁸¹ TNA WO 32/4651 'Man Power in Relation to War: Memorandum by AG, 16 May 1939.'

⁸⁸² Ibid. DGTA to AG, 24 May 1939; Minute by TAF (J.R. Wade), 19 May 1939; 'Extract from minutes of CCAC 58th Meeting, 1 June 1939.'

It is in the national interest that as many men should be militarily trained as possible. I have always been against the Schedule and the weeding out can always be done at the beginning of war. Men not admitted or weeded out in peacetime may in a war have passed out of the Schedule and could, if they had been trained, be made quickly useful. Therefore do not let us lose them on any account... I sincerely hope that all Government Departments concerned have forgotten the Schedule and that it will not be heard of again till War.⁸⁸³

The Army Council, however, could not countenance this informal approach and decided that all men in the TA and TARO who were not available in an emergency should be instructed to resign at once.⁸⁸⁴ As a result, in August 1939 the Ministry of Labour ordered each unit CO to compile a list of those skilled men in reserved occupations already serving, in anticipation of them being discharged in September.⁸⁸⁵ Yet in the event this exodus was deferred, meaning that the difficult process of ‘combing-out’ the Territorial Army had to wait until after war had been declared.⁸⁸⁶ To make this worse, against the advice of the AG the TA carried on enlisting boys under 19 and, after the Military Training Act was passed, also those in advance of their calling up notices. This meant that by the eve of war there were some 40,000 youths of 17 and 18 in the TA who were not legally deployable overseas, thus further complicating the mobilisation process.⁸⁸⁷

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Territorial Efficiency on the Eve of War

As well as disrupting its organisation and manpower planning, the TA’s rushed expansion programme also undermined the ability to train and equip the burgeoning number of Territorial volunteers. As seen in chapter five, training standards had shown signs of slowly improving over the 1930s as the force received increased support from the Regular Army, better access to equipment and facilities, and higher Training Grants. However, the rapid pace of expansion and the influx of recruits from 1937 onwards largely blocked any further progress, even though the TA was attracting a higher standard of volunteer.⁸⁸⁸

⁸⁸³ Ibid. Minute by S. of S., 10 June 1939.

⁸⁸⁴ TNA WO 163/69 Coordinating Committee of the Army Council 60th meeting, 14 June 1939.

⁸⁸⁵ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 Ministry of Labour to all Divisional Controllers, 27 Aug 1939.

⁸⁸⁶ K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) p.15.

⁸⁸⁷ LHCMA Adam MSS 3/2 ‘Paper by AG on Use of Manpower in the Army,’ 21 Nov 1941.

⁸⁸⁸ TNA WO 32/4610 DCIGS to P.S. to S. of S., 9 June 1938.

Indeed, the TA came under increasing criticism for its inability to effectively process and train its new, broader demographic. In May 1938 Hore-Belisha's Parliamentary Private Secretary was handed a document compiled by a group of London Territorials who declared themselves to be 'dissatisfied and (as citizens) alarmed by the methods of administration and instruction which they have found.'⁸⁸⁹ The memorandum pointed out that the efficiency of the TA depended entirely on the keenness of the men and the amount of time they were prepared to dedicate to training. This keenness was however 'fast evaporating as a result of their feeling that most of their time is merely being wasted and that no effort complementary to their own is being made by the TA administration.'

The writers calculated that about sixty per cent of their limited training time on drill nights was being wasted:

The instructors, almost without exception, lack general intelligence; they have learnt their lesson parrot-fashion and can only teach in that fashion; they cannot answer questions which are not "in the drill book," and finally their method and speed of instruction is entirely ill-suited to their audience. They take in fact an hour to teach what their hearers can all grasp fully in five minutes.

Moreover, the syllabus of instruction itself was flawed and 'seems to have been devised to suit the stupidest class of recruit, e.g. the rural ploughman,' while little effort was made to find and utilise for military purposes any of the skills or technical knowledge to be found amongst new recruits. The reason for this inefficiency was generally ascribed to the incompetence of those in charge and the inherent defects in the organisation of training.

Whether the writers had other motivations for submitting the memorandum are unclear. It is, however, apparent from correspondence around the issue that these men were associated with Edward Beddington-Behrens and Leo Amery's 'Army League,' which at that time had become an considerable irritant to the War Office as a result of its agitations over Britain's military unpreparedness, and particularly the state of the TA.⁸⁹⁰ In addition it is likely that such men, who in their own words 'command a high salary in civil life,' were unused to being at the bottom end of a system of military discipline and hierarchy, even in its diluted Territorial form, or the fact that they

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid. 'Memorandum on the London Division of the Territorial Army,' n.d. but May 1938.

⁸⁹⁰ D.J. Mitchell, 'The Army League, Conscription and the 1956 Defence Review,' (University of East Anglia, PhD thesis, 2012) pp.78-103; IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/3 Dunlop to Codrington, 26 May 1937; 'Notes upon the Present Position of the Territorial Army,' 19 April 1937.

were required to serve in the ranks when in earlier years they would probably have been offered commissions. The GOC of Scottish Command, Maj.-Gen. Charles Grant, certainly considered that the criticisms only applied to the expanding AA and infantry units in London. He argued that more established units had already addressed these problems, many of which were in any case unavoidable under a voluntary system of training. In most areas there was not the educational disparity found in a small number of London units, and the training system in use had been devised to provide for an average rate of progress which was suitable for the majority of Territorials.⁸⁹¹

Nevertheless, both the DGTA and the DCIGS agreed that 'there is no doubt a great deal of truth' in the complaints and that the current training system left much to be desired. Kirke recognised that the TA was now attracting men with a much higher standard of intelligence and these were undoubtedly becoming discouraged by having to undertake training which they considered valueless, a perception made worse by the lack of equipment, instructors and training opportunities.⁸⁹² In any case, the War Office was sufficiently concerned to distribute the memorandum amongst the Territorial Divisions, along with instructions for GOCs to maintain as far as possible the level of enthusiasm and interest amongst recruits.⁸⁹³

However, despite this pressure on the War Office to improve the training offer, the level of overstretch in the Army by 1939 meant that little could be done to achieve this in the time available. The exponential rate of expansion and the pressure this put on equipment, instructors and facilities actually led, as Drewienkiewicz has identified, to a marked drop in Territorial efficiency by 1939.⁸⁹⁴ Between the start of April and the end of May the TA absorbed 152,000 volunteers, but these were almost entirely untrained and inexperienced. For example, in June over 56 per cent of the Territorial infantry had served less than six months.⁸⁹⁵ The desperate need to find additional NCOs for duplicated units meant that promotion had to be accelerated regardless of qualifications - one

⁸⁹¹ TNA WO 32/4610 GOCinC Scottish Command to War Office, 25 Nov 1938.

⁸⁹² Ibid. DGTA to DCIGS, 31 May 1938; DCIGS to P.S. to S. of S., 9 June 1938.

⁸⁹³ Ibid. War Office to all GOC Divisions, 24 June 1938; Note by MT.2(TA), 17 June 1938.

⁸⁹⁴ K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) p.12.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid. Annex E: TA Strength in Infantry and AA Units in June 1939; see also L.F. Morling, (1972) Appendix D.

Territorial gunner found himself promoted to sergeant overnight, and in some cases men simply volunteered to become their unit's NCOs.⁸⁹⁶

In addition, the rapid process of expansion meant that commanders were overloaded with extra administrative work, which prevented them from adequately supervising training. For instance, in February 1939 the GOC Western Command reckoned that his level of correspondence had more than doubled since the TA was reorganised, and that administrative tasks were now a full time job for his permanent staff.⁸⁹⁷ Although additional clerks and storemen were authorised to help distribute the workload, the ratio between Territorials and PSIs remained inadequate.⁸⁹⁸ This overstretch ensured that 1939's annual camps resembled the improvised efforts of 1914's New Army more than that of a force preparing for a modern war.⁸⁹⁹

Whether the Territorial Army could realistically achieve a high standard of efficiency before the outbreak of war was, therefore, doubtful.⁹⁰⁰ The combined effects of reorganisation and duplication meant that training in 1939 was officially restricted, by necessity, to the individual and sub-unit level.⁹⁰¹ Although the General Staff pressed for greater realism, the need to focus on low-level training meant that the majority of Territorial troops lacked the opportunity to develop their (already limited) understanding of all-arms cooperation.⁹⁰²

Improving this situation was difficult to achieve. By 1939 there was little scope for Regular assistance to be expanded, as the Regular Army was already at full stretch preparing for its own wartime responsibilities, as well as training the first batch of Militiamen. The political sensitivity around conscription led to a degree of favouritism towards the Militia, a policy that was undeclared

⁸⁹⁶ B. Price, *What did you do in the war, Grandpa? Memories of a Young Gunner: Two weeks' Territorial Camp which lasted seven years 1939-1946* (Woolhampton, 1989) p.10; J. Colquhoun, *Action Front! – A History of 'C' Battery HAC in War and Peace*, (London, 1992) p.3; B. Sheridan, *What did you do in the War, Dad?* (Lewes, 1993) p.15.

⁸⁹⁷ TNA WO 32/4610 GOC Western Command to U.S. of S., 17 Feb 1939.

⁸⁹⁸ D. Edgar, *The Day of Reckoning*, (London, 1984) p.3.

⁸⁹⁹ Lt.-Col. D. Jackson, *The Territorials of Surrey 1908-1958*, (London, 1958) p.19; TNA WO 163/47 IAC 27th Meeting, 4 Aug 1939.

⁹⁰⁰ TNA WO 231/239 ATM No.23: Individual Training Period 1939/40.

⁹⁰¹ TNA WO 231/238 ATM No.22: Collective Training Period 1939.

⁹⁰² Brig. R.G. Cherry, 'Territorial Army Staffs and Training,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.84 (1939) p.551; IWM 4613 Maj. I. English.

but noticeable nevertheless.⁹⁰³ This meant that the Territorials invariably lost out when it came to competing with conscripts for facilities and equipment.⁹⁰⁴ Consequently by 1939 the Regular Army's scale of instructors earmarked for the TA was admitted to be insufficient to train even the First Line units, let alone the new duplicates.⁹⁰⁵ As a result a new training cycle had to be devised, whereby maximum assistance could now only be offered to the TA once in every three years.⁹⁰⁶

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By 1939 the TA depended largely upon its own commanders to improve its standard of training and efficiency. Yet few in the Regular Army believed they were capable of achieving this, and attempts to appoint Territorials to senior staff and command positions were consistently opposed. Hore-Belisha had wanted it established as a principle that a Territorial should be considered for any vacant appointment, but his suggestion that Col. John Brown be appointed Deputy DGTA had to be pushed through in the face of considerable opposition.⁹⁰⁷

Efforts to promote a Territorial to command of a division met with even stiffer resistance. Hore-Belisha had selected Col. Claude Liardet, the Commander, Royal Artillery (CRA) for the London Division, as the best candidate, but this had also met with opposition, with the Army Council, in Liddell Hart's view, being 'in revolt' over the issue.⁹⁰⁸ Hore-Belisha once again had to force the issue through, and Liardet finally took up command of the London Division early in 1938.

In the partisan opinion of observers like Liddell Hart, War Office obstructionism was due to the Regular Army's desire to covet all the main command appointments for themselves. Even at the time Liardet himself believed that 'it's a Trade Union we are up against.'⁹⁰⁹ In fairness, although

⁹⁰³ Gen. F. Pile, *Ack-Ack, Britain's Defence against Air Attack during the Second World War*, (London, 1949) pp.90-92; P. Dennis, (1987) pp.253-255.

⁹⁰⁴ Anon., 'Army Notes,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.84 (1939) p.652.

⁹⁰⁵ Brig. R.G. Cherry, (1939) p.548.

⁹⁰⁶ TNA WO 231/238 ATM No.22: Collective Training Period 1939.

⁹⁰⁷ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/445 Talk of 26 Oct 1937; Talk of 5 Nov 1937; Talk of 7 Oct 1937; TNA WO 32/11799 'Note on proposed addition of a Territorial Officer to the Territorial Army Directorate,' n.d. but c.Aug 1937. Officially, Kirke believed no businessman could afford the time, but he was more concerned with a Regular vacancy being filled by a Territorial. See WO 32/11799 DGTA to S of S, n.d but c. Oct 1937.

⁹⁰⁸ B.H. Liddell Hart, (1965) pp.84-85; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/445 'The Struggle to get a Territorial Officer given Command of a Territorial Division.' 1937-1938.

⁹⁰⁹ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/445 Liardet to Liddell Hart, 26 May 1932; Liardet to Liddell Hart, 23 May 1963.

preserving command positions was a concern, most of the opposition was based on the conviction that Territorials were not up to the job. Kirke, for one, objected to Hore-Belisha's propensity for making decisions based more on their publicity value than their military efficacy, and complained that a Territorial might know his own arm but he could not hope to have the breadth of knowledge of a Regular soldier.⁹¹⁰ As he recalled in his memoirs:

One of the greatest difficulties with which one had to compete with H.B. was the latter's belief that there were some great military geniuses hidden in the TA and that it was only the professional jealousy of the regular soldier which prevented them from emerging. In point of fact there was nothing the TA soldier liked less than being commanded by another amateur soldier.⁹¹¹

Kirke was not against having Territorials in the Directorate staff, where their specialist skills could be an advantage. For example, after cooperating with the Greater London Recruiting and Publicity Committee Kirke was keen to poach its secretary, Lt.-Col. J.K. Dunlop, to aid in the War Office's recruiting campaign.⁹¹² Dunlop was duly appointed Assistant Adjutant-General (TA). However, the realisation that the Regular Army still considered higher command as its own exclusive preserve hardly encouraged a closer integration between Regular and Territorial, and it is hardly surprising that Territorials serving as attachments to the War Office could find themselves side-lined. As Liddell Hart observed:

Kirke continues to ignore J[ohn].B[rown], as far as possible, rarely consulting him. John Brown goes to see him on his own initiative and J.B. is rarely notified when things are going to be discussed and has to depend on hearing of them from others. In order to do his job properly under these conditions he had to have a skin like a rhinoceros.⁹¹³

Although much of this discrimination may have been due to a culture of superiority in the Regular Army, there were legitimate doubts over whether Territorial commanders possessed the required level of professional leadership. Although it was believed that the TA possessed the material to produce effective leaders it was not thought that their civil employment fostered the necessary qualities of initiative and power of command, or the knowledge of how to handle men.⁹¹⁴ To release this potential

⁹¹⁰ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/445 Talk of 3 Nov 1937.

⁹¹¹ LHCMA Kirke MSS 9/1 Unpublished Memoir.

⁹¹² TNA WO 32/11799 'Note on proposed addition of a Territorial Officer to the Territorial Army Directorate,' n.d. but c.Aug 1937.

⁹¹³ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/20 Talk with Major-General Sir John Brown, 5 Feb 1938.

⁹¹⁴ TNA WO 231/238 ATM No.22: Collective Training Period 1939; Lt.-Col. H.C.H. Eden, 'The Organization and Training of Territorial Army Units,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.84 (1939) p.142.

they needed practice, but time for this was short, with the two-week annual training camp being the only opportunity to exercise command.⁹¹⁵

This led to a suggestion to call out the field army alongside the anti-aircraft 'couverture', in order to give it a clear month of uninterrupted training. However, Hore-Belisha considered that the voluntary terms of Territorial service made this difficult, and that this was 'one of the penalties one pays for a part-time Army.' The Government was unwilling to force all Territorials from their civil occupations and risk displeasing employers, and other suggestions to call out Territorials for one month's training each year were rejected for the same reasons.⁹¹⁶

This meant that the TA largely relied on drill hall based instruction which resulted in Territorials becoming quite efficient in 'the repetitive performance of a technique,' such as practiced by artillery gunners and those involved in anti-aircraft, but when it came to mastering an 'art,' such as the tactical handling of infantry (which required a considerable amount of outdoor practice to perfect), the standard was considered to be low.⁹¹⁷ As a result, the organisation of the 1939 training season was still deemed to be generally unimaginative, and in many cases tactical schemes were being conducted in an inflexible and unrealistic way.⁹¹⁸ Liddell Hart blamed the officers:

Too few of these seem to be able to visualize the effect of fire in relation to ground, movement and formations. What they cannot see themselves they naturally cannot convey to their men. The operation some of them carry out would be comically unreal if it were not tragically ominous.⁹¹⁹

However, one of the most far-reaching deficiencies in Territorial training as mobilisation approached was the near total lack of higher level and staff experience. In 1937 Col. J.K. Dunlop considered that a war would catch the Territorial Army's higher organisation unprepared:

The gravest defects of the TA are the lack of practice in movement among the senior officers, the lack of anything save extemporized staff formations in time of war, and a general lack of administrative experience which might lead to heavy sickness wastage on mobilization.⁹²⁰

⁹¹⁵ H.C.H. Eden, (1939) p.141.

⁹¹⁶ *Hansard*, HC Deb 9 May 1939 vol.347c.334; LHCMA Alanbrooke MSS 11/63 'Letter from Lt.-Gen. Sir John Brown,' c.1939; TNA WO 32/4646 Memorandum by D.DGTA 'Proposal to institute new "King's Roll" for Employers of Territorials,' 30 March 1938.

⁹¹⁷ B. Liddell Hart, (1939) pp.417-418.

⁹¹⁸ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/115/75 'Notes [by Maj.-Gen. John Brown] on BHL's [sic] Articles,' 21 May 1939.

⁹¹⁹ B. Liddell Hart, (1939) p.423.

⁹²⁰ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/3 'Notes upon the Present Position of the Territorial Army,' 19 April 1937.

In addition to this Territorial divisions and brigades were already severely understaffed. As the CRA of 55th (West Lancashire) Division observed, Territorial formations could be likened to ‘a huge body with a small and emasculated head.’⁹²¹ For example, a TA Divisional HQ was run at 33 per cent of its War Establishment in staff, whilst a CRA had 25 per cent and an Infantry Brigade only 40 per cent of their requirements.⁹²²

The failure to adequately prepare an organised peacetime Territorial staff cadre made this situation worse. It was always accepted that formations would have to absorb a large number of Territorial officers and reservists on mobilisation, but the vast majority of these would have no staff experience. After 1937 more opportunities for higher training were opened up to Territorials, with two vacancies put aside annually at the Staff College and one at the Imperial Defence College, alongside correspondence courses for prospective staff officers.⁹²³ By 1939 Commands were also instructed to undertake a series of skeleton-force Headquarter Exercises, or ‘telephone battles,’ in order to exercise their Territorial divisional staffs.⁹²⁴ Yet, although these measures were undoubtedly a move forward, such reforms were too late to produce a trained Territorial staff cadre before 1939, especially as relatively few officers could attend the courses and there were still lingering doubts over their suitability.⁹²⁵ In the end the General Staff had to accept that a considerable amount of further staff training would have to be given to the TA after mobilisation, and that most staffs would thus receive their education under the pressure of battle.⁹²⁶

When taken together, the relatively low level of efficiency the TA could achieve in peacetime meant that expectations of Territorial performance on mobilisation remained low. Maj.-Gen. John Kennedy, who had coordinated the instruction of Territorials as GOC 44th Division, told Liddell Hart:

I ... think it vitally important that it should be recognized that Territorial troops at the beginning of a war can only be asked to perform very simple manoeuvres and if it is possible to give them purely

⁹²¹ R.G. Cherry, (1939) p.548.

⁹²² *Ibid.* p.549.

⁹²³ *Hansard*, HC Deb 23 Nov 1937 vol.329 c.1006; TNA WO 231/237 ATM No.21, Individual Training Period 1938/39; *Hansard*, HC Deb 18 July 1939 vol.350 cc.199-200W.

⁹²⁴ TNA WO 231/239 ATM No.23: Individual Training Period 1939/40.

⁹²⁵ B. Liddell Hart, (1939) p.415; TNA CAB 53/34 COS.644 ‘Imperial Defence College: Admission of a Territorial Army Officer,’ 12 Nov 1937; CAB 53/9 COS 233rd Meeting, 29 March 1938; D. French, (2000) p.70; CAB 53/43 COS.812 ‘Report by the Commandant of the 1938 Course at the Imperial Defence College,’ 15 Dec 1938.

⁹²⁶ R.G. Cherry, (1939) p.550; TNA WO 231/239 ATM No.23: Individual Training Period 1939/40.

defensive work so much the better, but even defence must be on lines which are suitable to troops who may panic through ignorance or the shock of first casualties.

Territorial training is largely a veneer – which the rough usage of war destroys almost at once – unless it is carefully preserved until war experience gradually produces the real fighting soldier, a man who reacts instinctively to any situation and is not dismayed by the unexpected.⁹²⁷

Admittedly, peacetime Territorial training was always likely to be a ‘veneer,’ as the test of a unit’s efficiency would come after it had completed its programme of intensive training after embodiment. Nevertheless, this programme depended on a number of determining factors already being in place, especially a strong cadre of capable instructors and leaders and a thorough grounding in both the practical and theoretical aspects of the unit’s role. Unfortunately by 1939 it was in these key determinants that the TA was found wanting.

* * *

Even if the facilities had existed to train the TA to a high standard little could have been done to fully equip it before the outbreak of war. The decision to rearm the Territorials coincided with a comprehensive modernisation programme that left most of the Army’s reserve stocks obsolete. The only means of accelerating the TA’s re-equipment would be to increase manufacture or transfer equipment from the Regulars. The General Staff was willing to lend the TA limited ‘samples’ from the Regular Army’s war reserves to facilitate training, but never more than a third of its stock in any one item.⁹²⁸

Accelerating this rate depended on broadening and accelerating industrial production, something that Hore-Belisha consistently pushed for but was never satisfactorily achieved. The continuing uncertainties over the TA’s role allowed the Treasury to deny War Office demands on the grounds that they had not received government sanction.⁹²⁹ In any case contracts could only be placed for items for which enough manufacturing capacity existed.⁹³⁰ This meant that hardly any of the training

⁹²⁷ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/417 Maj.-Gen. J. Kennedy to Liddell Hart, 28 Aug 1938.

⁹²⁸ TNA WO 32/4457 Memorandum by the DSD: ‘Possibilities of accelerating the re-equipment of the TA,’ 23 Sept 1937; WO 32/4611 CIGS to DGTA, AG, QMG, DGMP and PUS, 21 June 1938; ‘Proceedings of a Meeting held on 16 June 1938 to consider the Re-organization of Territorial Army Field Formations’, by SD.2, 16 June 1938.

⁹²⁹ TNA WO 32/4457 S. of S. to DGMP, 8 Aug 1937; WO 163/47 Informal Army Council 6th Meeting, 14 Oct 1937.

⁹³⁰ TNA WO 32/4457 Memorandum by the DSD, 23 Sept 1937.

equipment sanctioned for the TA had actually been issued by the end of 1937.⁹³¹ As a result the TA still lacked modern small arms, anti-tank rifles, field artillery, armoured vehicles or tanks, and had only eight per cent of its required wireless sets and forty per cent of its MT vehicles.⁹³²

The situation should have improved over 1938/39 as rearmament gained pace and the TA received more funding. However little could have been done to rectify earlier flaws in procurement or remedy the bottlenecks in domestic production capacity. Issuing the TA with the new Bren light machine gun, for example, depended on production from the John Inglis Company in Canada, but delays in negotiating a manufacturing agreement and the disappointingly slow rate of domestic manufacture ensured that Bren guns for the TA remained in short supply.⁹³³ As a result, although each Regular unit had its scale of around fifty Brens by June 1939, all original TA units had only twelve per battalion, and second line battalions were lucky if they received any of their reduced quota of eight.⁹³⁴

Similar problems were found in re-equipping the TA with modern field artillery. By March 1938 the War Office agreed to standardise and rearm the Territorial field artillery alongside the Regulars.⁹³⁵ Again, however, the capacity simply did not exist to achieve this. As a stop-gap measure a decision was made to re-line existing field guns, and these converted 18/25-pdrs would be issued to the TA for training while also constituting a reserve, to be returned to the Regular RA in the event of an emergency.⁹³⁶ However, even this conversion programme lagged behind requirements, and as a result the Territorial Army was warned not to expect the delivery of any 18/25-pdrs until at least the summer

⁹³¹ TNA WO 163/47 Informal Army Council 11th Meeting, 22 Nov 1937; CAB 2/7 CID 302nd Meeting, 25 Nov 1937 and DPR.229 'War Office 17th Progress Report'; WO 32/4457 DGMP to F.1, 30 Nov 1937; Bovenschen to Bridges, 10 Dec 1937; Minutes of TISC 114th Meeting, 16 Dec 1937; 'War Office Memorandum No.345: Training Equipment for the Territorial Army,' 3 May 1938.

⁹³² TNA WO 32/4457 'Statement to show the situation to be reached by December 1937 in the re-equipment of the TA with modern weapons.'

⁹³³ TNA CAB 2/7 CID 302nd Meeting, 25 Nov 1937; CAB 2/8 CID 354th Meeting, 27 April 1939; 306th Meeting, 13 Jan 1938 and DPR.237 'War Office 18th Progress Report'; WO 32/4457 Minutes of TISC 114th Meeting, 16 Dec 1937; *Hansard*, HC Deb 08 Feb 1938 vol.331 c.835; HC Deb 13 July 1938 vol.338 cc.1348-9W; HC Deb 26 July 1938 vol.338 c.2894; HC Deb 27 June 1939 vol.349 cc.195-6; HC Deb 01 Aug 1939 vol.350 c.2154; D. MacKenzie, 'The Bren Gun Scandal and the Maclean Publishing Company's Investigation of Canadian Defence Contracts, 1938-1940,' *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol.26 No.3 (1991) pp.142-143.

⁹³⁴ *Hansard*, HC Deb 27 June 1939 vol.349 c.195.

⁹³⁵ TNA CAB 2/7 CID 313th Meeting, 17 March 1938.

⁹³⁶ TNA WO 32/4457 109th TISC Meeting, 11 Nov 1937; WO 32/4457 Minutes of the 141st Meeting of the TISC, 11 May 1938.

of 1939.⁹³⁷ The shortages in both these core items of equipment meant that Territorial units were eventually ordered to reorganise without them, and some retained their obsolescent equipment long after the outbreak of war.⁹³⁸

As rearmament efforts fell behind the demands of expansion such deficiency gaps only widened. In October 1938 it was conceded that the TA could not be equipped with its training equipment until May 1939 at the earliest and, although production rates did start to improve over 1939, they could not keep pace with the rate of expansion.⁹³⁹ Duplication further exacerbated the problem. Original units were required to share what limited equipment they did have with their duplicates, which they often could not do without compromising their own training and mobilisation efficiency.⁹⁴⁰ For example, when the London Division duplicated it transferred exactly half of its vehicles, weapons and equipment to the new 2nd London Division. This meant that the 1st Londons mobilised with considerably less equipment than it had held in peace.⁹⁴¹ Reflecting on this process, the division's Territorial commander, Claude Liardet, considered it to be:

A shocking business, rape of a decent Div, training hard, half of officers, NCOs and specialists and vehicles handed over to a non-existent formation, but had to be trained, organized and equipped by its parent, who was jolly bust at that time endeavoring to be efficient.⁹⁴²

As a consequence of these shortages by August 1939 Hore-Belisha considered that they would be severely pressed to despatch the Field Force overseas. Although two Regular divisions could be sent within a month, and another two between two and four weeks later, the Territorials would be left in a parlous state, and it would even be necessary to strip the TA of some of its ancillary troops to permit the despatch of the Regulars. Once these initial formations were committed the need to replace wastage meant that the re-equipment schedules for further contingents would only be further delayed. Although Hore-Belisha stressed that the more time they had to prepare in peace the better the

⁹³⁷ TNA WO 231/238 ATM No.22: Collective Training Period 1939.

⁹³⁸ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1937/5 Talk with J. Dunlop, 8 Feb 1937; TNA WO 222/1577 'Minutes of a meeting to discuss the steps in the Re-organization of the Territorial Army,' 7 Oct 1938

⁹³⁹ TNA CAB 2/8 CID 354th Meeting, 27 April 1939; CID 359th Meeting, 8 June 1939; For a detailed appraisal of the equipment situation and anticipated progress in the TA by late 1938, see IWM Dunlop MSS 74/163/8 'Forecast of availability of equipment to meet the initial minimum training requirements of the Territorial Army.'

⁹⁴⁰ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 DSD to GOCinCs All Commands, 6 April 1939; TNA WO 231/238 ATM No.22: Collective Training Period 1939; W. Bugler, *The Story of 114: An Informal history of the 114th (Sussex) Field Regiment (one-time Jungle Field Regiment) RA, (TA)*, (Privately Published, 1984) p.15; J. Colquhoun, (1992) p.4; B. Price, (1989) p.9.

⁹⁴¹ D. Williams, *The Black Cats at War: The Story of the 56th (London) Division TA, 1939-1945*, (London, 1995) p.3.

⁹⁴² LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/445 Liardet to Liddell Hart, 14 Aug 1965.

equipment situation would be, this factor was a commodity that in the summer of 1939 was fast running out.⁹⁴³

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Evaluation

Between 1937 and 1939 the War Office embarked on a series of reforms and improvements to the TA. These reflected the increasing importance it accorded to the reserves within its own rearmament priorities and, at least until early 1939, were at odds with the ‘limited liability’ priorities specified in government policy. Instead, the War Office carried on remodeling the TA along modern Field Force lines and rejected attempts to give the TA a singular role more applicable to the imperial and home defence responsibilities associated with the ‘New Conspectus.’ As far as the General Staff was concerned, Britain had to have a prepared mechanism to reinforce and expand the Regular Field Force and this capability could only be provided by an efficient and well-balanced reserve, in the form of the Territorial Army.

In order to attain this the TA had to increase both its standard of efficiency and its readiness to mobilise. As a result efforts were made to modernise its organisation and rationalise its manpower policy, while some of its clearest flaws, such as the ‘pledge’ on unit integrity and the disparity between War and Peace Establishments, were rectified. However, the limitations inherent in its voluntary enlistment policy and the lack of any mechanism to control the distribution of its manpower ensured that a lengthy period of re-organisation would be inevitable on mobilisation.

Admittedly some factors were outside of the TA’s control, as there was a limit to the size the Army could attain and still possess any level of efficiency. This had more to do with the availability of equipment and training opportunities than manpower. The prospects for improving Territorial efficiency did rise as it was accorded a progressively higher degree of importance over 1938, which promised to free up more facilities and material for its training. However, by 1939 the forced

⁹⁴³ TNA CAB 2/9 CID 371st Meeting, 1 Aug 1939.

acceleration of Britain's rearmament programmes led to a level of overstretch in the military that could not prevent Territorial efficiency from being degraded. Duplicating the TA was organisationally logical for the purposes of fighting a European war, but it certainly added more difficulties to an ever-lengthening list of shortages and limitations.

As a result by 1939 the Territorial Army had good prospects for eventual improvement but was beset with practical deficiencies. Territorial commanders were generally inexperienced and under-trained whilst its cadre of instructors and NCOs was too small to prepare the swollen ranks of new recruits, and the Regular Army was incapable of offering any more assistance. Moreover, an acute shortage of modern equipment ensured that the TA could not effectively train in peacetime, let alone mobilise for war.

The reality of the situation was that by the outbreak of war the Territorial Army, like much of Britain's defence services, was caught in a period of transition. Required to expand at an impossible rate, there were too many Territorials to train, with too few instructors, too little equipment and too little time. In addition, the introduction of the Militia was a concession to the fact that it was almost impossible to achieve a high level of efficiency and readiness on a part-time basis. Ultimately Britain could not prepare for a total war by a reliance on the ad hoc precepts of the voluntary Territorial system, in the same way that peacetime industrial practice was insufficient to meet the demands of accelerated rearmament. As Sir John Simon clearly understood, in order to truly prepare for modern war in peacetime Britain would have to become a 'different kind of nation.'⁹⁴⁴

⁹⁴⁴ J. Maiolo, (2010) p.231.

Chapter Seven.

Forging the Wartime Army: The Territorial Army Contribution to Mobilisation and the Flanders Campaign, 1939/1940.

Introduction

British mobilisation planning had always acknowledged the value of a well-organised and efficient Territorial Army in the event of another European conflagration, and its role therefore had assumed a fundamental importance after Britain finally declared war on Germany in September 1939. With this being the case, the 1939/40 period can be seen as the culmination of all the efforts made to prepare the TA since the reconstitution. As such this period represents the ‘acid test’ of Territorial Army efficiency and its capacity to carry out its role.

Yet by the outbreak of war the TA was still in a state of transition. Britain was struggling to accelerate its rate of rearmament, and the forced pace of expansion during the late 1930s had resulted in a great deal of confusion and disorder. As a consequence mobilising the Territorial Army proved far more difficult to implement than previously anticipated. This was exacerbated by a lack of experienced personnel, a shortage of modern equipment and facilities, and the general but acute overstretch in the Regular Army and its concomitant inability to provide further assistance.

It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the TA was presented with a number of challenges in the months after September 1939. In assessing the influence of these from a military perspective historians have the benefit of K.J. Drewienkiewicz’s study on the build-up and training of Territorial formations over the so-called ‘Phony war’ period.⁹⁴⁵ However, brevity prevented Drewienkiewicz from going into any great detail, and his thesis made no attempt to form a broader assessment of the Territorial contribution to Britain’s initial war effort.

⁹⁴⁵ Brig. K.J. Drewienkiewicz, ‘Examine the build-up, early training and employment of the Territorial Army in the lead-up to, and the early days of, the Second World War,’ (Royal College of Defence Studies dissertation, 1992).

This chapter will address this deficiency by assessing the efficacy of the TA's mobilisation, deployment and subsequent preparations up to May 1940. It will focus on several key determinants of Territorial efficiency, particularly those aspects concerned with its organisation and the effects of pre-war policy on the actual mobilisation process. This will include an examination of the scope and amount of pre-deployment training received, the effectiveness of its commanders and instructors, and the efforts made to improve standards once the first Territorial formations were committed. Accordingly, by examining how successful the Territorial organisation and its manpower was in preparing for active deployment, from embodiment through to the fall of France, it will be possible to assess how effectively the Territorial Army carried out its role.

Mobilisation 1939

Britain, at least outwardly, carefully avoided committing the Territorials to any one theatre on the outbreak of war. According to the arrangements made during the 1939 Anglo-French staff conversations France could only expect the automatic support of the Regular Field Force.⁹⁴⁶ Official policy remained that the French would be informed of the rate of readiness of Territorial formations, but 'the use to be made of the Territorial Divisions would be decided at the time, in consultation with the French Government, and would be in the best interests of the Allied cause as a whole.'⁹⁴⁷

Nevertheless, although it was stressed that their destination was not set in stone, the clear intention was always for the TA to reinforce the Allies' military build-up in Europe.⁹⁴⁸ The Chiefs of Staff did discuss alternative options, such as utilising Territorial formations as a reserve against possible Italian, German or Soviet incursions in the Middle East. In their final view, however, ensuring the security of France and the Low Countries remained the strategic priority. Moreover, it was common knowledge that the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) could not be maintained without Territorial reinforcements. As Henry Pownall, the newly appointed Chief of Staff to the BEF, acknowledged,

⁹⁴⁶ TNA CAB 53/47 COS.876 'Staff Conversation with the French,' 11 April 1939; CAB 53/49 COS.909 'Staff Conversation with Poland: Memorandum for the Guidance of the UK Delegation to the Anglo-Polish Staff Conversation,' 18 May 1939; W. Philpott and M. Alexander, 'The French and the British Field Force: Moral Support or Material Contribution?' *The Journal of Military History*, Vol.71 No.3, (July, 2007) p.766.

⁹⁴⁷ TNA CAB 53/49 COS.914 'Staff Conversations with the French,' 25 May 1939.

⁹⁴⁸ TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 10 Nov 1939, and attached 'Memorandum by Chiefs of Staff.'

‘we cannot of course accept that the Regulars shall have no support from the [Territorials] when they are trained and equipped. C-in-C made that quite clear and it was generally agreed.’⁹⁴⁹

In any case, the primacy of the Territorial framework for expansion had already been confirmed in a number of key organisational decisions taken before war was declared. Alongside duplication, by the summer of 1939 the need to ensure the BEF had a viable mechanism for reinforcement ensured that divisional nominations had finally been authorised.⁹⁵⁰ This meant that by July the first tranche of Territorial units had quietly been assigned to augment the First (Regular) Contingent, and divisions were similarly allocated to the follow-on Territorial echelons.⁹⁵¹

As a result preparations were made to prioritise the despatch of the 48th (South Midland) and 51st (Highland) Divisions, along with a large number of Territorial Corps, Army and Line of Communication Troops, at Z+4 months. Plans were made to concentrate these formations after mobilisation in Category ‘A’ Training Areas, with the 48th being organised under Southern Command whilst 51st did the same in Aldershot Command.⁹⁵² By the end of the month the Second (TA) Contingent had also been selected,⁹⁵³ with GOsCinC instructed to release these divisions from other duties after Z+1 month in order for them to be moved to their designated concentration/training areas.⁹⁵⁴

This meant that by the time mobilisation was announced plans to expedite the call out of the TA were already in place. Indeed, in order to reduce uncertainty Hore-Belisha was keen to bring elements of the field army on to a similar pitch of readiness as the anti-aircraft troops manning the ‘Couverture,’ and requested permission to call out a full thirty-five per cent of the Territorial field force on 24 August to protect Vulnerable Points. This was, however, refused.⁹⁵⁵ Instead authority was given to

⁹⁴⁹ B. Bond, (ed.) *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lt.-Gen. Sir Henry Pownall - Vol.1, 1933-1940*, (London, 1973) p.237, entry for 20 Sept 1939.

⁹⁵⁰ TNA WO 163/71 Meeting of the Pre-Precautionary Period Committee (PPPC), 8 May 1939.

⁹⁵¹ TNA WO 163/71 Meeting of the PPPC, 10 July 1939; ‘Mobilization Position of the Field Force from 1st August 1939.’

⁹⁵² IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/9 War Office to GOsCinC all Commands, 25 July 1939.

⁹⁵³ 42nd (East Lancs), 44th (Home Counties), 49th (West Riding) and 50th (Northumbrian) Divisions.

⁹⁵⁴ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/9 War Office to GOsCinC all Commands, 28 July 1939.

⁹⁵⁵ TNA WO 163/71 Meeting of the PPPC, 24 Aug 1939.

call-out the initial 'Key Parties' over 26/27 August, with a more general calling-out being authorised from 31 August.⁹⁵⁶

Eased considerably by prior rehearsals undertaken by orderly staffs, the actual call out process proceeded relatively smoothly.⁹⁵⁷ Despite some delays in the distribution of telegrams (caused by over-reliance on the standard post office system), by 27 August the Assistant Adjutant-General, TA (AAG, TA) could report that most 'key men' had been successfully called out and were now only awaiting the order for general mobilisation.⁹⁵⁸ Subsequently, the fact that war was declared towards the tail end of the annual training period was an advantage, as it meant that units were already more or less fully formed.⁹⁵⁹

Yet, although embodiment was carried out according to plan, the consequent process of shaping Territorial units into trained and cohesive military bodies proved a much harder task. Reflecting from 1941, the then Adjutant-General, Ronald Adam, noted that most of the Army's energies up to May 1940 had to be diverted into bringing some order to the chaos of Territorial manpower. The scale of this undertaking was such that the TA had to undergo a period of considerable disruption directly after mobilisation. This seriously constrained efforts to prepare its units for early service overseas.

This should have come as no surprise given the fact that most of these problems had been predicted in peacetime.⁹⁶⁰ The more thorough medical examination on mobilisation duly led to many personnel being instantly downgraded.⁹⁶¹ Additionally, as nineteen was set as the age limit for service in operational theatres, Territorial divisions earmarked for the BEF had to remove all those classed as 'immatures,' or under the deployable age. This necessitated the exchange of some 40,000 Territorials between units, which proved highly disruptive. For example, the re-allocation of 'immatures' from

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid. Meeting of the PPC, 31 Aug 1939.

⁹⁵⁷ Lt.-Col. Sir R. Verdin, *The Cheshire (Earl of Chester's) Yeomanry 1898-1967*, (Birkenhead, 1971) p.218; P. Dennis, (1987) p.258.

⁹⁵⁸ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 Abridged notes on visit to TA Units, 26th and 27th August 1939.

⁹⁵⁹ TNA WO 163/71 Meeting of the PPC, 28 Aug 1939; CAB 53/11 COS 311th Meeting, 21 Aug 1939 'Annex II: Measures which have been or are being taken by Service Departments.'

⁹⁶⁰ See Chapter Six.

⁹⁶¹ LHCMA Adam MSS 3/2 'Paper by A.G. on Use of Manpower in the Army,' 21 Nov 1941; A. Converse, *Armies of Empire: The 9th Australian and 50th British Divisions in Battle, 1939-1945*, (Cambridge, 2011) p.34; IWM 12183 L. Gibson; IWM 11941 T.E. Nimmins.

23rd and 12th Division resulted in each formation losing between five and ten per cent of their total manpower.⁹⁶²

A similar manpower dilemma was encountered over the necessity to release those employed in reserved occupations. By 1 September the 'comb out' was finally set in motion, leading to the discharge of between 9,500 to 10,500 Territorials.⁹⁶³ Some 2,100 key men had been released on the representation of employers and government departments during the initial call-up, and a further 7,100 were discharged after a Ministry of Labour audit. In December 1939 another 3,400 men were released after a similar process was initiated in ADGB units.⁹⁶⁴

Many Territorial units actively resisted the 'comb out,' especially of its longest-serving or more useful men, a fact that reflected the relative lack of experience that existed in the expanded Territorial Army. For example, in the infantry alone sixty-five per cent had less than twelve months service, and fifty per cent less than six.⁹⁶⁵ The upshot of this was that men with even only a few years of peacetime training were viewed as indispensable assets, and COs refused to release them.⁹⁶⁶ Furthermore, removing all those in one reserved occupational group could easily decimate whole units.⁹⁶⁷ For example, on mobilisation the 42nd Divisional Engineers lost over thirty per cent of its total strength to industry, and these could not be replaced until the end of 1939.⁹⁶⁸ As a response some men simply rejected their exempted status. The commander of 50th Division reported just after mobilisation that he had up to 100 miners 'who were frankly refusing to go.' He urged the War Office to re-think the issue, recognising that 'expulsion by brute force was an undesirable step.'⁹⁶⁹

The War Office intended to fill the resultant manpower gaps with conscripted servicemen, alongside Territorials transferred from second-line units and recalled Regular Reservists, but this policy could

⁹⁶² K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) Appendix B-3.

⁹⁶³ TNA WO 163/71 Meeting of the PPPC, 1 Sept 1939.

⁹⁶⁴ LHCMA Adam MSS 3/2 'Paper by A.G. on Use of Manpower in the Army,' 21 Nov 1941.

⁹⁶⁵ P. Caddick-Adams, 'Phoney War and "Blitzkrieg": The Territorial Army, 1939-1940,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.143 No.2 (Apr, 1998) p.68; K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) pp.26-27.

⁹⁶⁶ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 War Office to GOsCinC all Commands, 3 Oct 1939 and 27 Oct 1939.

⁹⁶⁷ LHCMA Adam MSS 3/2 'Paper by A.G. on Use of Manpower in the Army,' 21 Nov 1941.

⁹⁶⁸ K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) p.30.

⁹⁶⁹ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 'Report No.3: Notes on Visit to Durham and West Riding, 27th – 29th Sept 1939 on 50th (Northumbrian), 23rd (Northumbrian), 49th (W Riding) and 46th Division.'

markedly alter a unit's composition, leaving some sub-units with less than thirty per cent of their original Territorial volunteers.⁹⁷⁰ This was a cause of considerable controversy, particularly regarding cross-border transfers between personnel in Scots, Welsh, Irish and English regiments. Even the King intervened in December 1939 to express his dissatisfaction that Territorial personnel were being drafted to units with which they had no regional connection, or that these units were being filled with conscripts, again with which they had no connection.⁹⁷¹

Implied in these complaints was an accusation that homogenous Territorial units were being willfully broken up, which would have a marked effect on cohesion and efficiency, especially as the standard amongst the conscripts could be highly variable. Those received by the 48th Division, for instance, were generally regarded as very good material and although lacking experience were well trained up to section level. However, in the 61st Division the situation was quite different. For example, the 63rd Anti-Tank Regiment (2/Oxf. and Worc. Yeomanry) received a draft of 96 conscripts, of whom 18 were below Grade II in medical category. Of these one man was epileptic, one had only a single eye, another was hump-backed, one suffered from curvature of the spine and another was afflicted with a venereal disease.⁹⁷²

This need to rebalance their strengths and absorb new manpower meant that Territorial units were obliged to spend at least an additional month at their home stations reorganising their 'First' and 'Second' lines rather than training. Indeed, units continued to receive drafts up to, and even after, they had deployed overseas. Processing these new intakes delayed the despatch of the Second Territorial Contingent and meant that in the meantime 'these divisions could not be regarded as fit for war, and they should not be considered as available to send to France in the near future.'⁹⁷³ At the same time this large-scale transfer of original personnel and the infusion of non-voluntary manpower effectively began to change the character and identity of Territorial units. As Allan Converse has

⁹⁷⁰ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 'Report No.8: South Midlands, 25th to 28th October 1939'; P. Caddick-Adams, *By God they can Fight! A History of the 143rd Infantry Brigade, 1905-1995*, (Shrewsbury, 1995) p.153.

⁹⁷¹ TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 1 Dec 1939.

⁹⁷² IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 'Report No.8 South Midlands, 25th to 28th October 1939.'

⁹⁷³ Quoted in K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) p.21.

concluded in his study of the 50th (Northumbrian) Division, as a result ‘the cohesion of the old TA was already weakened even before [it] went into action.’⁹⁷⁴

Preparing for War: Territorial Training Prior to Deployment

Throughout the interwar period the preparedness of a Territorial unit to deploy was predicated on initially six, and later no less than four, months of intensive post-mobilisation training. In 1939, however, this pre-deployment period was heavily disrupted, severely curtailing both the quantity and the quality of training units received. Partly this was due to the manpower re-organisation described above, but it also depended on whether a unit was part of a ‘First Line’ formation, earmarked for active service, or a duplicate ‘Second Line’ division, held at a lower priority. There was also a tension between the perceived need for the TA to provide an adequate level of internal security and home defence, against the requirement not to disrupt the preparations of those formations training for overseas.⁹⁷⁵

After the initial rush of mobilisation itself, the pace in which the TA was prepared slowed considerably. Most Territorials remained at their drill halls, or even at home, for a number of weeks, which prevented the commencement of any serious training.⁹⁷⁶ As a result extra efforts were made to expedite the movement of those divisions earmarked for the BEF to their concentration areas, even if these areas lacked the infrastructure to support them.⁹⁷⁷ By late 1939 decent training grounds were in short supply and a widespread lack of accommodation continued to seriously delay pre-deployment training programmes. Once training began in earnest in November the low collective standard meant that at least a month of individual and sub-unit training was required before anything more complicated could be attempted.⁹⁷⁸

⁹⁷⁴ A. Converse, (2011) p.25.

⁹⁷⁵ LHCMA Kirke MSS 9/1 Unpublished Memoirs; 9/2 ‘Notes Left by General Sir Walter Kirke, GCB etc, covering his experiences as Inspector General and C-in-C Home Forces between Mid 1939 and 25 May 1940;’ D.J. Newbold, ‘British Planning and Preparations to Resist Invasion on Land: September 1939-September 1940,’ (University of London, PhD, 1988) pp.35, 43, 56, 68-72.

⁹⁷⁶ D. Flower, *History of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders 5th Battalion (91st Anti-Tank Regiment) 1939-45*, (London, 1950) p.16.

⁹⁷⁷ See IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 Reports No.1 to 11, submitted between September and December 1939.

⁹⁷⁸ K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) pp.29-33.

Yet even these limited aims were not necessarily achieved. Shortages of ammunition and range facilities meant that some troops deployed on active service without even test-firing their weapons.⁹⁷⁹ The 148th Infantry Brigade had not been exercised in any manoeuvres above battalion level before it embarked for Norway in April 1940. One of its constituent battalions, the 8th Sherwood Foresters, only received its equipment in February and not every man had been trained in the use of his platoon's equipment, leading many, including officers, to deploy lacking elementary skills, such as how to prime grenades.⁹⁸⁰ Similarly the 1st Queen Victoria's Rifles, a dismounted motorcycle battalion hurriedly dispatched to the defence of Calais, arrived with many men armed only with a revolver, and few in any case had fired any more than fifty rounds with the rifle while the battalion had conducted only a single course on the Bren gun.⁹⁸¹

Looking at higher-level training, although formations managed to conduct some theoretical staff exercises, most efforts at effective collective training were severely curtailed. Before deploying the 145th Infantry Brigade carried out only one brigade exercise, which was subsequently described as a confused and chaotic affair.⁹⁸² Similarly, its parent 48th Division managed just a single divisional exercise, designed to practice rotating brigades for forty-eight hours each in a simulated trench system, the main lesson of which, in the words of one participant, 'was already known to those who had served in the last war – that trench warfare, even without a real enemy, could be remarkably unpleasant.'⁹⁸³ This exercise also illustrates the type of war these units were preparing for. Although the combined arms lessons of the First World War had been assimilated into the BEF's written doctrine, memories of earlier experiences in France and Flanders still pervaded. As one Territorial battalion chronicler recalled:

No one, officers and men alike, could foresee how different the fighting conditions would be from those of 1914-18. If the equipment and uniforms were of different patterns, the training and thought were still buried deep in the morass of trench warfare, intermingled rather hazily with the modern idea of anti-tank ditches.⁹⁸⁴

⁹⁷⁹ Lt.-Col. J.E.H Neville, (ed.) *The Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Chronicle, Vol.1, September 1939 – June 1940*, (Aldershot, 1949) p.45.

⁹⁸⁰ C. Housley, 'First Contact': *A History of the 8th Battalion, The Sherwood Foresters, 1939-1945*, (Nottingham, 1997) p.12.

⁹⁸¹ I.F.W. Beckett, *Territorials: A Century of Service*, (Plymouth, 2008) p.153.

⁹⁸² Lt.-Col. J.E.H Neville, (1949) p.45.

⁹⁸³ Ibid.

⁹⁸⁴ Ibid. p.24.

Throughout January 1940 the first echelon of Territorial divisions was deployed to France (48th, 50th and 51st), with the next earmarked formations (42nd, 44th and 49th) duly replacing them on their vacated training areas. Yet as a result of the above factors these divisions arrived without having already undertaken an adequate period of training in the UK, and whether they were ready for active duty is extremely doubtful.

Deployment: Territorial Efficiency and Performance, 1939/40

Although the first Territorial Echelons managed to deploy broadly according to timetable, they could hardly be described as fully ready. As a consequence it was recognised that a lengthy period of further preparation would be necessary before TA formations could take part in active operations. Whether this was carried out depended on a number of internal and external factors, over which Territorial commanders had only a limited influence. Furthermore, for a Territorial the experience of preparing for war could differ markedly depending on whether the unit he was part of belonged to a First or Second Line formation, and whether it had been warned off for deployment or was to remain on home defence duties in the UK.

The Territorial ‘First Line’

Fortunately the period of so-called ‘Phony War’ ensured that the Territorial formations committed to France were given a relatively peaceful respite in which to prepare, although continuing doubts over Territorial proficiency, when coupled to the lack of resources and training opportunities, meant it was difficult to see how standards could be raised. The War Office duly admitted in the winter of 1939 that ‘no Territorial battalion is really sufficiently well trained to be sent up into the forward area before the end of the year.’⁹⁸⁵ This low opinion was also reflected in the estimation of the GOC II Corps, Lt.-Gen. Alan Brooke. After visiting the 4th Gordon Highlanders, a Territorial machine gun battalion recently transferred into his command, he recorded in his diary:

It is totally unfit for war in every respect and will take at least 2 months to render it fit. It would be sheer massacre to commit it to action in its present state in addition to endangering the lives of others.

⁹⁸⁵ Quoted in K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) p.26.

I therefore consider that it is a very grave fault by those concerned in sending it out to this country in such a state.⁹⁸⁶

The Army Council was well aware that the formations joining the BEF did so without adequate preparation, and to ameliorate this Gort tried to keep one division at any one time out of the line in order for it to carry out the field training it needed.⁹⁸⁷ He had also intended for BEF formations to conduct a progressive programme of intensive training once they deployed to France, but the need to cover a wide section of the allied line meant few could be released to do so.

Training in theatre was also further degraded by the constant need to divert manpower to labour duties. The lack of a dedicated labour force meant that the BEF was initially forced to use its own personnel to construct a defensive line along the Franco-Belgian border, which meant that many units could only dedicate one day a week to their training programmes. Despite efforts to direct manpower from other sources, including foreign workers, the Army continued to rely on 'low priority Territorial units' as an unskilled work force well into 1940.⁹⁸⁸ It was even suggested that this would help raise morale, which had been sapped by the lack of training opportunities, the impossibility of receiving equipment and the boredom of guarding VPs at home.⁹⁸⁹ With this in mind, by March 1940 the 12th, 23rd and 46th Divisions were stripped of any heavy equipment and support elements and dispatched to France for labour duties.⁹⁹⁰ Although the intention was for these formations to concurrently carry out a modicum of training, at any one time between four-fifths or two-thirds of their personnel would be utilised for construction tasks. As a result they were neither prepared nor equipped to conduct any type of military operations, a fact that became abundantly clear when they were swept up in the 1940 campaign.⁹⁹¹ Even then, the eventual arrival of the Territorial Labour Divisions did little to solve the crisis in manpower and did even less to advance the general level of training.⁹⁹²

⁹⁸⁶ A. Danchev and D. Todman (eds.), *War Diaries of Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, 1939-1945*, (London, 2001) p.20, diary entry for 26 Nov 1939.

⁹⁸⁷ TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 18 March 1940.

⁹⁸⁸ K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) p.24; B. Bond, (1973) p.238, entry for 21 Sept 1939; TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 11 Dec 1939; WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 1 Jan 1940.

⁹⁸⁹ TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 19 Feb 1940.

⁹⁹⁰ TNA WO 163/49 OS.29 Minute by AG to S of S, 7 March 1940.

⁹⁹¹ K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) p.49. For a critical, if somewhat vituperative, account of their subsequent experiences, see D. Edgar, *Day of Reckoning: The Untold Story of the Chaos in France before Dunkirk, and how three British Territorial Army Labour Divisions finished up facing the Panzers*, (London, 1983); T. Lynch, *Dunkirk 1940 - 'Whereabouts Unknown': How Untrained Troops of the Labour Divisions were Sacrificed to Save an Army*, (Stroud, 2010).

⁹⁹² TNA WO 163/49 OS.64 'Labour for the Army,' c.April 1940.

As Drewienkiewicz has calculated, the sum of effective training received by the ‘First Line’ TA before May 1940 was therefore highly variable but certainly inadequate. He identified a clear disparity in the aggregate duration of training undertaken by the highest trained divisions (for example, twelve weeks for 50th Division) and the lowest (two to three weeks for 48th Division). By comparison, a Militiaman could expect at least eight weeks of individual training before joining his unit.⁹⁹³

Weeks of Training 1939/40					
Division	Sept-Oct	Nov-Dec	Jan-Feb	Mar-May	Total
42nd	2	3	3	3(2)	11
44th	2	3	3	3(2)	11
48th	2	3	1(1)	-	6
49th	2	3	3	2(2)	10
50th	2	3	3(2)	4(3)	12
51st	2	3	2(2)	-	7

Note: The number in parentheses indicates the number of those weeks whereby training was undertaken with full equipment scales.

Source: K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) ‘Table One: Training Achieved,’ p.48.

Indicative of the low level of efficiency amongst the Territorial divisions is the report filed in January 1940 by the GOC of III Corps, Lt.-Gen. Ronald Adam. Training had been handicapped by the lack of experienced officers and the difficulties he had in replacing those found incompetent. An injection of Regular personnel to offset this had not been forthcoming, and his Corps HQ staff was inexperienced and overloaded with administration. Many of his units still lacked all manner of essential items of ammunition and equipment, which ensured their men lacked confidence in their tools, and although 51st Division had carried out some limited brigade manoeuvres most divisions had done little more than organise basic exercises at a battalion level. Adam stressed that the quality of the individual Territorial was not the issue, as he found them to be enthusiastic, intelligent and physically capable. Nevertheless, whilst he was confident that his divisions could hold the line in a defensive capacity, he

⁹⁹³ K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) p.47.

had to warn his superiors that his corps would need a significant uplift in equipment and training before it could be classed as fully capable.⁹⁹⁴

The shortage of modern equipment was an enduring complication, and the TA had already been stripped of some key items in order to despatch the first BEF echelon. For example, when the 5th Regular Division departed for France in November it took with it the equipment of the Territorial division earmarked for despatch at Z+4 months. Furthermore, the lack of armoured vehicles had seriously delayed the formation of the Territorial tank brigades, and the slow production of essential equipment ensured that III Corps lacked adequate coverage against attack from armour, aircraft or gas.⁹⁹⁵

Shortages were such that, despite an explicit order to make no distinction between original and duplicated units, deploying Territorial formations could only do so by stripping the equipment from their 'Second Line' formations left in the UK.⁹⁹⁶ For example, this left the duplicate 12th Regt RHA (HAC) with only one 18/25-pdr and a handful of obsolete field pieces to train with, and no tractors for the guns apart from an array of civilian lorries. Most gun drill had to be carried out with wooden mock-ups, and training amounted mainly to drill and fitness.⁹⁹⁷

Although much is made of the BEF as a fully motorised army, the TA relied upon requisitioned vehicles for its mobility and this proved an unreliable practice. In a batch of eighty-six vehicles processed for 1st London Division at Woolwich, forty had to be rejected straight away, and of the 36 motorcycles hired only seven usable examples reached their units.⁹⁹⁸ This led to most units being chronically short in transport. The 91st Field Regt, RA, for example, was earmarked for early

⁹⁹⁴ TNA WO 163/49 OS.11 'Memorandum by the CIGS on the Training of III Corps: Appendix A – Report by GOC 3 Corps,' 21 Jan 1940.

⁹⁹⁵ TNA WO 163/48 'Memorandum by Chiefs of Staff,' Nov 1939.

⁹⁹⁶ TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 10 Nov 1939 and attached 'Memorandum by DGAR on the Proposed Despatch to France of Additional Formations'; B. Price, *What did you do in the war, Grandpa? Memories of a Young Gunner: Two weeks' Territorial Camp which lasted seven years 1939-1946* (Woolhampton, 1989) p.15; W. Bugler, *The Story of 114: An Informal history of the 114th (Sussex) Field Regiment (one-time Jungle Field Regiment) RA, (TA)*, (Privately published, 1984) p.15, 17; A.T.M Durand and R.H.S. Hastings, *The London Rifle Brigade, 1919-1950* (Aldershot, 1952) p.59.

⁹⁹⁷ J. Colquhoun, *Action Front! – A History of 'C' Battery HAC in War and Peace*, (London, 1992) p.9; IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 'Report No.8 South Midlands, 25th to 28th October 1939.

⁹⁹⁸ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 'Report No.10 Visits made to London 17th, 18th and 19th November 1939.'

deployment and had twelve 25-pdr guns in September 1939, but did not possess the tractors to move them.⁹⁹⁹ Indeed, lack of vehicles prevented III Corps from practicing any aspects of motorised movement or march discipline before its units left for France.¹⁰⁰⁰

Attempts were made to minimise the impact of equipment shortages and direct what little was available to where it was needed most. For example, in order to equip the units heading overseas all low priority units were instructed to surrender any equipment above a twenty-five per cent training scale, although this obviously retarded their own preparations. Despite this, however, production of several key item of equipment continued to lag behind the deployment timetable, and little could be done to ameliorate this.¹⁰⁰¹

* * *

Although the absence of equipment was an obvious practical problem, this was compounded by accusations that the TA's preparation was being inadequately directed. As the former Yeomanry officer and erstwhile editor of the *Army Quarterly*, Cuthbert Headlam, recalled:

One feels rather nervous and unhappy when one sees the modern soldiers: they seem so very raw and untrained, even after all these months of war. The weak lot are of course the second line TA, Hore-Belisha's boys: their officers are said to be quite impossible.¹⁰⁰²

Sir Auckland Geddes expressed his opinion with rather more force:

This army business is worse than could have been believed. These second line T.F. divisions are more than a menace. The rubbish we have got here is appalling and the officers! My God!¹⁰⁰³

As explained in the previous chapter, duplication had already overextended the Territorial Army's officer corps and further expansion after mobilisation only exacerbated this. The subsequent pressures of mobilisation and the exigencies of war therefore made it difficult to avoid promoting men above the ceiling of their formal training and competence. This inevitably meant that, in the words of one Territorial CO, 'the new Army was being built on a weak foundation instead of a firm rock.'¹⁰⁰⁴

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid. 'Notes on Visit of AAG, TA 2nd and 3rd September.'

¹⁰⁰⁰ TNA WO 163/49 OS.11 'Memorandum by the CIGS on the Training of III Corps: Appendix A – Report by GOC 3 Corps,' 21 Jan 1940.

¹⁰⁰¹ Ibid. 'Memorandum by the CIGS on the Training of III Corps,' 6 Feb 1940.

¹⁰⁰² J. Beach, (ed.) *The Military Papers of Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Cuthbert Headlam, 1910-1942*, (Stroud, History Press, 2010) p.310, diary entry for 17 Nov 1940.

¹⁰⁰³ LHCMA 1/311/116 'Notes,' Feb 1940, quoted by P. Dennis, (1987) p.255.

¹⁰⁰⁴ LHCMA Houghton-Brown MSS Col. J. Houghton-Brown, 'Soldier-Farmer,' p.110.

Previous planning assumptions had relied on the TA Reserve of Officers (TARO) to cover any mobilisation deficiencies, but within the War Office it was ‘common knowledge that a large proportion of the officers in TARO have little war-time value and as an organisation the TARO is a very unreliable asset.’¹⁰⁰⁵ Despite attempts to overhaul its composition, by 1939 the TARO was therefore deemed to be ‘quite out of touch with the modern military’ and thus ‘of no great military value.’¹⁰⁰⁶ Other initiatives aimed at building up a pool of officers, such as the Officer Emergency Reserve, the Officer Cadet Reserve and the Officer Producing Group also proved incapable of generating the numbers the wartime army required. The shortage was such that the TA resorted to trawling converted anti-aircraft units, Training Centres and Depots for suitable ‘middle-piece’ officers, and demands were even made to recall officers from active service in order to address the shortfall.¹⁰⁰⁷

As the post-mobilisation Officer Cadet Training Unit system took time to establish, COs initially had to find additional officers from amongst their own personnel. Each unit was therefore authorised to immediately put forward two candidates for direct commissions (ideally those in possession of an OTC Cert. B or the Officers’ Qualification Certificate), and a further five after a later period of OCTU training.¹⁰⁰⁸ This was not in itself an inappropriate response, as the recent influx of high-calibre recruits meant that large numbers of potential officers were already serving in the ranks.¹⁰⁰⁹ However, these men were not distributed equally throughout the organisation, meaning that some units had far too many suitable candidates to choose from while others struggled to even find capable NCOs.¹⁰¹⁰ This placed a great deal of pressure on a few select units, particularly those in the London ‘class

¹⁰⁰⁵ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 ‘Notes on the Training of TA Full Colonels, Members of the TARO and the OER,’ c. Nov 1938.

¹⁰⁰⁶ TNA WO 163/68 CCAC Paper No.175 ‘Reorganization of the Territorial Army Reserve of Officers: Memorandum by AG,’ 18 Feb 1939.

¹⁰⁰⁷ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 ‘Report No.2: Notes on Visit to Lancashire, 19-21st September’; ‘Report No.3: Noted on Visit to Durham and West Riding, 27th – 29th Sept 1939’; ‘Report No.9: visit paid 2nd, 3rd and 4th November 1939.’

¹⁰⁰⁸ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 War Office to GOsCinC All Commands, 1 Sept 1939.

¹⁰⁰⁹ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 War Office to all Secretaries, TA Associations, n.d. but April 1939

¹⁰¹⁰ TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 1 Jan 1940; IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 ‘Report No.1: Notes on Visit to Scotland, 14th -16th September 1939.’

corps,' to surrender their best men to other units.¹⁰¹¹ For example, by August 1940 the 1st London Rifle Brigade had lost nearly half of its original mobilised strength to OCTUs.¹⁰¹² Indeed the entire 56th Division was allegedly held back from deployment for fear of repeating the mistakes of 1914, and losing too many of its potential officers while they were serving as inexperienced privates.¹⁰¹³

Nevertheless, the Territorial Army still provided the larger share of the wartime army's junior leadership, at least initially. Between September 1939 and January 1940 the Army commissioned 1,617 Territorials, against 393 men from the Regular Army and 207 from the Militia.¹⁰¹⁴ In fact some sixty-five per cent of OCTU vacancies in 1940 were to be specifically allotted to pre-war members of the Regular and Territorial Armies.¹⁰¹⁵ Nevertheless, it was also claimed that the Army was reluctant to promote senior Territorials, which was viewed in some circles as part of a definite War Office policy to remove all non-Regular officers from brigade or divisional commands.¹⁰¹⁶

Although it was not impossible for a Territorial to reach high officer (for instance Ronald Weeks, the wartime DCIGS, rose from the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel at the outbreak of war to Lieutenant-General by 1942,)¹⁰¹⁷ it was still unlikely. In the words of one Territorial Colonel, it would be 'easier for a cable to go through the eye of a needle than for a Territorial Army officer to aspire to a rank higher than that of a major.'¹⁰¹⁸ Of the 15,067 pre-war Territorial officers still actively serving in October 1944, a mere 1,554 held a rank above Major. Only thirty-six Territorials had been promoted to Brigadier, seven were Major-Generals and only one was a Lieutenant-General, and nearly all were

¹⁰¹¹ D. Williams, *The Black Cats at War: The Story of the 56th (London) Division TA, 1939-1945*, (London, 1995) p.3; Brig. C.N. Barclay, *The London Scottish in the Second World War - 1939 to 1945*, (London, 1952) p.37, 49.

¹⁰¹² A.T.M Durand and R.H.S. Hastings, (1952) p.61.

¹⁰¹³ D. Williams, (1995) p.3.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Hansard*, HC Deb 16 Jan 1940 vol.356 c.7.

¹⁰¹⁵ *Hansard*, HC Deb 5 March 1940 vol.358 cc.202-3.

¹⁰¹⁶ *Hansard*, HC Deb 13 March 1945 vol.409 c.135; HC Deb 12 Dec 1939 vol.355 c.1008; HC Deb 12 March 1940 vol.358 c.1078; TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 1 Jan 1940; R. Wild, *Dunkirk: A Personal Memoir – A Year in the Life of a Territorial Army Recruit, 1939-1940*, (Cardiff, 2004) p.42.

¹⁰¹⁷ T. Harrison Place, 'Lionel Wigram, Battle Drill and the British Army in the Second World War,' *War in History*, Vol.7 No.4 (2000) p.443.

¹⁰¹⁸ *Hansard*, HC Deb 13 March 1945 vol.409 c.150.

officially of lower substantive rank.¹⁰¹⁹ Of the 156 wartime divisional commanders in the field army only three were Territorials, and none of these had particularly distinguished military careers.¹⁰²⁰

In fact a pre-war Territorial CO was lucky if he managed to retain his original command. Between September 1939 and October 1941 a total of 265 Territorial unit commanders (or a quarter of the total) had been replaced.¹⁰²¹ Many were undeniably too old or too unfit to stand up to the rigours of combat, a fact already recognised before mobilisation and that subsequently became apparent during the 1940 campaign.¹⁰²² There also remained the ingrained assumption that, as amateurs, such men lacked the breadth of experience and expertise of their professional counterparts. One Territorial CO, the peacetime head of a brewery, had this conviction explained to him by his Regular brigade commander:

“After the war ... if I came to your brewery would you be likely to give me a job?”
... “I doubt it sir. The brewery trade has a long training period and most of us have been brought up to it.”
... “Well, in that case you will not be surprised if I put a regular soldier in your place in due course.”¹⁰²³

Challenging the proficiency of Territorials on professional grounds was not wholly unreasonable. As David French has observed, ‘Territorials did not have the badge of professional competence which most regular officers who commanded divisions possessed: they were not staff-college graduates.’¹⁰²⁴ Part-time Territorial training was also not seen as adequate preparation for wartime command. Liddell Hart considered that, as far as a Regular was concerned, thirty years in the TA was only equivalent to two or three years of ‘proper’ service.¹⁰²⁵ Furthermore, Territorial commanders were

¹⁰¹⁹ I.F.W. Beckett, (2008) p.123; No less than 2,553 serving Territorial Majors actually held the substantive rank of 2/Lt, along with 211 Lt.-Cols and 8 Colonels. See TNA WO 163/252 WOCCI Demobilization Planning Index (officers):

‘Analysis of Officers of the Territorial Army, comparing Acting or Temporary Rank with Substantive Rank,’ 30 June 1944.
¹⁰²⁰ D. French, ‘Colonel Blimp and the British Army: British Divisional Commanders in the War against Germany, 1939-1945,’ *English Historical Review*, Vol.111 No.444 (Nov, 1996) p.1187: These were H. Willans, C.F. Liardet, and W.G. Michelmores; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/575 Pile to Liddell Hart, 12 February 1942; J. Crang, (2000) p.92; <http://www.kzwp.com/lyons.pensioners/obituary2W.htm> accessed 18 Oct 2013.

¹⁰²¹ D. French, (2000) p.79.

¹⁰²² TNA WO 163/70 Meeting of the PPPC, 28 Sept 1938; K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) pp.20-21; G. Pryor, ‘The “Fifth Column” and the British Experience of Retreat, 1940,’ *War in History*, Vol.12 No.4, (2005) pp.428-432; M. Connelly and W. Miller, ‘The BEF and the Issue of Surrender on the Western Front in 1940,’ *War in History*, Vol.11 No.4, (2004) pp.433-434; SOFO Box 32 Item 45 Lt.-Col. R.D.R. Sale: Correspondence - letter dated 21 April 1940; I. Murray, ‘Filling a Wider Canvas,’ *Bugle and Sabre: Vol.II*, (Witney, 2008) p.49; M. Heyworth, *Hazebrouck 1940*, (Privately published, 2004) letter dated 31 March 1940, p.82 and letter dated 21 April 1940, p.111.

¹⁰²³ F.I. Hodson (ed.), *Tides of War: Seventeen Riflemen's Personal Experiences*, (Privately published, copy deposited in IWM).

¹⁰²⁴ D. French, (1996) p.1187.

¹⁰²⁵ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/575 Liddell Hart to Pile, 9 Feb 1942.

believed to lack the man-management skills the Army considered to be so critical to the effective leadership of a military unit.¹⁰²⁶

As a result removing ineffective officers was regarded as a priority. After inspecting one newly arrived Territorial unit, the GOC of II Corps recorded how its commander struck him 'as being no use at all. A good unit being spoilt by a bad CO,' and this was not an isolated case.¹⁰²⁷ After being forced to remove another ineffective commander he lamented how, 'It is sad the number of Territorial commanding officers who are proving quite unsuitable to command a unit out here.'¹⁰²⁸

The question of how to weed out the Territorial command structure was broached as early as October 1939, but did not come up for discussion by the Army Council until March 1940, after the CIGS had calculated that as many as fifty-five per cent of all Territorial COs were unfit for active command.¹⁰²⁹ After discussion it was decided to base field command solely on individual merit, but that only those classed as 'useless' would be required to resign their commissions, leaving the rest to be re-employed in a capacity other than active command.¹⁰³⁰ As a result of this policy, throughout early 1940 the BEF underwent a purgative process to comb out its ineffective commanders, leaving one Territorial to record how the COs around him were falling 'as thick as the leaves in Vallombrosa.'¹⁰³¹

At the same time a parallel programme of 'stiffening' Territorial units with Regular personnel was undertaken, in order to inject a measure of professional and administrative experience.¹⁰³² As a result, in November 1939 100 officers and 400 NCOs were withdrawn from the BEF to 'stiffen' the Territorial forces still training at home, and the intention was to continue withdrawing a quota of

¹⁰²⁶ War Office, ATM No.29: War, Feb 1940; ATM No.31: War, April 1940; IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 DMT to Commands and Districts at Home, 2 Oct 1939; WO 163/49 OS.11 'Memorandum by the CIGS on the Training of III Corps: Appendix A – Report by GOC 3 Corps,' 21 Jan 1940.

¹⁰²⁷ A. Danchev and D. Todman, (2001) p.34, diary entry for 25 Jan 1940.

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid. p.35, diary entry for 31 Jan 1939.

¹⁰²⁹ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 'Report No.8 South Midlands, 25th to 28th October 1939'; TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 29 March 1940; WO 163/49 OS.44 'Memorandum by CIGS on the Employment of Territorial Army Officers reported upon as Unfit to Command in War,' March 1940.

¹⁰³⁰ TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 29 March 1940 and 22 April 1940.

¹⁰³¹ I.F.W. Beckett, (2008) p.123; SOFO Box 32 Item 45 Lt.-Col. R.D.R. Sale: Correspondence - letter dated 12 April 1940.

¹⁰³² TNA WO 163/47 Army Council Meeting, 27 Sept 1939; WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 9 Oct 1939; CAB 53/52 COS.947 'Reinforcement for Garrisons Abroad,' 19 July 1939; WO 163/47 Army Council Meeting, 12 Sept 1939; WO 193/19 'Swapping TA for Regulars in India,' 26 Oct 1939; quoted in K.J. Drewienkiewicz (1992), p.27; W.S. Churchill, *The Second World War Vol.1 The Gathering Storm*, (London, 1948) p.437; B. Bond, (1973) p.303, entry for 25 April 1940.

experienced officers from the BEF to strengthen the divisions forming in the UK.¹⁰³³ However, Gort objected to this, preferring instead to exchange a Regular brigade for a Territorial one in each division as it arrived in theatre.¹⁰³⁴ Once in France Gort also ordered the substitution of one Territorial battalion in each Territorial brigade with a Regular unit.¹⁰³⁵ This was a response to the fact that supplying the enlarged TA with Warrant Officers and NCOs was effectively stripping Regular units of their best men, and thus compromising their own effectiveness.¹⁰³⁶

Individual Regulars and re-called Reservists also continued to be posted to Territorial units in key positions, but there were never enough experienced personnel to go around. Drewienkiewicz has calculated that to have any real influence on efficiency the ratio between Regulars and Territorial would have to have been at least 1:10. Unfortunately, in the circumstances this was impossible to achieve, and in 1940 a unit was lucky if it had one Regular for every one hundred.¹⁰³⁷

The Territorial ‘Second Line’

The Territorial formations committed to France may well have been underprepared, and the general standard of training amongst the prioritised ‘First Line’ was admittedly inconsistent at best.¹⁰³⁸ However, these formations were certainly better served than those in the Territorial ‘Second Line.’ Consisting mainly of duplicate divisions, these only became separate organisational entities from their parent formations in October 1939. Moreover, their staffs were mainly extemporised and units were typically under-establishment and short of all manner of even basic equipment, with a distinctly lower level of Regular inclusion and support than ‘First Line’ divisions. Support services had to be formed from scratch as none had been allocated prior to the outbreak of war, and these were slow to establish. For example, even after a month of preparation the divisional and brigade staff of the 45th and 43rd Divisions were still mainly improvised and working under considerable difficulty, and like most duplicate divisions the 45th had no service and support arms. Some crucial staff appointments, such as

¹⁰³³ TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 27 Nov 1939.

¹⁰³⁴ TNA WO 163/49 OS.11 ‘Memorandum by the CIGS on the Training of III Corps,’ 6 Feb 1940; WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 18 March 1940.

¹⁰³⁵ B. Bond, (1997) p.41.

¹⁰³⁶ Brig. W.J. Jervois, *The History of the Northamptonshire Regiment, 1934-1948*, (Aylesbury, 1953) p.29.

¹⁰³⁷ K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) p.68.

¹⁰³⁸ Ibid. p.47.

the Deputy Assistant Director of Ordnance Services and the Commander RASC, were left unfilled and the division only possessed an acting ADMS because an officer had been borrowed from the 43rd Division.¹⁰³⁹

Stripped of equipment and manned on the whole by ‘immatures’ and untrained recruits, the ‘Second Line’ was mainly utilised to guard Vulnerable Points (VPs), precisely in order to free the divisions earmarked for the First Contingent to train and deploy. As outlined in chapter eight, it had been hoped to use National Defence Companies for this task, but in the event they proved insufficient. Despite efforts to boost its strength, the NDC had only recruited some nineteen per cent of its officers (139 out of 738) and thirty-four per cent of its other ranks (6,726 out of 19,619) by August 1939.¹⁰⁴⁰ As a result many NDCs on mobilisation were largely improvised affairs, with their personnel forced to borrow weapons and equipment from their hard-pressed Territorial affiliates.¹⁰⁴¹

As a result of this shortfall a significant proportion of ‘Second Line’ formations had to be broken up and re-organised in order to furnish guards for the large and ever expanding list of VPs.¹⁰⁴² This task constituted a considerable drain on Territorial manpower, absorbing some 34,380 men by November 1939, of which at least 20,000 belonged to field force units.¹⁰⁴³ It has been claimed that these home defence duties at least had a value in forming formerly disparate units into more closely-knit bodies.¹⁰⁴⁴ Nevertheless, in general the experience only lowered morale and as many Territorials had no idea as to why they had to guard certain areas (and in the apparent absence of any effort to explain to them why) resentment was inevitable.¹⁰⁴⁵

¹⁰³⁹ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 ‘Report No.4: Report upon visit paid to West Country, October 4th-6th.’

¹⁰⁴⁰ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/9 ‘Territorial Army Reserve: National Defence Companies Position on 1st August 1939 – Table by AG.1 Statistics,’ 12 Aug 1939.

¹⁰⁴¹ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 ‘Abridged notes on visit to TA Units, 26th and Sunday, 27th August’ [1939].

¹⁰⁴² TNA WO 166/1 GHQ Home Forces War Diary, Feb 1940: ‘Appendix B: The Provision of Military Protection for Vulnerable Points, 7 Feb 1940.’

¹⁰⁴³ D.J. Newbold, (1988) p.43; LHCMA Kirke MSS 9/1 Unpublished Memoir; TNA WO 166/1 GHQ Home Forces War Diary, Jan 1940: ‘Appendix C - Weekly Report of the C.-in-C. Home Forces, 13 Jan 1940.’

¹⁰⁴⁴ A.T.M Durand and R.H.S. Hastings, (1952) p.54.

¹⁰⁴⁵ B. Sheridan, *What did you do in the War, Dad?* (Lewes, 1993) p.27, 29; B. Price, (1989) p.12; J.F. Horwood in F.I. Hodson (ed.), *Tides of War: Seventeen Riflemen’s Personal Experiences*, (Privately published, copy deposited in IWM); J. Colquhoun, (1992) p.9.

It was also hugely disruptive, both from an organisational perspective and with regard to training. Given the wide geographic spread of VPs, entire divisions could be dispersed throughout the country with little opportunity to properly form. For example, by October 1939 the 38th Division had been scattered throughout Wales and the borders, a situation that the divisional commander reported was having a woeful effect on its morale, training and efficiency.¹⁰⁴⁶ A similar fate befell the 9th (2nd Highland) Division, which was broken up into garrisons across the whole of Scotland.¹⁰⁴⁷ Even after a formation had been relieved of these duties their disengagement was often easier said than done. For example, after the 43rd Division had been ordered to concentrate for deployment only one infantry battalion and three field regiments managed to fully disengage from their various support duties, which in October were still absorbing 5,000 men from the Division.¹⁰⁴⁸ Indeed, Territorial field units were still tied up in such tasks well into 1940.¹⁰⁴⁹

This level of dispersal could also break up individual units as well as formations. The duplicate 5th Oxf & Bucks, for example, found itself guarding a multitude of VPs across the breadth of the south coast and Isle of Wight, a task that its CO recorded ‘nearly destroyed us.’ As a result it was in no position to undertake even an elementary level of training until March 1940.¹⁰⁵⁰ Similarly, on mobilisation the 2nd London Rifle Brigade was scattered in billets all over the City of London and was incapable of even administering itself effectively. Its members spent the next nine months being moved to different sites around the capital, and did not receive any modern equipment until July 1940.¹⁰⁵¹ The Army Council was well aware of the dissatisfaction pervading those Territorial units held back on VPs, although they conceded that in the circumstances more useful training was simply impossible to arrange. Nevertheless, they were still anxious to withdraw young Territorials from such debilitating work as soon as possible.¹⁰⁵²

¹⁰⁴⁶ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 ‘Report No.5: Report upon visit to Wales and North Midlands, 11th-13th October.’

¹⁰⁴⁷ I.F.W. Beckett, (2008) p.128.

¹⁰⁴⁸ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 ‘Report No.4: Report upon visit paid to West Country, October 4th-6th.’

¹⁰⁴⁹ D.J. Newbold, (1988) pp.59-62.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Lt.-Col. J.E.H. Neville, (1949) pp.51-52.

¹⁰⁵¹ A.T.M Durand and R.H.S. Hastings, (1952) pp.80-83.

¹⁰⁵² TNA WO 163/47 Army Council Meeting, 12 Sept 1939 and 14 Sept 1939.

Manning VPs against the spectre of fifth columnists and raiding parties may have been a dubious use of manpower, but retaining a military presence in urban areas was a deliberate policy. Although no divisions were to be specifically and exclusively allotted to aid the civil power, Beckett has noted how the duplicate 38th (2nd Welsh), 47th (2nd London), 59th (Staffordshire) and 61st (2nd South Midland) Divisions were still allocated to this role in London, South Wales, Lancashire and the Midlands respectively.¹⁰⁵³ Indeed, every formation was considered available for such duties if required, and some units were co-located alongside the local police, either to restore law and order in the aftermath of the expected air attacks or to guard against the recently commenced IRA bombing campaign.¹⁰⁵⁴ The 1st London Rifle Brigade, for example, was tasked as the central reserve to the London Area, rotating its companies at thirty minutes notice to move, with the rest held at six hours readiness.¹⁰⁵⁵ As Newbold has identified, at the end of 1939 no less than 158,625 men were still earmarked to assist the civil authorities in the event of air raids.¹⁰⁵⁶

Despite the justifications, however, the need to man VPs and provide assistance to the civil power nullified much of the training potential for the units involved. As the 'First Line' formations were also allocated the bulk of the equipment and facilities, next to no military preparation, apart from some much needed elementary instruction, could be carried out in the 'Second'. As a result these low priority Territorial Divisions lacked even a basic common training standard and remained chronically under-equipped and poorly manned well into 1940.¹⁰⁵⁷

‘One Army’: The Territorial Contribution, 1939/40

Despite concerns over the capability of the Territorial Army, it nevertheless played a fundamental part in Britain's initial war effort. In numerical terms alone the TA's contribution to mobilisation was considerable. Just prior to the declaration of war the component strengths of the British Army were approximately as follows:

¹⁰⁵³ I.F.W. Beckett, (2008) p.128.

¹⁰⁵⁴ J.M.A. Tamplin, *The Lambeth and Southwark Volunteers: A Century of Voluntary Service in the Volunteers and Territorials, 1860-1960*, (London, 1965) p.155; D. Daniell, *History of The East Surrey Regiment: Volume IV 1920-1952*, (London, 1957) p.77; J. Colquhoun, (1992) p.9; P. Venham and D. Fletcher, *Moving the Guns: The Mechanisation of the Royal Artillery, 1854-1939*, (London, 1990) p.107.

¹⁰⁵⁵ A.T.M Durand and R.H.S. Hastings, (1952) p.51.

¹⁰⁵⁶ D.J. Newbold, (1988) p.44.

¹⁰⁵⁷ K.J. Drewienkiewicz, (1992) p.37; D.J. Newbold, (1988) p.123.

	Officers	Other Ranks
Regular	15,000	217,000
Reserves	12,000	173,000
Militia	N/A	34,000
Territorial Army	19,000	409,000
Territorial Reserve	8,000	13,000
Total	<i>54,000</i>	<i>846,000</i>

Source: LHCMA ADAM MSS 3/1 'Notes for S. of S. Estimates Speech: AG Department,' 15 Feb 1941.

Territorials therefore represented just short of half the Army's entire manpower strength, and more than double the number of those serving on active attestations.

Additionally, Territorial formations dominated the early-war army in organisational terms. In September 1939 Britain had on paper a force of thirty-three divisions, of which two were armoured and seven Regular infantry divisions, whilst twenty-four were either 'First' or 'Second Line' Territorial divisions. The TA also initially contributed twelve tank brigades, and AA Command was almost entirely Territorial.¹⁰⁵⁸ Subsequently, no fewer than nine Territorial divisions served in France during the 1940 campaign and another was committed to Norway, whilst the 1st (Yeomanry) Cavalry Division embarked for the Middle East in December 1939. Territorial units were also instrumental in facilitating the despatch of the BEF's ostensibly all-Regular spearhead, and the first Territorials to arrive in France were from the 218th A.T. Coy, RE (of the 56th (1st London) Corps Troops RE) from Bethnal Green, elements of which had embarked as early as 12 September 1939. An additional forty units, or elements thereof, had joined them by the end of the month. As a result, within the first two months of war there were no fewer than 18,000 Territorials already serving in France.¹⁰⁵⁹

However, their subsequent performance has been seen as only limited at best. Drewienkiewicz has concluded that during the subsequent 1940 campaign 'no Territorial Division approached the standard of the best Regular Division, although the best Territorial formation was much more effective than the

¹⁰⁵⁸ D. French, (2000) p.187.

¹⁰⁵⁹ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/9 'The TA in the Early War.' These formed 15 regiments of artillery, 23 companies of engineers, 3 Divisional Signals, 7 signal sections and 2 machine-gun battalions.

worst.’ Moreover, he summarised that no ‘Second Line’ formation managed to maintain cohesion after its first serious engagement, or impose any significant delay on the German advance.¹⁰⁶⁰

It is hard to argue against this final analysis. He does concede there were examples where Territorial formations performed creditably, and there were certainly engagements, such as the defence of Hazebrouck, Cassel and Calais and the spoiling attack around Arras, where Territorial troops showed great tenacity against considerable odds. Nevertheless, there remains the general conviction that the Territorials had been ill-prepared for the 1940 campaign and were subsequently incapable of performing to the required standard.¹⁰⁶¹ David Fraser, although noting that the Regular Army had its fair share of ineffectual commanders, observed that Regular units ‘possessed a basic discipline and standard of administration which Territorial units had in many cases had too little time to acquire, and too little experience to develop.’¹⁰⁶² This lack of time and experience also prevented Territorial formations from becoming fully cohesive, and limited their technical and tactical ability.

It has also been stated that after Dunkirk some in the Regular Army used the supposedly poor performance of the Territorials to explain their broader defeat.¹⁰⁶³ As the situation in France worsened the Prime Minister, by then Winston Churchill, was admittedly anxious to bring as many Regular units back to the UK as possible. As he recorded in his history of the war, ‘I longed for more Regular troops with which to rebuild and expand the Army. Wars are not won by heroic militias.’¹⁰⁶⁴ Consequently, over the early summer of 1940 he pressed the Chiefs of Staff to hastily substitute Territorials for Regulars in overseas garrisons, and ‘the more the better.’¹⁰⁶⁵

Coupled with the widespread ‘weeding out’ of TA commanders and its apparent limitations during the French campaign, it is unsurprising that some Territorials believed that the TA had been cast as a scapegoat for the defeats of 1940. As early as November 1939 Lt.-Gen. Sir John Brown warned the

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid. pp.61-63.

¹⁰⁶¹ D. French, (2000) p.172.

¹⁰⁶² D. Fraser, *And We Shall Shock Them: The British Army in the Second World War*, (London, 1983) p.29.

¹⁰⁶³ H. Strachan, ‘The Territorial Army and National Defence,’ in K. Neilson and G. Kennedy, *The British Way in Warfare: Power and the International System, 1856-1956* (Farnham, 2010) pp.172-173.

¹⁰⁶⁴ W.S. Churchill, *The Second World War Vol.II: Their Finest Hour*, (1949) p.145.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ibid. p.49, 124, 145.

War Office that many Territorials were becoming aggrieved over their treatment and how they were being blamed for the Army's post-mobilisation disorder. This attitude was considered a 'breach of faith' and a complete reversal of the assurances previously given to Territorial volunteers, as well as a churlish affront to their peacetime efforts.¹⁰⁶⁶ Instead of being congratulated for what Brown considered was 'the greatest feat of voluntary recruiting that has been carried out by any country in time of peace,' senior Territorials found themselves scolded for recruiting the under-age, unfit and occupationally exempt.

Brown was no doubt justified in pointing out that in actuality the War Office was to blame for this, as the TA only carried out the instructions it had been given. If age and occupational enlistment restrictions had been declared they would have been followed, and if units had been allowed to recruit without being limited to authorised establishments they could easily have reached their new war strengths. As he indignantly informed the Adjutant-General:

I feel I must put this point of view before you because I know that officers and men of the Territorial Army, who have given so many years of hard and unrewarded work to the country, feel both bewildered and sore at heart when they find the Territorial Army system, in effect, blamed for things which are not their fault and for which I firmly believe the responsibility should be taken inside this building.¹⁰⁶⁷

Such complaints elicited little real sympathy and instead, as one commander noted, over this period 'the Territorial Army got a bad name, which it really never lived down until towards the end of the War.'¹⁰⁶⁸ This reflected a growing concern that the War Office was deliberately seeking to downplay Territorial identity. Indeed, from his new position as Inspector General of Home Defence, Walter Kirke observed that the Government was at risk of committing all of the same mistakes towards the Territorials as Kitchener had in 1914.¹⁰⁶⁹ As he later reflected:

The AG's Branch started by thinking they could ride roughshod over the TA. In fact their avowed object was to obliterate it as soon as possible ... This was a constant source of trouble to me, who was in touch with the troops themselves and their feelings, whereas the AG's Department treated them as 'bodies' ... The attitude was rather – "What are they grouching about? Serve 'em right."¹⁰⁷⁰

¹⁰⁶⁶ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 DAG(T) to DRO, n.d. but Oct/Nov 1939.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Ibid. DAG(T) to AG, n.d. but Nov 1939.

¹⁰⁶⁸ LHCMA Houghton-Brown MSS Col. J. Houghton-Brown, 'Soldier-Farmer,' p.111.

¹⁰⁶⁹ LHCMA Kirke MSS 9/1 Unpublished Memoirs.

¹⁰⁷⁰ LHCMA Kirke MSS 9/2 'Notes Left by General Sir Walter Kirke, GCB etc, covering his experiences as Inspector General and C-in-C Home Forces between Mid 1939 and 25 May 1940.'

Such attitudes heightened another clear concern amongst Territorials that the force they had volunteered for no longer existed. As Hore-Belisha explained to Parliament, although all personnel enlisted under the Armed Forces (Conditions of Service) Act did so on Territorial attestations, they were now classed as being embodied for general service in the Regular Army for the duration of the emergency.¹⁰⁷¹ As a result, and despite the War Office stressing that it was not the case, the passing of this legislation led to a general belief that that the Territorial Army had been abolished.¹⁰⁷² For example, a number of newspapers ran a near identical article proclaiming that the TA had ‘thus ceased to have an independent existence.’¹⁰⁷³

This assertion was widely credited as true. As one Middlesex County Association member recalled, ‘in at least one case a large body of Commanding Officers was informed that the TA had ceased to exist, and the sooner they forgot its traditions, and the fact that they had ever belonged to it, the better.’¹⁰⁷⁴ The Adjutant-General’s Department argued that this was not factually correct, but that the Armed Forces Act merely ‘gave legal form to what had been for many a year for the personnel of the TA an obligation in equity.’¹⁰⁷⁵ Nevertheless, the confusion was such that Hore-Belisha had to issue a formal explanation to Parliament:

I am glad to have the opportunity of dispelling a misconception. The Territorial Army did not end at the outbreak of war. On the contrary, in accordance with the intention announced some years ago, all expansion since the war has been based on the Territorial Army. Men who, since the outbreak of war, have volunteered for service for the duration of the war have been enlisted into the Territorial Army, while every man called up for military service under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act, 1939, has been deemed to have enlisted in the Territorial Army.

Thus, the Territorial Army does exist, but, in the operational necessities of war, the whole of the Forces must constitute one Army in which each individual is placed where his attainments are of greatest use to the nation. For this reason and to avoid obvious outward distinction in the field, it was decided to suspend, during war, the wearing of the letter "T."¹⁰⁷⁶

¹⁰⁷¹ *Hansard*, HC Deb 1 Sept 1939 vol.351 c.160.

¹⁰⁷² *Hansard*, HC Deb 15 Sept 1939 vol.351 c.887; IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 DAG(T) to DRO, n.d. but Oct/Nov 1939; 74/164/8 AUS to DRO, 17 Nov 1939.

¹⁰⁷³ *The Times*, 7 Sept 1939; *The Telegraph*, 7 Sept 1939; *The Manchester Guardian*, 7 Sept 1939.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Col. E.J. King, quoted in P. Dennis, (1987) pp.256-257.

¹⁰⁷⁵ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 DAG(T) to DRO, n.d. but Oct/Nov 1939.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Hansard*, HC Deb 5 Dec 1939 vol.355 c.467W.

This latter order, although apparently inconsequential, was commonly seen as another direct attack on the identity of Territorial units, and an effort to subsume it within the wartime conscript army.¹⁰⁷⁷ As one Territorial recalled:

The first things they said to me, I can remember as anything, PSI Rigg said, “Atkinson, you’re no longer a Territorial, ... take that ‘T’ down, [that] Territorial brass off your shoulder. You’re now a regular soldier.”¹⁰⁷⁸

Indeed, the way in which Territorials were instructed to remove their ‘T’ insignia, amongst other identifying aspects, was regarded as tactless and the whole issue was generally mishandled.¹⁰⁷⁹

War Office’s policy, however, always remained centred on removing any differentiation between the various components of the Army, and this impulse directly influenced the decision to abolish the ‘T’.¹⁰⁸⁰ It was reflected in a similar refusal to allow Territorial units to retain Territorial designations in order to distinguish themselves from Regular or conscript units, especially as ‘in fact there would seem to be little, but name, to distinguish their administration and responsibilities from those of units of regular personnel.’¹⁰⁸¹ As the Adjutant-General, Gen. Gordon-Finlayson, decided in December 1939:

Although it is essential to have these distinctions, and although nothing should be done to discourage Territorials and the Territorial spirit, there should be no need to emphasise distinctions between Regulars, Territorials and Militia during the present War; rather it should be borne in upon everybody that the nation is now fighting for its life, and that the Armed Forces concerned constitute one National Army in which every individual, whether Regular, Territorial or Militia, is determined to do his best for the common end.¹⁰⁸²

This extended to re-confirming the Army Council’s rights to change the role of any unit and cross-post or transfer its individual personnel according to the needs of the service.¹⁰⁸³ A similarly robust approach was taken when Territorial searchlight units were compulsorily transferred from the administrative control of the Royal Engineers to the Royal Artillery, after a voluntary request for them

¹⁰⁷⁷ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 DRO to DAG(T) and DPS, 21 Oct 1939; TNA WO 163/47 Meeting of the Army Council, 14 Sept 1939; I.F.W. Beckett, (2008) p.122.

¹⁰⁷⁸ H. Moses, *The Gateshead Gurkhas: A History of the 9th Battalion The Durham Light Infantry, 1859-1967* (Durham, 2001) p.121.

¹⁰⁷⁹ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 ‘Report No.3: Notes on Visit to Durham and West Riding, 27th – 29th Sept 1939 on 50th (Northumbrian), 23rd (Northumbrian), 49th (W Riding) and 46th Division.’

¹⁰⁸⁰ TNA WO 163/71 Meeting of the PPPC, 28 Aug 1939.

¹⁰⁸¹ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 DPS to DRO (through AUS), 21 Oct 1939; 74/164/7 DRO to DAG(T), 21 Oct 1939.

¹⁰⁸² IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 AG to DRO (through DAG(T), 1 Dec 1939.

¹⁰⁸³ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 War Office to GOsCinC all Commands, 18 Sept 1939; LHCMA Adam MSS 3/2 ‘Paper by A.G. on Use of Manpower in the Army - Appendix E: Transfers,’ 21 Nov 1941.

to do so had largely failed.¹⁰⁸⁴ At the same time those horsed Yeomanry Regiments not required for the 1st Cavalry Division dispatched to Palestine were quickly converted to artillery.¹⁰⁸⁵ After all, the General Staff could not afford to treat servicemen in wartime differently from each other, and it consequently refused to do so.

Such an approach was recognised to be essential if Britain was to field a viable National Army.¹⁰⁸⁶ As the Adjutant-General concluded, it was impossible to deploy units overseas, allocate skilled personnel where they were needed or to provide reinforcements ‘unless the whole Army was treated as a national Army and there was freedom to move personnel from one unit to another to the best advantage.’¹⁰⁸⁷ This conviction was confirmed as policy in November, when the War Office forwarded to every Command a paper intended to ‘open up in the minds of all concerned a larger view of the Army’s needs.’

In conclusion it is pointed out that the Territorial Army at the outbreak of the War was in a transition stage consequent upon duplication. The task of re-organizing its mass of units of uneven strength and efficiency into an efficient fighting force in the shortest possible time is a very formidable one, which involves complicated problems of recruiting, drafting, training, organization and, above all, time. In the solution of these problems the factor of “Territorial connection” is always given due weight. There are however occasions when it must give way to the over-riding necessities of training and efficiency. As the war proceeds such occasions will undoubtedly become more frequent. The demands of war will be harder in battle upon one formation than another; the demands of industry will throw an unequal strain upon different parts of the Homeland, whether it be England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. The exigencies of the service must be met regularly and with regulated efficiency by the recognition of the fact that we have now formed – and in fact, are – a National Army, in which each officer or man will be found the best place for him.¹⁰⁸⁸

Although the War Office was mindful of the need to preserve the Territorial Army’s peacetime identity, after mobilisation the inculcation of a broader, inclusive ‘National Army’ consciousness was rightly considered to be the more important goal.

Evaluation

Despite the best efforts of peacetime planners, the TA faced a multitude of challenges on mobilisation, and these affected its ability to prepare for deployment overseas and thereafter operate

¹⁰⁸⁴ TNA WO 163/49 OS.63 ‘Conversion of AA Searchlight Units to RA,’ 1 May 1940.

¹⁰⁸⁵ TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 16 Oct and 24 Nov 1939.

¹⁰⁸⁶ TNA WO 163/49 OS.60 ‘Use of powers for Compulsory Transfer under National Service (Armed Forces) Act, 1939: Note by AG,’ n.d. but Jan 1940; WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 19 Jan 1940.

¹⁰⁸⁷ TNA WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 27 Nov 1939.

¹⁰⁸⁸ TNA WO 222/1577 ‘Memorandum on the Subject of Reinforcements and Cross-Postings, Territorial Army,’ 14 Nov 1939.

effectively on active service. Admittedly many of the problems it encountered had been predicted, and could have been avoided if firm decisions had been made before war was declared. For example, the necessity to remove those medically downgraded or too young to deploy, as well as the 'comb out' of those in reserved occupations, were all anticipated but nevertheless still seriously unbalanced the TA's organisation and disrupted its pre-deployment training programmes over the winter of 1939. Lack of equipment meant that stripping 'Second Line' formations to supply those deploying first was inevitable, but far from ideal. The inadequacy of the TA's own senior commanders and the limitations of Regular assistance also contributed in fostering a general sense that Territorial formations had only a limited utility.

Nevertheless, the contribution that the TA made, both to Britain's mobilisation in September 1939 and the build-up of the British Expeditionary Force in France, should not be downplayed. Territorials supplied the bulk of the British Army's manpower during the initial phase of the war, and even if they were only partially trained this was still an advantage over newly-called up conscripts. Furthermore, the Territorial Army did fulfil a key role by reinforcing the British Expeditionary Force on time and in strength, while simultaneously providing the organisational framework on which to graft Britain's wartime National Army.

Admittedly it would have been preferable if Territorial formations had deployed better prepared and equipped to take part in a modern war. Yet the problems it faced were not faults in the TA *per se*, but more to do with flawed assumptions surrounding the increased demands of mobilisation. These had developed little from the early 1920s, apart from the realisation that the procedure may have to be accelerated. There was little real effort to account for the introduction of newer, more complex doctrine, greater and more complicated training requirements or the introduction of modernised equipment. Practical difficulties such as these slowed the mobilisation process and the concomitant speed in which the TA could be made ready. In effect, in 1939/40 standards of efficiency had to be sacrificed to meet the rate of preparedness. As a result, although Territorial formations may have

been committed overseas broadly according to the required timetable, it was inevitable that they would be neither fully equipped nor fully trained.

This is not surprising. As David French has identified, in reality it would take between eighteen months and two years to transform the keen but inexperienced Territorials into effective soldiers.¹⁰⁸⁹

The TA in September 1939 was in a transitional state, and British industry was still to catch up to the demands of supplying a modern army.¹⁰⁹⁰ Consequently, there was little doubt at the time that the Army would not be capable of going on to the offensive until at least 1941.¹⁰⁹¹ Furthermore, the Territorial Army alone did not lose the 1940 campaign, which was more to do with broader failings in training and C3I, as well as flaws at the tactical, operational and strategic level.¹⁰⁹² Indeed, as the war progressed it was not long before, as Fraser has argued, ‘the intelligent civilian, who became quickly dedicated and assimilated military training, was seen to be superior to all too many of his so-called professional comrades.’¹⁰⁹³ Furthermore, in the words of Ian Beckett:

There was nothing logically to determine that a territorial should not be as good as a soldier as a regular after an appropriate period of training; territorials were likely to be better trained than the majority of new recruits and better motivated in that they had made a conscious decision in peacetime to commit themselves in advance of their fellow citizens.¹⁰⁹⁴

If some TA officers felt that individual Territorial identity was being eroded it was an inevitable part of fighting a general war against a modern military power, which could only be won by integrating the nation’s military resources as part of ‘one army.’ Indeed, the Army Council identified one of its main wartime tasks to be ‘to persuade people of the idea for the time being of one National Army

¹⁰⁸⁹ D. French, (2000) p.64.

¹⁰⁹⁰ M.S. Alexander, ‘Preparing to Feed Mars: Anglo-French Economic Coordination and the Coming of War, 1939-1940,’ in M.S. Alexander and W.J. Philpott, *Anglo-French Defence Relations between the Wars*, (Basingstoke, 2002), pp.190-192; M.S. Alexander, ‘Fighting to the Last Frenchman?’ Reflections on the BEF Deployment to France and the Strains in the Franco-British Alliance, 1939-1940,’ in J. Blatt (ed.), *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments*, (Providence, RI, 1998) pp.316-317.

¹⁰⁹¹ B. Bond, (1973) p.272, entry for 28 Dec 1939; D. French, ‘Invading Europe: The British Army and its Preparations for the Normandy Campaign, 1942-44,’ in M.L. Dockrill, B.J.C McKercher and E. Goldstein (eds.) *Power and Stability: British Foreign Policy, 1856-1965*, (London, 2003) p.272.

¹⁰⁹² D. French, (2000) pp.156-183; T. Harrison Place, ‘British Perceptions of the Tactics of the German Army, 1938-40,’ *Intelligence and Security*, Vol.9 No.3, (1994) pp.495-519; N. Smart, *British Strategy and Politics during the Phony War: Before the Balloon Went Up*, (Westport, CT, 2003) pp.69-98; D.W. Alexander, ‘Repercussions of the Breda Variant,’ *French Historical Studies*, Vol.8 No.3 (Spring, 1974) pp.459-488; W.J. Philpott, ‘The Benefit of Experience? The Supreme War Council and the Higher Management of Coalition War, 1939-40,’ in M.S. Alexander and W.J. Philpott, *Anglo-French Defence Relations between the Wars*, (Basingstoke, 2002) p.209-222, also contained in P. Chassaing and M. Dockrill, *Anglo-French Relations, 1898-1998: From Fashoda to Jospin*, (Basingstoke, 2002) pp.109-124; N. Jordan, ‘Strategy and Scapegoatism: Reflections on the French National Catastrophe, 1940,’ in J. Blatt (ed.), *The French Defeat of 1940: Reassessments*, (Providence, RI, 1998) pp.13-29; T.C. Imlay, *Facing the Second World War: Strategy, Politics and Economics in Britain and France, 1938-1940*, (Oxford, 2003) pp.103, 109-115.

¹⁰⁹³ D. Fraser, (1983) p.28.

¹⁰⁹⁴ I.F.W. Beckett, (2011) p.260.

instead of a separate Regular Army, Territorial Army and Militia.¹⁰⁹⁵ Admittedly, some Territorials resented this move, as did some Regulars. It was only to be lamented, as Beckett has stated, that such individuals failed to recognise that their 'jealously preserved safeguards of integrity were a luxury in face of the enormous demands for manpower in modern total war.'¹⁰⁹⁶

¹⁰⁹⁵ TNA WO 163/49 OS.2 'Notes on the Maintenance of Scottish Units and Formations by Scotsmen,' Jan 1939; WO 163/48 Army Council Meeting, 27 Nov 1939; Army Council Meeting, 19 Jan 1940.

¹⁰⁹⁶ I.F.W. Beckett, (2011) p.261.

Part II

Chapter Eight.

Aid to the Civil Power: The Territorial Army's Role in Maintaining Internal Order, 1919-1939.

Introduction

In contrast to its status before 1914, the interwar Territorial Army was organised primarily for general service overseas. As the reconstitution debate had emphasised, there was no justification for re-establishing a force limited solely to home defence. Nevertheless, despite these assertions the TA was still closely identified with home defence throughout this period. The pre-eminent association was with anti-aircraft defence, and this role even came to dominate Territorial Army policy by the 1930s. Yet running in parallel was another important domestic role, specifically the Territorial Army's obligation to provide military or paramilitary aid to the civil power.

This role covered a wide variety of possible tasks, including the countering of subversion, reassuring public confidence in a crisis and ensuring that law and order was upheld. These tasks were undeniably complicated, especially as the precise nature of the internal security threat shifted over time. As such the contingency planning that occurred up to the early 1930s mostly focused on schemes to augment the police. Yet by the mid 1930s rising fears of air attack also established the need to prepare for the possible breakdown of centralised control, due to mass panic and a collapse in social cohesion brought about by a paralysing aerial 'knock out blow.' Whether military assistance was required in the form of a disciplined workforce to maintain essential services, or a loyal, armed body to re-instate central control, would depend on the ability of the British public to withstand this blow. Yet by the outbreak of war this was still an open question.

Ostensibly the TA had no formally acknowledged peacetime obligation to offer aid to the civil power. Yet in fact the availability of Territorials was central to many domestic defence schemes. This fact has not been adequately explained in the existing literature, particularly those aspects associated with maintaining internal security into the 1930s. For example, Peter Dennis suggests that the Territorial

Army's contribution to the Defence Force and the Civil Constabulary Reserve only had significance during the 1920s. He dismisses any later Territorial involvement in the provision of military assistance and comments that after 1931 'the question was not raised again.'¹⁰⁹⁷ This is simply not the case, as although the industrial threat had largely subsided after 1926 the contingency did not disappear. Quite the contrary, the end of the General Strike sparked a long-running argument between the War Office and the Home Office over the extent of Territorial assistance to the civil power. Similarly, although Keith Jeffery in his work on military aid and internal security managed to extend his analysis into this period, he also does not adequately cover the specific issues surrounding the use of the TA.¹⁰⁹⁸ Furthermore, neither approached the subject of utilising Territorials during air attack at all, either as a disciplined source of manpower for air raid emergency duties or as a military body for maintaining centralised control in the face of a panicked and uncontrollable population.

In order to address these deficiencies this chapter will re-assess the Territorial commitment to aid the civil power by focusing on several key areas. The first will clarify exactly how far the legal liability to aid the civil power extended to the TA, based on the debates that took place during its reconstitution. Subsequently the chapter will delineate the extent of the Territorial connection to the quasi-military Defence Force in 1921, as well as to the Civil Constabulary Reserve (CCR) from 1926. From this point it will be possible to follow the development of this connection right up until the outbreak of war, through the plans to establish a permanent CCR structure based around the Territorial organisation.

This chapter will then go further by assessing the importance of the TA to other internal security tasks. In particular this will cover the TA's new and potentially significant responsibilities in the era of the aerial 'knock out blow.' As such it will be seen that Territorials performed a vital interim civil defence function during the 1930s through the provision of a disciplined civil defence reserve, both to

¹⁰⁹⁷ P. Dennis, 'The Territorial Army in Aid of the Civil Power, 1919-1926,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.16 No.4 (Oct, 1981) p.722.

¹⁰⁹⁸ K. Jeffery, 'The British Army and Internal Security 1919-1939,' *The Historical Journal*, Vol.24 No.2 (June, 1981); K. Jeffery and P. Hennessy, *States of Emergency: British Governments and Strikebreaking since 1919*, (London, 1983).

assist the Home Office in maintaining essential services under the pressure of air attack, as well as suppressing a panicked population if law and order subsequently collapsed.

Thereafter it will be apparent that, rather than being connected only with the improvisations around the Defence Force and CCR, there was in fact a consistent effort to formalise a definite Territorial responsibility to aid the civil power throughout the interwar period. Ultimately, however, it is important to note that the War Office rarely considered this responsibility one the TA should embrace above all its other roles. In the opinion of the military authorities the Territorial Army was a conventional force first and foremost, whose primary function was to reinforce the expeditionary force or man the active ground based anti-aircraft defences. This is apparent from the efforts to free Territorials from being tied up in protecting Vulnerable Points on mobilisation, as had occurred in 1914. Accordingly, the War Office consistently resisted attempts to broaden the TA's civil defence responsibilities where these interfered with its military role. Although it initially did so with only varying success, by the outbreak of war the Territorial's military role was pre-eminent.

* * *

Territorials and the Legal Liability to Aid the Civil Power, 1919/20

The extent and circumstances in which the Territorial Army was obliged to aid the civil power became an early point of contention during the reconstitution debate. Although the Territorials had a clear responsibility to assist the authorities in the event of a revolution or a grave national emergency, it was acknowledged that accusations that the TA was being re-formed for strikebreaking or domestic suppression risked undermining the scheme before it had even been implemented. Political neutrality had always been a key consideration for recruiting voluntary auxiliaries. This had led to the Volunteers being specifically forbidden from being used as an armed body to assist the civil authorities, and this restriction was carried forward into the nascent Territorial Force scheme after Parliamentary pressure led Haldane into re-confirming this exemption in the new Territorial Regulations.¹⁰⁹⁹

¹⁰⁹⁹ I.F.W. Beckett, *Riflemen Form: A Study of the Rifle Volunteer Movement, 1859-1908*, 2nd edn, (Barnsley, 2007) p.148-149; TNA WO 32/6589 Use of Territorial Force in aid of civil power, 1908; *Hansard*, HL Deb 18 July 1907 vol.178 cc.851-

This was not to say that the TA could not be used under any circumstance. Although it was expressly stated that Territorials could not be embodied for the purpose of aiding the civil power, there was nothing to stop their use for this once they had been called out. Indeed, if a decision were made to recall the Army Reserve the Territorials would automatically be embodied in due course, after which they could be directed to any task as necessary. This created a legal loophole whereby Territorials could be called out for strike work, albeit, as the DGTVF put it, ‘by a roundabout process,’ but in such a way that avoided the regulations or the need for specific Parliamentary sanction.¹¹⁰⁰

However, threatened with widespread civil unrest, and with the police force in a weakened and demoralised state, the new Secretary for War and Air, Churchill, considered it essential that the reconstituted Territorials were given a firm obligation to act in support of the civil power. This insistence, however, clashed with the opinion of others closely involved in the reconstitution process, particularly the Territorial Director-General, the Earl of Scarbrough, and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, William Peel, who were both highly wary of enforcing such a sensitive liability. As a result the preliminary conditions of service, which were drafted by Scarbrough in June 1919, stated categorically that Territorials could not be called out for this purpose.¹¹⁰¹

Scarbrough’s intention was to make it explicit that, while Territorials could still be embodied in a national emergency, they would not be required to intervene in any way in a political or industrial dispute. However, it was difficult to differentiate the point at which industrial unrest ended and a national emergency began, and certainly Churchill was the wrong man to make the distinction.¹¹⁰² As he queried subsequently:

Suppose a Triple Alliance Strike takes place with a revolutionary intention[?] Are we to be debarred from using the Territorial Force to keep order and maintain communications[?] I agree fully that they

852; HC Deb 5 March 1908 vol.185 cc.928-929; War Office, *Regulations for the Territorial Force and for County Associations*, 1912, para.404.

¹¹⁰⁰ TNA WO 32/2677 Minute by the JAG, 17 Sept 1919; WO 32/2676 Scarbrough to Peel, 30 March 1920.

¹¹⁰¹ The successive draft Conditions of Service proofs are retained in TNA WO 32/11245.

¹¹⁰² P. Dennis, (1981) p.712. This remained a problem throughout the 1920s. See TNA WO 32/5314 CIGS to AG, 5 Dec 1924.

should never interfere in ordinary disputes and disorders, but should not there be power to utilise them if the fundamental safety of the Realm is jeopardised?¹¹⁰³

As the Regular Army was being drawn down in size he considered it ‘indispensible’ that the reconstituted TA should accept a liability to aid the civil power if it were deemed necessary.¹¹⁰⁴

Faced with Churchill’s intransigence, Scarbrough argued that a civil assistance liability would be ‘strongly resented’ and used by labour and union leaders to derail recruitment efforts, which could prove fatal to a voluntary force that depended heavily on urban, industrial centres for its technical personnel.¹¹⁰⁵ This view was supported by the findings of a conference of Territorial representatives, who had been called together specifically to examine the repercussions such an obligation would have on recruiting.¹¹⁰⁶ Agreeing that distinguishing between a legitimate strike and a national emergency was fraught with difficulty, they pointed out that some Territorials, if compelled to come out, ‘would be a source of danger rather than safety to the public.’¹¹⁰⁷ As Peel noted:

It was notorious that many men enlisted without making themselves fully acquainted with all the conditions, and that in time of stress the pressure of trades union feeling would prevent them from fulfilling their undertaking. It would be vain therefore to impose an obligation which might be dangerous and could not be carried out.¹¹⁰⁸

As a compromise Scarbrough proposed making Territorial embodiment a distinct and separate process to the proclamation calling out the Army Reserve. Instead the decision would have to be ratified by Parliament, which would hopefully remove ‘all possibility of interpreting the War Office intentions as being to use the Territorial force for strike breaking, etc.’¹¹⁰⁹ Churchill, believing that a revolutionary-motivated general strike was an imminent possibility and that such a threat certainly constituted sufficient justification to embody the Territorials, accused Scarbrough and Peel of seeking a ‘fundamental change in policy in this respect.’ After all, in his view ‘what is the use of the

¹¹⁰³ TNA WO 32/11245 S. of S. to U.S. of S., DCIGS and FM, 8 July 1919.

¹¹⁰⁴ TNA WO 32/2677 Memo: ‘TF Reconstruction Conference,’ DGTVF to DPS, 30 Sept 1919.

¹¹⁰⁵ TNA WO 32/2681 Memorandum by DGTVF, 12 Oct 1919; Memorandum of a Conference between S. of S., U.S. of S., DGTVF and CIGS, 23 Oct 1919.

¹¹⁰⁶ A total of four meetings took place at the War Office between 28 Oct and 31 Oct 1919. See TNA WO 32/2681 Memorandum: ‘Conferences on Territorial Force Reconstruction,’ Nov 1919.

¹¹⁰⁷ TNA WO 32/2681 Peel to Churchill, Nov 1919.

¹¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁹ TNA WO 32/2676 Scarbrough to Peel, 30 March 1920.

Territorial Army if it will not come to the rescue of the State at a moment of dire and supreme peril?¹¹¹⁰

Peel re-assured him that there was no intention of disputing the ‘broad point’ that the TA should be used to maintain order during a genuine emergency, but really the question was one of procedure, and whether Parliament should ultimately direct the process. As he explained:

This would make it perfectly clear to any critic that the use of the TA in a great civil emergency was the deliberate and conscious act of the legislature, and not a purely executive act deriving its authority from the power connected with the army reserve. Moreover, the 2nd Proclamation would be another mark of the new status of the TF as a separate and self-contained army.¹¹¹¹

As a result Territorial embodiment would be placed solely under civilian control and ‘there could be no doubt in the minds of Territorials that their representative in Parliament definitely decided to embody them. Then if these troops were used to quell revolutionary disturbance Parliament would have had due notice, and no one ought to complain.’¹¹¹²

In the event, and despite receiving a broad degree of support in the War Office, this additional procedure was not specifically delineated in the subsequent regulations.¹¹¹³ Nevertheless, it was automatically incorporated into the general embodiment procedure agreed subsequently, which stipulated that only Parliament had the authority to call out the Territorial Army. This also meant that Churchill’s efforts came largely to nought. The Territorials could still not officially be used to aid the civil power, insofar as formal embodiment was concerned, although it remained true, as Peel related at the time, that ‘the real safeguard of the force lies in the fact that no sane Government would embody it, unless it was sure that the feeling of the country justified so grave a step.’¹¹¹⁴

The final conclusion, however, was not that the TA could not be used, but rather that it could not be employed openly. The proscription on utilising Territorials only extended to their use in formed bodies, and did not rule out their involvement as private citizens when not in uniform. Neither did it

¹¹¹⁰ Ibid. S. of S. to PUS, CIGS, U.S. of S. and DGTVF, 29 April 1920.

¹¹¹¹ Ibid. Peel to Churchill, 4 May 1920.

¹¹¹² Ibid. Peel to Churchill, 11 May 1920.

¹¹¹³ TNA WO 32/11245 Conditions of Service: Proof dated Feb 1920; War Office, *Regulations for the Territorial Army and for County Associations*, 1924 (London, 1924) para.442.

¹¹¹⁴ TNA WO 32/2676 Minute by Peel, 31 May 1920.

rule out the use of the Territorial organisation, and its nationwide infrastructure was clearly recognised to be a valuable vehicle around which alternative auxiliary police forces could be established. Both of these factors were key components in improvising responses to the subsequent internal unrest in the early 1920s.

Improvisation: The Defence Force, 1921

The first test case came during the miners 'lock out' in 1921, when a dispute over wages threatened to draw the mining, transport and railway unions of the Triple Alliance into a national strike. Faced with the disruption this would cause to the provision of essential supplies and services, the CIGS, Henry Wilson, was prepared to immediately enact the military's internal security plans. Given the weakness of the police force and his lack of Regular personnel, however, he doubted whether he could do so without receiving a considerable uplift in deployable manpower.

Securing personnel was therefore regarded as a priority, and Wilson was certainly willing to use the TA if the government was faced with 'the big thing.'¹¹¹⁵ Neither did the Cabinet rule out embodying the Territorials if the situation demanded it, and the necessary draft legislation was even prepared.¹¹¹⁶ As the situation deteriorated in early April the option to embody the Territorials was again seriously considered.¹¹¹⁷ As the newly-appointed Under-Secretary at the War Office, Robert Sanders, recorded in his diary:

Worthy Evans called me in at once to see the CIGS, AG etc, as to the preparations for meeting disorder. A scheme was produced that was apparently prepared last autumn and which involved the embodiment of the Territorials. This seemed to be approved.¹¹¹⁸

However, as has been seen above, any decision to use Territorials to aid the civil power was fraught with difficulties. This encouraged the Army Council to remind ministers that, 'while no legal and binding pledge had been given,' it had been 'practically stated' by Territorial recruiters that the force

¹¹¹⁵ K. Jeffery and P. Hennessy, (1983) p.61.

¹¹¹⁶ TNA CAB 23/25/1 17(21) Cabinet Conclusions, 4 April 1921.

¹¹¹⁷ TNA CAB 23/25/6 22(21) Cabinet Conclusions, 5 April 1921.

¹¹¹⁸ J. Ramsden (ed.) *Real Old Tory Politics: The Political Diaries of Robert Sanders, 1910-1935* (London, 1984), p.153, diary entry for 10 April 1921.

would not be used to maintain internal order.¹¹¹⁹ As a result it became necessary to improvise. The speed in which these decisions were made at the time is apparent from Sanders' continued account:

Birch [Lt.-Gen. Sir J.F.N. Birch] the new boss of the TF told me afterwards that all sorts of pledges has been given to the TF that they should not be called up in aid of civil power. I told W[orthington] E[vans] this and next day the Territorial Divisional Commanders were summoned to the War Office. They were unanimous that the TF should not be embodied. W.E. was called in; he got suggestions very quickly and in half an hour had got out the Defence Forces scheme that has now been adopted.¹¹²⁰

The decision to raise the quasi-military Defence Force was approved on 8 April 1921 and communicated to Parliament the same day.¹¹²¹ Described as being intended 'solely to support the Police in the fulfilment of their duties to their community,' the new force was given a superficial civil appearance, but the connection between the Defence Force and the Territorial Army was barely concealed. Indeed, as Dennis has observed, 'in fact the two organisations were inextricably interwoven.'¹¹²² Being able to exploit the Territorial infrastructure was key, as the War Office (as the department made responsible for establishing the force) simply duplicated its existing organisation, with each Territorial unit and formation replicating itself. Each Defence Force unit adopted the name of its Territorial progenitor and absorbed the majority of its officers and support staff. Recruiting took place at Territorial drill halls under the resident permanent staff, and instructors seconded from the TA drilled Defence Force recruits. Although enlistment was officially open to ex-soldiers and a certain number of civilians, serving Territorials were to be 'specially invited,' and actively encouraged, to join. On doing so they were automatically discharged from the TA, but on the termination of their service each man was at liberty to re-enlist back in his previous rank, his service considered to have been continuous.¹¹²³ Normal enlistment ages were between 18 and 40, but young men of 17 were also eligible as long as they were serving Territorials.¹¹²⁴

Recruitment was, however, still entirely voluntary and there is little evidence to suggest that Territorials were compelled to enlist. After a slow start, by 17 April the Defence Force had attracted around 70,000 volunteers, and this total may have increased to 80,000 by the time the Force was

¹¹¹⁹ TNA CAB 23/25/6 22(21) Cabinet Conclusions, 6 April 1921.

¹¹²⁰ J. Ramsden (ed.) *Op. Cit.*

¹¹²¹ TNA CAB 23/25/6 22(21) Cabinet Conclusions, 8 April 1921; P. Dennis, (1981) p.714

¹¹²² P. Dennis, (1981) p.715.

¹¹²³ Surrey History Centre, QRWS/15/6/1 Army Order No.151, 8 April 1921.

¹¹²⁴ *Ibid.* Army Order No.155, 12 April 1921.

disbanded in July.¹¹²⁵ Dennis has claimed that there are no complete figures for enlistments in all areas, although he suggests that the surviving records from Association archives indicate that in most areas Territorials made up considerably less than half of their local Defence Force units.¹¹²⁶ His assumption is essentially correct, but it is in fact possible to calculate the broader Territorial contribution, as the national enlistment figures were included in the Army's General Annual Reports. These inform us that up to September 1921 25,682 Territorials were listed as having technically left the TA to join the Defence Force.¹¹²⁷ If one takes the figure of 80,000 as the highest total strength, then less than a third of the Defence Force's manpower was made up of Territorials.

From these statistics it is clear that the Defence Force did not rely on Territorial personnel as heavily as it depended on the Territorial organisation. This also suggests that service in the Defence Force was not universally popular, and it is undoubtedly true that the local response differed markedly between units. The members of the city-raised 4th Battalion Leicestershire Regt., for example, markedly avoided the Defence Force, whilst other units in rural areas of the county responded quite well.¹¹²⁸ It would also appear that the Defence Force relied largely on the unemployed, and indeed in some cases Associations specifically encouraged those out of work to volunteer.¹¹²⁹ However, in no example did any unit transfer *en masse*, and volunteers were mostly those who could afford to absent themselves for the required three months.¹¹³⁰

In the event only a handful of Defence Force members were ever employed on protection duties and the organisation contributed very little to ending the strike.¹¹³¹ Indeed, as few units ever moved from their concentration areas Defence Force service was likened to an extended summer camp, where some men were 'thoroughly enjoy[ing] the outing and would like the strike to go on.'¹¹³²

¹¹²⁵ J. Ramsden (ed.), (1984) p.154, diary entry for 17 April 1921; I.F.W. Beckett, (2011) p.251.

¹¹²⁶ P. Dennis, (1981) p.715.

¹¹²⁷ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.1941 General Annual Report on the British Army 1920-21.

¹¹²⁸ G. Stepler, *Britons, To Arms! The Story of the British Volunteer Soldier*, 2nd edn. (Stroud, 1997) p.133.

¹¹²⁹ I.F.W. Beckett, (2011) p.251; Oxfordshire History Centre, O11/1/A1/5 Oxford TF Association Minutes, 'Special Meeting,' 16 April 1921.

¹¹³⁰ I.F.W. Beckett, (2011) p.251.

¹¹³¹ K. Jeffery and P. Hennessy, (1983) p.64; TNA WO 32/2674 Capt. Latter to DADTA, 13 July 1925.

¹¹³² E.G. Godfrey, "*The Cast-Iron Sixth*" – *A History of the Sixth Battalion London Regiment (The City of London Rifles)*, (London, 1938) p.258; A.T.M Durand and R.H.S. Hastings, *The London Rifle Brigade, 1919-1950*, (Aldershot, 1952) p.17; J. Ramsden (ed.), (1984) p.155, diary entry for 8 May 1921.

However, whilst the practical impact of the Defence Force at the time may have been limited, the experience left a lasting legacy on the Territorial Army. Although it contained a minority of serving Territorials, it remained a fact, in Glenn Stepler's words, that 'the legal veneer of it being an entirely separate force was too thin.'¹¹³³ Territorial recruitment programmes were heavily disrupted during the ninety days the Defence Force was active, and many men who had volunteered for duties with it subsequently declined to transfer back.¹¹³⁴ As was later admitted within the War Office, 'the effect was practically to empty the TA, which was [already] at low strength.'¹¹³⁵ Incentives were offered in an attempt to encourage personnel to re-join, and it was stressed that continuity of service and bounty qualification would not be affected.¹¹³⁶ Regardless, of the 25,682 Territorials who volunteered for the Defence Force only 18,322 subsequently re-enlisted directly back into the TA.¹¹³⁷

It is in fact hard to argue that the Territorial Army gained any positives in return for its affiliation with the Defence Force. By September 1921 the TA had gained a total of 8,820 direct enlistments from the disbanded Defence Force, or only slightly more than they lost.¹¹³⁸ Yet over the ensuing years the number of men deemed 'undesirable' saw a marked increase and many Associations reported having to discharge a high proportion of their former Defence Force men.¹¹³⁹ As was later explained by one staff officer, this was due to the fact that COs had been pressurised into accepting as many disbanded Defence Force members as could be induced to join, but 'as it was not always the best type of man who joined the D[efence] F[orce], the TA was saddled with men who did its reputation a great deal of harm and are largely responsible for the recruiting difficulties of the last four years, as parents will not let their young lads join a unit full of undesirables. It is difficult to over-estimate the harm done to the TA by the Defence Force.'¹¹⁴⁰

¹¹³³ G. Stepler, (1997) p.49.

¹¹³⁴ P. Dennis, (1981) pp.715-716; J.D. Sainsbury, *The Hertfordshire Yeomanry Regiments, Royal Artillery Part 1: The Field Regiments 1920 -1946*, (Welwyn, 1999) p.34.

¹¹³⁵ TNA WO 32/2674 Memorandum: 'The Defence Force, 1921.'

¹¹³⁶ Surrey History Centre, QRWS/15/6/1 Army Order No.297, 2 July 1921; Army Order No.165, 26 April 1926.

¹¹³⁷ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.1941 General Annual Report on the British Army 1920-21.

¹¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹³⁹ P. Dennis, (1987) pp.77-78; G. Stepler, (1997) p.135.

¹¹⁴⁰ TNA WO 32/2674 Capt. Latter to DADTA, 13 July 1925.

It took a number of years for these men to be weeded out, a fact perhaps illustrated by the spike in the number of Territorials officially discharged under the heading ‘not likely to become an efficient soldier’ during this period. From a figure of 594 in 1920/21, this jumped to 1,535 over 1921/22, 2,043 in 1922/23 and 1,122 in 1923/24, before dropping back down to 414 over 1924/25 and 273 over 1925/26, after which the figures remained more or less constant for the rest of the decade.¹¹⁴¹ It was only in 1926, four years after the event, that the DGTA, Hugh Jeudwine, could state that ‘we are only now emerging from the cloud it cast over the TA.’¹¹⁴²

As a result, the decision to establish the Defence Force scheme along Territorial lines has generally been considered a mistake. In re-assessing the connection between the two organisations historians have mainly focused on the damage done to the TA’s image, and the reckless and transparent manner in which it was subsequently associated with the suppression of industrial disputes.¹¹⁴³ These are valid criticisms and, as one officer highlighted after the event, the manner in which Territorial personnel and facilities were used was ‘hardly in accordance with the spirit of the provision that it shall not be used to deal with civil disturbances.’¹¹⁴⁴

However the Defence Force’s real lasting influence was the dangerous precedent it set, whereby the TA was now regarded as the nucleus for any future ‘third force’ civil assistance organisation. The only way to get rid of this possibility was to establish a substantial civil police reserve on a permanent footing in peace. Unfortunately the opportunity to do so after the 1921 strike was not taken up. This meant that when another national strike threatened five years later the government was forced once more towards improvisation. Yet again the capacity to do so relied entirely on the availability of the Territorial Army.

¹¹⁴¹ See Table V.

¹¹⁴² TNA WO 32/2674 DGTA to U.S. of S., 3 May 1926.

¹¹⁴³ P. Dennis, (1981) p.714, 717; G. Stepler, (1997) p.135.

¹¹⁴⁴ TNA WO 32/2674 Capt. Latter to DADTA, 13 July 1925.

Setting a Precedent: The Civil Constabulary Reserve Scheme, 1926

Fortunately when the General Strike broke out in 1926 the Defence Force plans were not simply brought out and reactivated. In fact, on the grounds of expense, efficiency and the negative impact on the TA, the War Office was adamant that the Defence Force should not be revived.¹¹⁴⁵

Nonetheless, it was recognised that some form of reinforcement to the civil authorities was desperately needed. However, after Cabinet agreed that the Territorial Army, 'as such,' should not be called out, it was clear this would have to be achieved by some other means. This led to the decision to form another improvised 'special Civil Force,' and that units of the TA should be invited to volunteer as a whole for service in it.¹¹⁴⁶

The government was careful to emphasise the civilian identity of the new Civil Constabulary Reserve (CCR), pointing out that it was a plain clothed force of Special Constables, under the authority of the Home Office and tactical control of the police. Nevertheless, the level of Territorial complicity was again obvious.¹¹⁴⁷ In order to get the CCR established the authorities relied on the free availability of Territorial manpower and the Territorial organisational structure. All Territorial headquarters were subsequently ordered to raise CCR companies. Indeed, initially units were instructed not to recruit any 'outsiders,' but to rely instead on serving Territorials, members of the Senior OTC and 'ex-military men known and trusted at the territorial headquarters.'¹¹⁴⁸

Although London had first priority, the government intended to eventually raise the CCR as a national force of up to 300,000 volunteers, organised in 'storm centres' of five hundred men across the country.¹¹⁴⁹ To achieve this goal each GOC was given the same order to replicate the CCR scheme

¹¹⁴⁵ TNA WO 32/2674 Minute by CIGS, 4 May 1926; Minute by AG, 6 May 1926; PUS to S. of S., 7 May 1926; Jeudwine to Onslow, 5 and 8 May 1926; Onslow to Creedy, 9 May 1926; CAB 27/260 Supply and Transport Committee 15th Meeting, 3 May 1926.

¹¹⁴⁶ TNA CAB 23/52/25 CC.25(26) Cabinet Conclusions, 7 May 1926; CAB 27/323 Civil Constabulary Reserve Committee Report, 7 May 1926.

¹¹⁴⁷ P. Dennis, (1981) p.721.

¹¹⁴⁸ TNA CAB 23/52/26 CC.26(26) Cabinet Conclusions, 7 May 1926.

¹¹⁴⁹ P. Dennis, (1981) p.720.

amongst the Territorial units in their Commands.¹¹⁵⁰ Nevertheless, in the event this figure was never reached. Although recruiting for the CCR formally began on 10 May and initially met with a good response, less than 20,000 had been formally enrolled before the strike collapsed two days later.¹¹⁵¹ In practical terms, therefore, the CCR remained largely untested, and on the odd occasion when units did deploy they were mainly confined to patrol work.¹¹⁵²

Regardless of its short lifespan and limited utility, the CCR still relied exclusively on the Territorial Army's structure and organisation, without access to which such a hastily improvised force could not have been formed. Yet, despite the emphasis on attracting serving personnel, Territorials still actually only accounted for forty-eight per cent of total enrolments. Nationally, the largest number of volunteers (11,162) came forward in London, which reflected the fact that the capital remained the government's central priority and had been given the longest period to recruit. Even then, serving Territorials were in a minority, accounting for only thirty-two per cent of the total.

Composition of the Civil Constabulary Reserve by enrolment type.

	Serving Territorials	Ex-Soldiers	Others (i.e. OTC, civilians etc).	Total
Met. Police District	3,625	5,671	1,866	11,162
Eastern Command	74	31	-	105
Northern Command	2,319	820	124	3,163
Southern Command	788	339	94	1,221
Scottish Command	816	368	102	1,286
Western Command	1,194	229	23	1,446
Total	8,816	7,458	2,209	18,483

Source: TNA WO 287/251 Statistical Review of Officers and Other Ranks of the Regular Army and Army Reserve (Regular) for Financial Year 1926/27, issued May 1927.

¹¹⁵⁰ TNA CAB 23/52/26 CC.26(26) Cabinet Conclusions, 7 May 1926.

¹¹⁵¹ TNA CAB 27/323 Civil Constabulary Reserve Committee: Third Report of the Interdepartmental Sub-Committee, 14 May 1926.

¹¹⁵² K. Jeffery and P. Hennessy, (1983) p.120, 128; C. Townshend, *Making the Peace: Public Order and Public Security in Modern Britain*, (Oxford, 1993) p.93.

Furthermore, it is again difficult to argue that the Territorial Army benefitted from any connection with a force associated with strikebreaking and ‘black and tans,’¹¹⁵³ and it is hardly surprising the War Office subsequently proved reluctant to establish the scheme on a permanent basis. However, this aversion was not based on the perceived damage caused to the Territorials’ image, but rather on the fact that whilst the CCR was in existence it effectively prevented the Territorial Army from mobilising.

This fact became clear when the feasibility of calling out the Territorial Army was discussed. As could be expected, Churchill pressed his successor in the War Office, Worthington-Evans, to embody the TA should the domestic situation get worse:

Do not, I beg you, speaking with the knowledge of so many years of military affairs, be misled by silly War Office objections against this measure. The Territorial Army will recover after the conflict is over, but even if it suffers for some years it will not have suffered in vain. Such an embodiment will immediately give you the necessary mass of men to afford the widespread protection which is essential, and will enable you to keep the regular units concentrated.... It is far better to take too many precautions than too few.¹¹⁵⁴

Officially, Cabinet did not entirely discount the possible need to formally call out the Territorials either.¹¹⁵⁵ However, there were grave doubts as to whether it would actually be possible to extract the Territorial organisation from its antipathy with the CCR.¹¹⁵⁶ As Worthington-Evans realised, as soon as the TA became involved in setting up the CCR, openly or otherwise, ‘its value for embodiment is largely destroyed.’ Consequently, he was keen to only involve the two London Divisions in the CCR scheme, or otherwise the government ‘should recognize that the TA cannot usefully be embodied.’¹¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, in the event these concerns were overruled, and the entire Territorial organisation was seconded to the needs of the CCR.

Yet such concerns over the impact on the TA’s military role remained the key drawback in subsequent plans to establish the CCR scheme on a permanent basis. Naturally the War Office

¹¹⁵³ TNA WO 32/3455 ‘London District: Report on General Strike, May 1926.’

¹¹⁵⁴ Churchill to Worthington-Evans, 7 May 1926, quoted in M. Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Vol.V, 1923-1939*, (London, 1976) p.161.

¹¹⁵⁵ TNA CAB 23/52/26 CC.26(26) Cabinet Conclusions, 7 May 1926.

¹¹⁵⁶ TNA WO 32/2674 DGTA to U.S. of S., 8 May 1926; Onslow to Creedy, 9 May 1926; WO 30/143 Informal Army Council Meeting 1926 (4), 6 May 1926; WO 32/2674 DGTA to U.S. of S., 8 May 1926; C. Townshend, (1993) p.94.

¹¹⁵⁷ TNA WO 32/2674 Minute by Worthington-Evans, 19 Sept 1926.

welcomed some form of civil organisation to reinforce the police, as this would reduce the likelihood of the authorities requesting military assistance.¹¹⁵⁸ As the AG conceded in November 1926, there remained ‘a clear necessity in times of civil disturbance for the existence of some efficient force of a semi military character intermediate between the regular police forces of the country and the fighting Service.’¹¹⁵⁹ However, there continued to be unease over the precedent of using the Territorial Army as the framework for this reserve. Aside from the point of principle that the military should not assume civil responsibilities, this cut across the function and purpose of the TA and threatened to undermine its ability to act in support of the Regular Army. As a result concern over the extent of Territorial involvement came to dominate the ensuing debate over a permanent CCR scheme until the outbreak of war.

Formalising Responsibilities: The Permanent CCR Scheme, 1927-1939

In his 1981 article Dennis concluded that after the General Strike collapsed demands for utilising the TA, or even Regular troops, to assist the civil power largely fell away, until ruled out altogether in 1931.¹¹⁶⁰ Although he later conceded (in a single paragraph postscript in his 1987 monograph) that the problem of internal security did reappear in the 1930s, he failed to expand upon this.¹¹⁶¹ Indeed, he seems to assume that the Territorial Army’s involvement in civil assistance tasks effectively ended in 1926. This is an over-simplification at best. Dennis’ account fails to reflect the ongoing dispute between the War Office and Home Office regarding the responsibility for maintaining internal order. This is particularly remiss as the argument focused specifically on the role of the TA as the nucleus for a permanent constabulary reserve.

The War Office was certainly not opposed to the formation of a peacetime CCR scheme. The Adjutant-General, Lt.-Gen. Sir Robert Whigham, was even willing, at least initially, to retain existing arrangements, believing that there were distinct advantages in exploiting the Territorial organisation

¹¹⁵⁸ TNA CAB 53/13 COS.97 ‘Annual Review of Imperial Defence Police: Annex ‘A’ – Internal Security at Home which might necessitate employment of Armed Force,’ 15 June 1927; WO 32/3513 ‘Notes for 1st Meeting of the Protection Sub-Committee of the General Purposes Committee,’ 17 Feb 1927; K. Jeffery, (1981) p.394.

¹¹⁵⁹ TNA WO 32/3456 AG to S. of S., 5 Nov 1927.

¹¹⁶⁰ P. Dennis, (1981) p.722.

¹¹⁶¹ P. Dennis (1987) p.85.

and the agency of the County Associations.¹¹⁶² Nevertheless, Whigham had to concede that a scheme structured around the TA would inevitably ‘impede the ultimate embodiment of the Territorial should the general course of events render that desirable.’¹¹⁶³ It was this intrinsic problem that led the Army Council to vigorously oppose a subsequent proposal to formalise the existing CCR scheme along Territorial lines.¹¹⁶⁴ The CIGS, Gen. Sir George Milne, was adamant that it was not the Army’s duty to raise an internal security force for the civil authorities, but he particularly objected to any proposals that entangled the TA and undermined its military function. Even Whigham, who again pushed for some form of peacetime CCR, agreed that ‘for military reasons, any future CCR should be independent of the Territorial Army as, for the time being, it results in the Territorial Army becoming demobilised and unavailable for military purposes.’¹¹⁶⁵

This opposition reflected the realisation that the Territorial Army could function either as the nucleus of a civil police reserve or perform its military role in support of the expeditionary force, but it was incapable of doing both simultaneously. In addition the War Office after 1926 remained acutely sensitive to any connection between the Territorials and political partisanship or their possible use for strikebreaking. This was particularly uncomfortable given the fact that the necessity to utilise the TA for suppressing internal unrest could not be ruled out.¹¹⁶⁶ The War Office anticipated that British communists would conduct a campaign of subversion during a confrontation with the Soviet Union, and with the despatch of the expeditionary force the TA would inevitably become involved in aiding the civil power. As the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, the Earl of Onslow, recognised, it would be ‘a very unpopular thing, and perhaps do harm to voluntary enlistment, if the first job the TA were called up on to undertake during the war were to put down civil disturbances.’¹¹⁶⁷

Additionally, if it were found necessary to call out the TA, or even to supply voluntary formations to support an imperial campaign, the CCR scheme could not be enacted without disrupting the existing

¹¹⁶² TNA WO 32/3511 ‘Minutes of a conference (No.8) of War Office branches concerned,’ 15 May 1926; WO 32/3456 AG to S. of S., 5 Nov 1926.

¹¹⁶³ TNA WO 32/3456 AG to S. of S., 5 Nov 1926.

¹¹⁶⁴ TNA WO 32/3513 Minute by CIGS, 21 Feb 1927; Minute by QMG, 23 Feb 1927; Minute by PUS, 3 March 1927.

¹¹⁶⁵ Ibid. Minute by AG, 28 Feb 1927.

¹¹⁶⁶ Surrey History Centre, Onslow MSS 5337/7/(40) Onslow to Jeudwine and attached memorandum, 12 May 1927.

¹¹⁶⁷ TNA WO 32/3456 Minute by Onslow, 13 May 1927.

mobilisation schedules. Moreover, as Onslow warned, Territorial mobilisation would also compromise the CCR itself, as the scheme risked ‘counting the same individual twice, first as a Territorial and secondly as a constable in the Civil Constabulary,’ and if the TA was embodied a large part of the screen of police would have to be suddenly withdrawn.¹¹⁶⁸ As a result the War Office insisted that in principle Territorials should not be considered available for assisting the civil power, and furthermore that the Army Council would retain first call on their services should that be necessary.¹¹⁶⁹

Largely ignoring these valid points, the Home Office continued to insist on the CCR scheme, and warned that if Territorials were unavailable the police would be compelled to resort to military assistance much sooner than they would otherwise.¹¹⁷⁰ Milne, noting that this read ‘very much in the nature of blackmail,’ found the Home Office unwilling to engage with his concerns over the Territorial Army’s involvement or the War Office’s lack of resources, and Worthington-Evans agreed that their views were so ‘fundamentally at variance’ that Cabinet had to provide a ruling.¹¹⁷¹

In the event the Home Secretary agreed to a partial compromise, insofar as he would accept responsibility to recruit a permanent CCR as long as the War Office remained responsible for its equipment.¹¹⁷² Despite this concession, however, the Home Office showed little inclination to proceed with anything more specific.¹¹⁷³ As a result the General Staff was forced to continue basing its contingency plans on the inadequate CCR procedure from 1926. Even though a review in early 1931 again identified reliance on the TA as the scheme’s main defect, the DRO, Maj.-Gen. Walter Pitt Taylor, felt he had to leave the individual Territorial’s eligibility to enrol in the CCR unimpaired and

¹¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁶⁹ TNA WO 163/33 Army Council 358th Meeting, 8 July 1927 and Army Council Précis No.1295 ‘Duties in Aid of the Civil Power,’ July 1927; WO 32/3456 ‘Memorandum by the Army Council upon the Use of Troops in Aid of the Civil Power,’ 14 June 1927. This was issued to the Under-Secretary of State, Home Office on 30 July 1927.

¹¹⁷⁰ TNA WO 32/3513 Home Office to Under-Secretary, War Office, 14 July 1927.

¹¹⁷¹ TNA WO 32/3513 CIGS to S. of S., 2 Aug 1927; Minute by Worthington-Evans, 9 Aug 1927.

¹¹⁷² TNA CAB 24/189 CP.257(27) ‘The Constitution of a Force of Whole-Time Special Constables for General Service in a Civil Emergency: Joint Memorandum by the Secretaries of State for Home Affairs and War,’ 10 Nov 1927; CAB 23/55/26 CC.56(27) Cabinet Conclusions, 16 Nov 1927.

¹¹⁷³ TNA WO 32/3513 Creedy to Anderson, 2 Dec 1930; Anderson to Creedy, 17 Dec 1930.

allow the TA's Regular staff and infrastructure to assist the police, but he did recommend that the TA itself should not be 'specially urged' to form complete units.¹¹⁷⁴

Both the AG and the CIGS agreed that utilising the Territorial Army in this way would still be unworkable.¹¹⁷⁵ However, by the time the issue was discussed between the departments the War Office had agreed to organise, recruit and administer the CCR, provided that it incurred no financial liability and had no connection with its employment.¹¹⁷⁶

Nevertheless, despite accepting far greater responsibilities than it had contemplated previously, the War Office still insisted on limiting the TA's involvement in the new CCR scheme as far as possible, perhaps even extending to a total ban on the enlistment of its personnel.¹¹⁷⁷ The DMO&I also pointed out that the Army Council did not want Territorial units to be enlisted 'en bloc,' nor did they wish for any special appeal aimed at Territorials to be made. Although they could not stop individuals from enrolling, they were adamant that 'they wished to keep the TA out of the Scheme as far as possible,' and rejected any suggestion 'which might give the impression of the creation of a quasi-military formation.'¹¹⁷⁸

Nevertheless, by 1932 a revised plan for the London Area, 'CCR Instructions No.1,' was finally approved, which left the War Office principally responsible for raising and maintaining the CCR on a Territorial basis.¹¹⁷⁹ This outcome was certainly far from ideal for the War Office and its acceptance had important implications for the TA. It represented a clear failure to keep separate the TA's military role from an obligation to provide aid to the civil power, albeit transparently through a proxy.

¹¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 'Civil Constabulary Reserve,' 15 Jan 1931; DRO to AG, 23 March 1931.

¹¹⁷⁵ Ibid. CIGS to AG and PUS, 20 April 1931.

¹¹⁷⁶ Ibid. CIGS to PUS, 26 July 1932; 'Notes for Meeting with Home Office Representatives,' 3 Aug 1932.

¹¹⁷⁷ Ibid. Note by MO.1, 2 Aug 1932.

¹¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 'Meeting with Home Office representatives,' 3 Aug 1932; MEPO 3/2469 'Draft Note drawn up by the Sub-Committee for the Main [CCR] Committee,' n.d. but Sept 1932; 'Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the Main Committee,' 9 Sept 1932.

¹¹⁷⁹ Ibid. AAG to DRO, 24 Oct 1932; Minute by CIGS, 4 Nov 1932.

In the event, however, the TA was not informed of its new liabilities. Although the CCR's District Administrators were all Territorial Divisional or Brigade commanders, the tight security around internal security measures meant that only a very small number of Regular staff were aware of the scheme.¹¹⁸⁰ This level of confidentiality was deliberate. As the AG later stressed:

A high degree of secrecy is essential, as it is most important that the TA should not be considered a strike breaking force in any sense (an additional reason for secrecy is that the scheme, if run by the War Office, might be considered a reflection upon police loyalty).¹¹⁸¹

Furthermore, there remained no power to compel an individual Territorial to join the CCR, and the Regulations continued to specifically state that Territorials were not liable to be called out in the aid of the civil power.¹¹⁸² Regardless, the decision to now formalise the relationship between the Territorial Army and the CCR did blur the line between military and civil responsibilities for maintaining law and order. Moreover, and in spite of the Army Council's repeated warnings, the final scheme failed to deal satisfactorily with any of the concerns raised over Territorial involvement, or the inevitable disruption that the CCR scheme would cause to the Territorial embodiment process.

Admittedly, in 1932 these issues were not regarded as pressing considerations. After all, the prospects of a return to the domestic unrest of the early 1920s or a major war involving the mobilisation of the entire nation hardly seemed credible. However, as the international situation began to deteriorate and the pace of rearmament quickened this sanguinity would not last. Thereafter greater priority was given to the need to place Britain's defences on a more appropriate footing and this involved giving the TA's mobilisation plans far more serious consideration.

Foremost amongst these new concerns was the effect the CCR scheme had on the TA's ability to perform its primary military role. A concerted effort was therefore made to extract the Territorial Army from any obligations that compromised its ability to mobilise, or tasks that it simply could not fulfil once war was declared. The first issue that had to be resolved involved the position of the Territorial anti-aircraft formations. In order to ensure the air defences were manned before a 'knock

¹¹⁸⁰ Ibid. DRO to AG, 26 Jan 1933.

¹¹⁸¹ Ibid. 'Situation as regards the CCR in event of industrial unrest coinciding with a period of strained relations with a foreign power,' 4 Jan 1937.

¹¹⁸² War Office, *Regulations for the Territorial Army and for County Associations 1936*, (London, 1936) para.473.

out blow' could be struck these personnel were liable to be called out at short notice, without the need for a Proclamation or the assent of Parliament. Yet if they were suddenly embodied it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to then raise the CCR, or conversely to man the searchlights and guns if the CCR scheme was already in operation. This was particularly alarming prospect considering that around half of all Territorial personnel in London were involved in anti-aircraft defence.¹¹⁸³

To resolve this quandary the decision was made to formally bar Territorial anti-aircraft or coastal defence personnel from enrolling in the CCR.¹¹⁸⁴ This spurred the AG, Lt.-Gen. Sir Harry Knox, into pushing for a full review of the Territorial role in the CCR scheme. Noting that their circumstances had now fundamentally altered, he insisted they inform the Home Office that the Army Council would have no option but to renege on its CCR scheme obligations should it be faced simultaneously with other military commitments. Instead the Home Office should make plans to recast the scheme alongside its expanded civil defence apparatus, with War Office assistance being limited to the provision of equipment, accommodation and transport only. This would ensure they could 'cover all eventualities, which would be more satisfactory than a force that could only be realised if our hands were free at Home from a military point of view.'¹¹⁸⁵

In the event the Home Office managed to get the War Office to accept a compromise, whereby Territorial assistance would continue to be available in the unlikely eventuality that the strain in international relations lessened, but even then the CIGS insisted that anti-aircraft and coast defence Territorials were ineligible, as they had to be available around the clock during a precautionary period.¹¹⁸⁶ In the campaign to ensure the Territorial Army's military role was given priority over any subsidiary functions this represented an impressive coup.

¹¹⁸³ TNA WO 32/3513 AG to CGIS, QMG, MGO and PUS, 10 Feb 1937.

¹¹⁸⁴ Ibid. DMO&I to DRO, 8 Dec 1936.

¹¹⁸⁵ Ibid. AG to CGIS, QMG, MGO and PUS, 10 Feb 1937; WO 32/3513 'Situation as regards the CCR in event of industrial unrest coinciding with a period of strained relations with a foreign power,' 4 Jan 1937.

¹¹⁸⁶ Ibid. CIGS to PUS, 7 June 1937; AG to CIGS, 1 July 1937; CIGS to AG, 15 July 1937; AG to PUS (through CIGS), 5 Aug 1937.

Nevertheless, events showed that this still did not go far enough. The chaotic experience of the Sudeten Crisis and the TA's palpable unpreparedness for war spurred the DRO, Maj.-Gen. Michael Barker, to question whether it was in the interests of the War Office, or indeed the nation, to retain any responsibility for the CCR, and he pushed once again for the TA to be released from any obligations. The DMO&I, Maj.-Gen. Henry Pownall, entirely agreed with this outlook, stating that the TA organisation and machinery had to be 'rid of any commitments in connection with civil unrest both in peace and prior to embodiment in an emergency. We are unlikely for some time to enjoy the conception of "peace" which we held ten years ago.'¹¹⁸⁷

No one in the War Office opposed this, and the Home Office was duly informed that, as its involvement was predicated on a level of international stability that did not exist, the TA 'could no longer be regarded as a basis for raising the Reserve.'¹¹⁸⁸ Faced with such resolve, the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, requested that the scheme should not be scrapped but rather held over for periodic review, although his acceptance that 'the scheme must be regarded as in complete abeyance, so far as the participation of the Territorial Army is concerned,' acknowledged that for all intents and purposes the existing basis for the CCR was no longer viable.¹¹⁸⁹

This admission in August 1939 effectively ended the Territorial Army's connection with assisting the civil power through the medium of an organised police reserve. Right up to this point, however, it is clear that Territorials had been deeply involved in plans to aid the civil power throughout the interwar period. Nevertheless, the Territorial Army was never trained to consider itself as an auxiliary police force, and whether it was suitable for this role remains doubtful. As Keith Jeffery has observed:

No one in the War Office seems to have considered the possibility that utilizing a part-time, essentially amateur, force, however 'efficient' or 'semi military', during a civil emergency might in the end prove to be counter-productive. Put under stress, such a force would be more likely than the regular police or army to break discipline, over-react and, perhaps, precipitate, rather than prevent, serious violence.¹¹⁹⁰

Neither was this responsibility compatible with the TA's military role, and this fact finally killed off the scheme. At no point was the War Office confident that the Territorials could perform a dual

¹¹⁸⁷ Ibid. DMO (for CIGS) to AG, 31 Jan 1939.

¹¹⁸⁸ Ibid. War Office to Under Secretary, Home Office, 7 March 1939.

¹¹⁸⁹ Ibid. Home Office to Under-Secretary, War Office, 9 Aug 1939.

¹¹⁹⁰ K. Jeffery, (1981) p.395.

expeditionary/home defence function simultaneously. As such the War Office was keen to limit its obligations to the civil power to the barest levels, as the TA's role in support of the Regular Army was always considered paramount. Although doubt over the relevance of this expeditionary role during the 1920s and the 'limited liability' period complicated the argument, by 1939 it had been accepted that the TA could not be expected to provide for both roles. Accordingly, as war loomed it was the Territorial Army's military function in support of the expeditionary force that was given priority.

* * *

The Territorial Role in the Protection of 'Vulnerable Points'

One task that did fit with the TA's military home defence role, and with which it had been heavily involved in 1914, was the protection of Vulnerable Points (VPs). Consequently, the question over who would be responsible for guarding VPs in the UK, either from attack by an external enemy or from the internal threat posed by 'ill disposed persons,' remained an important issue over the interwar period.¹¹⁹¹ It was generally assumed that each service had to provide protection for its own VPs, as did each Government Department, but this was beyond most of their capabilities. As a result it fell to the War Office to cover the shortfall, particularly over transport infrastructure and storage facilities. After the experience of the First World War the most obvious manpower pool for this task remained the Territorial Army.¹¹⁹²

However, Territorial units could not guard VPs and reinforce the expeditionary force at the same time, and it was well known that the diversion of men to static guard duties in 1914 had seriously undermined their preparation and training. In consequence, and as part of a larger review of its home defence schemes over 1927, the Army Council had put forward two options for organising future VP defence. Both entailed the formation of a 'Territorial Army Defence Corps Reserve,' under the auspices of the County Associations, the difference being whether or not personnel were enrolled in

¹¹⁹¹ See TNA CAB 13/3 for the many Home Defence Committee papers concerned with this issue.

¹¹⁹² K.W. Mitchinson, *Defending Albion: Britain's Home Army, 1908-1919*, (Basingstoke, 2005).

peace.¹¹⁹³ The CIGS and AG, anxious to avoid the diversion of any Regular resources to this role, pushed for a quick decision, and so the Army Council opted to raise a new peacetime force.¹¹⁹⁴

Originally intended as a 'special corps of low category Territorials,' by 1929 the nascent 'TA Reserve, Defence Section' was identified as the main organisation for providing internal military guards during wartime.¹¹⁹⁵ However, there was no real incentive to set the scheme in motion until 1934. Rebranded as the Royal Defence Corps (TA), the force was to consist of 'thoroughly reliable' veterans over 45 who were willing to sign an 'honourable undertaking' to come forward when needed. The new force was to be brought closer to the main body of the TA and personnel were to be enrolled, organised and administered by Territorial Adjutants. Once enrolled RDC men would be permitted to attend parades of their affiliated Territorial unit and become members of its clubs, but they had no peacetime training obligations, nor would they receive any pay, travelling expenses or other emoluments until mobilisation.¹¹⁹⁶

However, few seem to have been aware of the Royal Defence Corps existence, let alone the importance of its role. As the list of Vulnerable Points was secret the War Office restricted the level of publicity to be given to the new force and no official pronouncement was made of its formation.¹¹⁹⁷ As a result the Under-Secretary at the War Office, Lord Strathcona, was certain that it was 'partly the air of secrecy and mystery which killed the Royal Defence Corps and partly the method in which the announcement was made.'¹¹⁹⁸ Consequently the number of enrolments remained low and the RDC was thought to offer little in the way of assistance to Territorial units on mobilisation.¹¹⁹⁹

¹¹⁹³ TNA WO 163/33 Army Council Précis No.1287 'Protection of Vulnerable Points in Great Britain in an Emergency,' April 1927.

¹¹⁹⁴ Ibid. Army Council 357th Meeting, 8 April 1927.

¹¹⁹⁵ TNA CAB 3/4 CID 163-A 'Protection of Vulnerable Points,' 18 Jan 1929; CAB 12/2 Home Defence Committee 9th Meeting, 6 Nov 1928 and 10th Meeting, 23 April 1929.

¹¹⁹⁶ TNA WO 33/1339 'Royal Defence Corps (Territorial Army): Instructions for Formation, Organization and Administration, Part 1, 15 March 1934 and Amendments No.1, 2 Oct 1934.'

¹¹⁹⁷ Ibid. WO to all Secretaries of Associations, 15 March 1934.

¹¹⁹⁸ TNA WO 32/4245 U.S. of S. to PUS, 5 March 1936.

¹¹⁹⁹ TNA WO 32/4244 Committee on the Readiness of the TA on Mobilization: First Interim Report, 1935; WO 32/18655 RDC(TA) Strength and enrolment returns, 1934-35.

Considered a failure, by the mid 1930s the RDC scheme was officially wound up and a decision made to find an alternative.¹²⁰⁰ Rather than have it form as a separate corps, this new organisation was to have a much less ambiguous connection to the local Territorials. This approach had been recommended by both the Home Defence Committee, who suggested forming Reserve Companies of time-expired men in each Territorial battalion, and Maj.-Gen. D.K. Bernard's committee on Territorial readiness.¹²⁰¹ As a result the latter's proposal, which envisaged a new county-based structure of National Defence Companies (NDC) organised as a part of each Territorial infantry unit, was quickly endorsed.¹²⁰²

Although its conditions of service were broadly the same, it was believed that the NDC's affiliation to a local TA battalion would make it more popular than the RDC, whose identity the War Office admitted was always more 'nebulous in character.'¹²⁰³ There was a general assumption that many ex-Territorials would be willing to join a company affiliated with their old unit, and the Secretary for War, Duff Cooper, also found it 'anomalous that responsibility for home defence should be shared by the Territorial Army and a body not fully identified with it, namely, the Royal Defence Corps.'¹²⁰⁴

Buoyed up by optimistic forecasts, Duff Cooper thought the scheme could attract up to 100,000 men, although the Adjutant General was far less sanguine.¹²⁰⁵ Instead the latter set a lower total calculated through setting personnel quotas for each Command, of which around fifty-four per cent had been enrolled within two weeks of the opening of enlistments.

¹²⁰⁰ TNA WO 32/4245 DUS to PUS, 24 Feb 1936.

¹²⁰¹ TNA CAB 12/3 HDC 25th Meeting, 19 Jan 1936.

¹²⁰² TNA WO 32/4245 2nd Interim Report of the Committee on the Readiness of the TA on Mobilization, 1936.

¹²⁰³ TNA WO32/4245 War Office to GOsCinC all Commands, 19 May 1936.

¹²⁰⁴ Ibid. GOC Northern Command to U.S. of S., 2 July 1936; WO 32/9700 'Notes on the 5th Meeting of the TA Advisory Committee,' 18 May 1936; *Hansard*, HC Deb 21 July 1936 vol.315 c.228.

¹²⁰⁵ TNA WO 32/4316 S. of S. to AG, 21 Dec 1936; AG to CIGS, 17 Sept 1936.

Command	Quota Strength	Actual Strength
Eastern	2,275	1,267
Northern	1,670	1,034
Scottish	1,080	400
Southern	1,320	670
Western	2,110	1,157
Total	8,455	4,537

Source: TNA WO 32/4316 AG.1 'NDC (TA), Position on 12th September, 1936.'

The compact size of the NDC was not initially a problem, as at this point only 191 officers and 5,704 Other Ranks were needed for guarding VPs, a total they had almost reached by January 1937. In fact, the Adjutant-General's Department was keen to restrict recruiting to within the quotas, as he considered NDC service as a 'soft job' that competed for the same men needed to expand the anti-aircraft Territorials, and was regarded, rather disparagingly, 'as a retreat for the so-called patriots in peace time who do not wish to be bound to give up spare time and holidays for military training.'¹²⁰⁶

The DGTA continued to hold this opinion, later stating to his Council colleagues that:

These men seem to wish to enjoy the benefit and privileges of the Territorial Army soldier without incurring his responsibilities and obligations. If money is available ... it can be better expended in the Territorial Army itself.¹²⁰⁷

This was, however, a rather narrow-minded approach, as the NDC possessed a vital wartime role in ensuring the Territorial Army was not diverted to internal protection duties upon mobilisation. This factor gained in importance as the likelihood of war increased, but there was little confidence in the NDC as it then stood. From 1937 the list of vulnerable points began to expand exponentially, meaning that the organisation was overwhelmed by its obligations. After all, as the Adjutant-General admitted, the NDC had been formed 'with a very limited object and they bear little or no relation to the number of calls that will be made on them were we unfortunately to be faced with mobilisation.'¹²⁰⁸

A subsequent review concluded that little could be done about this, as NDC enlistments had effectively slowed to a standstill. With the problem deemed to be its limited appeal rather than its

¹²⁰⁶ TNA WO 32/4316 AG.1 to DRO, 5 Jan 1937.

¹²⁰⁷ TNA WO 163/47 Informal Army Council 11th Meeting, 22 Nov 1937; IAC Précis No.9 'The National Defence Companies, TA' 26 Nov 1937.

¹²⁰⁸ TNA WO 32/4316 AG to DRO, 13 Jan 1937.

organisation, the issue was put to one side.¹²⁰⁹ Indeed, the War Office expected that the strength of the NDC would continue to deteriorate, leaving any expansion programme impossible to achieve.¹²¹⁰

This depressing situation remained the case until late in 1938, when the Sudeten Crisis brought the possibility of mobilisation much closer. During this period the DGTA became increasingly aware that the NDC was more of a liability than an asset. Similarly to anti-aircraft Territorials they were required to man their VPs at the very outset of war, but as they could not be formally enlisted until embodiment this was not feasible. This could only be obviated if officers were commissioned in peace into the TARO and other ranks were enlisted in the TA Reserve, but this had already been rejected on financial grounds.

Neither was the NDC capable of operating in a military sense. Kirke noted that most of the officers and men had never met each other, and with no opportunity to practice weapons handling (and considering that most had not handled a rifle in twenty years) arming them would be a hazardous proposition. No administrative plans had been made to enlist, equip or even collate their numbers. Indeed, Kirke realised that, if an emergency arose, he had no idea how many men would actually turn up for duty.¹²¹¹

With mobilisation looming Kirke consequently pushed for a considerable reduction in the time lag between the call out of the NDC and their actual assumption of duties. Yet he also wanted to ensure that they were sufficient in number and, equally important, that they were competent to perform their duties. This aspiration met with wide agreement, the AG boldly stating that the NDC was ‘only next in importance, for home defence, to the ADGB. This being the case, it must be put on an absolutely foolproof footing, and I do not consider this can be done without certain expenditure.’¹²¹²

¹²⁰⁹ Ibid. DRO to AG, 16 Feb 1937.

¹²¹⁰ TNA CAB 12/3 HDC 36th Meeting, 5 Oct 1937.

¹²¹¹ TNA WO 32/4316 DGTA to DUS, 10 Sept 1938.

¹²¹² Ibid. DGTA to CIGS, AG, QMG, PUS, 7 Oct 1938; AG to DRO 28 Oct 1938.

Releasing funds for drills, training and mobilisation equipment was certainly important, although forging the NDC into cohesive bodies was also essential in ensuring its efficiency and competitiveness with alternative forms of voluntary service. Importantly, however, the other conclusion from this review was that it could not be raised via the Territorial system. In order to put the NDC on an ‘absolutely foolproof footing,’ the AG insisted that responsibility for it be moved from the TA and onto a Regular or Supplementary Reserve basis. Attached to Depots and re-composed mainly of Regular Reservists who had completed their Section B or D reserve service, these men could then be called up for one week in each year and have a definite commitment to come out in a period of emergency.¹²¹³

Despite the fact this would detach the NDC from its Territorial affiliation, Kirke did not object. In his view the NDC mainly consisted of ex-Regulars in any case and their concentration in Depots on mobilisation would allow them to stay under Area Commands long after their affiliate Territorial units had relocated elsewhere.¹²¹⁴ However, in the meantime Kirke needed to stop the ‘grave drift away from the NDCs, to other more active civilian defence organisations, which ... in the absence of an active policy, we are powerless to prevent.’¹²¹⁵ This meant that plans to shift responsibility to the Supplementary Reserve were only a ‘long range policy,’ and in the interim the War Office set about improving the existing organisation on a Territorial basis.¹²¹⁶

This resulted in a further expansion in strength and the request of additional expenditure in order to offer payments for drills and other emoluments. The Treasury initially balked at this new outlay, considering it ‘extravagant’ for what was meant to be a voluntary body.¹²¹⁷ Regardless, the Army Council pushed ahead with announcing the formation of the ‘Territorial Army Reserve (National Defence Companies)’ in April 1939. Under this revitalised scheme ex-service members would now be enlisted formally into the TA Reserve and required to attend a minimum of six drills per year, paid at Territorial rates. They would be established into formed companies and platoons and each allotted

¹²¹³ Ibid. AG to DRO 28 Oct 1938.

¹²¹⁴ Ibid. DGTA to AG, 10 Nov 1938.

¹²¹⁵ Ibid. DGTA to AG and PUS, 20 Dec 1938.

¹²¹⁶ TNA CAB 53/44 COS.838(DC), ‘Acceleration of Mobilisation,’ Jan 1939; CAB 54/2 DCOS 33rd Meeting, 30 Jan 1939.

¹²¹⁷ TNA WO 32/4316 Rae to Munster, 15 Feb 1939.

to specific Vulnerable Points by Commands, whilst the Secretary of State retained the authority to call them out at any time, regardless of whether the TA was embodied.¹²¹⁸

These new conditions of service enabled the NDC to be used with greater flexibility and promised to greatly improve its efficiency, but it still lacked sufficient strength. From an initial establishment of 8,107, the NDC was now expected to expand to some 738 officers and 17,835 men, with the latter figure rising by August to 19,619. This was a steep climb, as on 1 August 1939 the NDC still only numbered a total of 139 officers and 6,726 men.¹²¹⁹ Indeed, the poor response meant that by the eve of war the War Office had decided to ‘go slow’ on the NDC, and try and secure alternative means to safeguard VPs through the Militia.¹²²⁰ Therefore, despite NDC numbers swelling on the outbreak of war and its subsequent reorganisation into Home Service Battalions attached to Regular infantry units, there was still insufficient manpower to ensure every Vulnerable Point had protection. This shortfall, as examined in chapter seven, had to be covered subsequently by the Territorial field army, especially the duplicate formations, which represented a significant drain on its resources and largely undermined its training potential as it endeavored to mobilise.¹²²¹

* * *

Absorbing the ‘Knock Out Blow:’ Territorial Assistance in the Development of Civil Defence and Air Raid Precautions

As explained above, within the existing literature the Territorial Army’s connection with providing aid to the civil power begins and ends with the Defence Force and CCR schemes. Moreover, there has been no attempt to assess how the Territorial Army’s internal security role was re-orientated during a period when concern over Britain’s vulnerability to aerial attack increasingly influenced the direction of strategic policy. This is a significant omission given the TA’s importance in the development of civil defence planning and the provision of passive support during air raids.

¹²¹⁸ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/9 War Office to GOsCinC all Commands, 27 April 1939.

¹²¹⁹ Ibid. ‘Territorial Army Reserve: National Defence Companies – Position on 1st August 1939,’ 12 Aug 1939.

¹²²⁰ TNA WO 32/4498 DGTA to MS and PUS, 8 Aug 1939; ‘Note for the DGTA,’ Aug 1939.

¹²²¹ D.J. Newbold, ‘British Planning and Preparations to Resist Invasion on Land, September 1939-September 1940,’ (University of London, PhD, 1988) p.43; F.W. Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and Organisation in Two World Wars*, (Manchester, 1988) p.53.

It is true the Territorial Army already had a substantial degree of responsibility for air defence through its anti-aircraft divisions.¹²²² Nevertheless, during the late 1920s and early 1930s the War Office was put under mounting pressure to allocate additional Territorial manpower to assist the civil authorities in the event of an air attack. Although this demand foresaw a conventional measure of military assistance in support of law and order, it also required Territorials to assume a passive civil defence role far removed from its military obligations. In this case, the question whether Territorials could, or indeed should, provide for what was arguably a purely civil responsibility became a particularly contentious point of debate.

The need to prepare an adequate civil defence programme was, however, never in doubt. At this time popular fears regarding air attack centred on Britain's susceptibility to the 'knock out blow.' This intensive and overwhelming aerial *coup de main*, aimed at the civilian populace and executed without warning, had the intention of breaking the nation's resolve before active hostilities had even begun.¹²²³

In the apparent absence of an effective active defence, it was thus considered essential that the population and civil infrastructure was resilient enough to absorb the blow. Achieving this aim partially relied on having an organised system already in place to ensure the supply of vital services could be maintained. Establishing this presented a complex challenge, as a General Staff paper sardonically pointed out, given that 'normal labour, being purely of a civilian nature, might prove unwilling to remain at duty under the conditions of intensive air attack.'¹²²⁴

¹²²² See Chapter Nine.

¹²²³ For the influence of the 'knock out blow' theory and fear of air attack see M. Haapamaki, *The Coming of the Aerial War: Culture and the Fear of Airborne Attack in Inter-War Britain*, (London, 2014); B. Holman, *The Next War in the Air: Britain's Fear of the Bomber, 1908-1941*, (Farnham, 2014); I. Patterson, *Guernica and Total War*, (London, 2007); U. Bialer, *The Shadow of the Bomber: the Fear of Air Attack and British Politics, 1932-1939*, (London, 1980).

¹²²⁴ TNA WO 32/3492 Air Raids Precautions Sub-Committee: 'Note on the Problem of the Provision of Personnel for Anti-Aircraft Protection Services in London,' 7 Jan 1929.

The solution was seen to lie in the formation of a mobile labour reserve, organised primarily along military lines and serving under military discipline.¹²²⁵ In 1928 the CID's ARP Sub-Committee began discussing the enrolment of these 'breakdown gangs' in London, who would be responsible for repairing bomb damage, including the clearing of roads and anti-gas decontamination. However the War Office was reluctant to set up a new organisation and did not think it was the Army's responsibility to provide a 'stiffening' for civilian labour.¹²²⁶ Instead, discussion moved towards temporarily 'lending' troops during a precautionary period, until such time as special labour units could be raised and trained. After Maurice Hankey suggested using TA units for this the War Office was instructed to examine the practicalities of re-allocating some 5-6,000 Territorials to the control of the civil authorities in an emergency.¹²²⁷

The War Office understood that by making Territorials available they could ensure a disciplined body of men was available to give immediate support to a civilian workforce. Nevertheless, the diversion of trained soldiers to unskilled labour tasks was clearly an inefficient use of resources. Not only would their services be lost to the Army but they could also incur heavy casualties while deployed in the bombed areas. At the same time their diversion, and particularly that of key staff officers and supply and administrative personnel, would seriously hinder the Territorial Army's mobilisation and expansion.¹²²⁸

Of course, it also undermined the principle that the civil authorities were responsible for maintaining essential services, and the General Staff suspected the Home Office had 'followed the line of least resistance' in trying to foist the commitment on the TA. However, as the staff officer tasked with offering a counter-proposal commented, 'It seems, perhaps, better to realize that only the Army,

¹²²⁵ R. Woolven, 'Civil Defence in London, 1935-1945: The Formation and Implementation of the Policy for, and the Performance of, the Air Raids Precautions (later Civil Defence) Services in the London Region,' (University of London, PhD, 2001) p.40.

¹²²⁶ TNA WO 32/3492 DMO&I to DRO, 16 Nov 1928.

¹²²⁷ TNA CAB 46/2 ARP 44th Meeting, 26 Nov 1928.

¹²²⁸ TNA WO 32/3492 Minute by CIGS, 23 Jan 1929.

Regular or Territorial, can supply the fully disciplined units required, and it is obviously impossible to tie up regulars.’ Naturally, this left the TA as the only option.¹²²⁹

In the meantime the Home Office continued to regard the Army as the solution to their disciplined labour problem, and by July 1930 the ARP (Policy) Committee decided that the so-called ‘Anti-Aircraft Emergency Service’ had to be organised as a military organisation in peace.¹²³⁰ They reiterated that Territorials remained the only manpower source large enough to provide an initial mobile reserve during an attempted ‘knock out blow.’¹²³¹ Without the assistance of the TA the whole ARP structure would be seriously weakened.

The Army Council continued to reject this contention. In a joint paper submitted to the CID the Secretary of State for War, Thomas Shaw, pointed out that the duties of this labour organisation could ‘in no sense be called military,’ and were at odds with the Army’s purpose and responsibilities. As Shaw explained, ‘the primary duty of the Territorial Army, on mobilisation, is to train for war; and ... any interference with their programme would result in serious loss of fighting efficiency.’¹²³² For these reasons the War Office refused to countenance the diversion of any Territorial manpower for labour duties.

Regardless of this reasoning, the ARP (Policy) Committee continued to argue there was no viable alternative at a time ‘when lack of adequate preparation might well mean immediate and irretrievable disaster.’¹²³³ Playing on this sense of jeopardy, Sir John Anderson pushed the CID to give the Home Office control over at least two or three Territorial battalions. The intention was to distribute them as a ‘disciplined body of unskilled men’ in support of a much larger force of civilian workers, but it was

¹²²⁹ Ibid. MO.1 to AG.1 and TA.1, 6 Dec 1928.

¹²³⁰ Ibid. Air Raids Precautions Sub-Committee: ‘Note on the Problem of the Provision of Personnel for Anti-Aircraft Protection Services in London,’ 7 Jan 1929; S.R. Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz*, (Cambridge, 2012) p.132; CAB 46/6 ARP(Policy) Committee 2nd Meeting, 15 July 1930.

¹²³¹ TNA CAB 3/5 CID 178-A Annexure: Report of the ARP (Organisation) Sub-Committee, 19 May 1930.

¹²³² Ibid. CID 179-A The Enrolment of Personnel for Anti-Aircraft Emergency Service: Note by the Secretary of State for War, 30 Aug 1930.

¹²³³ Ibid. CID 178-A Report by the Air Raids Precautions (Policy) Committee covering Report of Air Raids Precautions (Organisation) Sub-Committee, 31 July 1930.

hoped the physical presence of soldiers would also stiffen public resolve. Without this assistance they risked losing control and inviting chaos:

It would be very dangerous to assume that it would be possible to rely implicitly on civilian labour to carry out the work under the same conditions, practically speaking, as might be expected of soldiers in the front line of a battle. It was, therefore, essential to have as a stand-by disciplined forces which could be called in if conditions became such that it was impossible for the civilian organisation to carry on. If this was not done, he had little doubt that such a state of panic would be produced as might bring about the collapse, certainly of the community in London, if not of the whole country.¹²³⁴

In conclusion Anderson felt ‘very strongly that it was only the fact of being under a code of military discipline, together with the prestige inseparable from membership of a military force, which would give the necessary security against a disastrous breakdown.’¹²³⁵

With the two departments incapable of reaching agreement the issue was passed up to Cabinet, but the ministers found it no easier to find a compromise.¹²³⁶ The issue was therefore referred back again to the ARP (Policy) Sub-Committee, who came down firmly on the side of the Home Office. The committee insisted that only the War Office was capable of raising and administering such a ‘quasi-military undertaking,’ and contended that Territorials could easily be used once they agreed to undertake the same enhanced call-out liability as anti-aircraft personnel.¹²³⁷ Although Shaw continued to refute this argument on principle, he realised the War Office had little option but to concede, and agreed that the War Office would now accept responsibility for organising the anti-aircraft emergency services, on the proviso that his department was not made financially liable. Despite the Home Secretary also refusing to accept responsibility for funding the scheme, this extension of the Territorial Army’s role into civil defence was nonetheless accepted.¹²³⁸

However, there is little evidence that anything more than preliminary planning was subsequently carried out.¹²³⁹ This was just as well, as the General Staff never considered the Territorial Army capable of carrying out its ARP responsibilities on top of its other wartime commitments.¹²⁴⁰ The

¹²³⁴ TNA CAB 2/5 CID 250th Meeting, 29 Sept 1930.

¹²³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²³⁶ TNA CAB 24/215/32 CP.332(30) ‘Enrolment of Personnel for Anti-Aircraft Emergency Services,’ 13 Oct 1930; CAB 23/65/23 CC.72(30) Cabinet Conclusions, 10 Dec 1930.

¹²³⁷ TNA CAB 3/5 CID 182-A Report of the Air Raids Precautions (Policy) Sub-Committee, 9 March 1931.

¹²³⁸ TNA CAB 2/5 CID 252nd Meeting, 19 March 1931.

¹²³⁹ TNA WO 32/3492 CIGS to PUS, 27 Oct 1931.

¹²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* Minute by DRO, 14 Feb 1935.

issue finally came to a head after the DRO, Maj.-Gen. Bernard, began his comprehensive review of Territorial readiness in 1935. As could be expected, Bernard wanted to know if he had to take into account ARP ‘moppers up’ as a Territorial liability as, against a background of increased military responsibilities, accelerating rearmament and the expansion of civil defence in general, this liability no longer appeared practical and, indeed, promised to act as major impediment to the Territorials on mobilisation.¹²⁴¹

As a consequence a decision was made to get the responsibility officially handed back to the Home Office.¹²⁴² This meant that by June 1936 the obligation for maintaining essential services had been re-allocated to the local authorities, under the umbrella of the Home Office’s newly formed ARP Department, whilst ARP duties was now confirmed as a local, civilian led task.¹²⁴³

This undoubtedly represented a step forward in a broader process to rid the Territorial Army of its extraneous obligations. However, the decision also brought with it a new problem, whereby the rapidly expanding civil defence apparatus began to compete directly with the TA for manpower and funding. This led to an ugly inter-departmental spat after the War Office claimed a monopoly over the younger age groups and sought a CID ruling prioritising Territorial recruitment.¹²⁴⁴ After the 1938 civil defence recruiting campaign began to falter, calls to abolish any restrictions on enlistment were renewed.¹²⁴⁵

Yet, having relinquished the TA’s formal responsibility for civil defence, the War Office was now in a difficult position to contest this demand. The advent of the ‘limited liability’ policy had removed much of the rationale for maintaining a large Territorial field army. On the other hand, the Home Office could point out that, as policy now prioritised home defence and as the ‘knock out blow’ placed civil defence at the vanguard, it was irresponsible to prevent the ARP from recruiting the best

¹²⁴¹ Ibid. DUS to PUS, 11 Nov 1935.

¹²⁴² Ibid. PUS to CIGS and AG, 12 Nov 1935; Knox to Creedy, 14 Nov 1935; Montgomery-Massingberd to Creedy, 25 Nov 1935.

¹²⁴³ TNA CAB 3/6 CID 231-A; *Hansard*, HC Deb 15 Nov 1937 vol.329 c.41-43; S.R. Grayzel, (2012) p.208.

¹²⁴⁴ TNA CAB 2/7 CID 308th Meeting, 27 Jan 1938; WO 32/4648 AG to S. of S., 19 May 1938.

¹²⁴⁵ TNA WO 32/4648 ‘Memorandum on the meeting to consider certain points of disagreement between the War Office and the Home Office,’ by DRO, 27 May 1938.

material. As the Adjutant-General was forced to concede, ‘the anomalous position of the Territorial Army today makes it hard, indeed impossible, to refute this argument.’¹²⁴⁶ As he advised Hore-Belisha in June 1938:

It appears to me that we have no immediate plan for the early use of the bulk of the TA with the Field Force; yet we object to Home Office competing in the same recruiting field for services that we know to be essential. This, I suggest, is not a sound attitude to adopt.¹²⁴⁷

This awkward situation meant that, in order to preserve some measure of prioritisation, the War Office now chose to reverse its position. Henceforth it would actively highlight the Territorial Army’s value as an aid to the civil power, and Kirke deliberately emphasised this point when responding to a Manpower Committee paper calling for an unrestricted recruiting policy:

The [Manpower Committee] memorandum lays stress on the urgency of the duties to be carried out on the outbreak of war but neglects the essential point that the trained and disciplined Territorial, in formed bodies under his own officers, is going to be a far more valuable organization for carrying out ARP work than the great majority of ARP detachments themselves.¹²⁴⁸

The Home Office certainly welcomed this new approach, especially as it was hoped Territorials would make up for a chronic shortfall in auxiliary firemen. In May 1938 the Home Secretary, Samuel Hoare, asked that at least 5,000 Territorial infantry and artillery personnel volunteer for additional fire fighting drills, and for them to be used in this role during a crisis.¹²⁴⁹ After being discussed within the Territorial Directorate, it was agreed that each London infantry company should form a fire-fighting squad of 20-30 men, all serving under the anti-aircraft call-out liability, as long as the Home Office arranged to pay each volunteer 1/- per drill and supplied the necessary equipment.¹²⁵⁰ As a result, by July 1938 every battalion in London held a small fire-fighting reserve, operating either under the orders of local fire brigade or the GOC London Division.¹²⁵¹

The end result was that by mid 1938 the War Office had agreed to divert a significant number of Territorials to civil tasks during a crisis, and furthermore Kirke assured Hore-Belisha that ‘the Territorial Army can, of course, produce far more than this if men are called up immediately an

¹²⁴⁶ TNA WO 32/4649 AG to S. of S., 24 June 1938.

¹²⁴⁷ Ibid. AG to S of S, 29 June 1938.

¹²⁴⁸ Ibid. DGTA to S of S, 15 June 1938.

¹²⁴⁹ TNA HO 144/22132 Home Office to War Office, 23 May 1938.

¹²⁵⁰ Ibid. ‘Record of a Meeting held on 25th April 1938’ by TA.1, 28 April 1938.

¹²⁵¹ TNA WO 32/4649 DGTA to AG, 22 July 1938.

emergency occurs.¹²⁵² However, the practical value of this offer was undermined by the restrictions contained in the Territorial conditions of service. In fact, its complicated and time-consuming call out procedure was identified as the key handicap in the TA's ability to provide effective military assistance in an emergency.¹²⁵³ To do so personnel needed to be fully trained and ready to deploy at very short notice, whilst under existing arrangements TA units were incapable of completing their embodiment in anything less than three days. The only solution was to extend to the whole field army a liability to be embodied for ARP duties without the need for a Proclamation, thus placing them in line with the voluntary declaration signed by all Territorial anti-aircraft personnel.¹²⁵⁴ Doing so had the added advantage that the TA could continue to justify recruiting from the more active, younger age groups.¹²⁵⁵ Admittedly, by renouncing the need for Parliamentary sanction they would be bypassing one of the main safeguards against precipitous mobilisation, but the clear risk of hostilities now overruled these concerns. As a consequence by April 1939 this enhanced call-out liability had been formally extended to all Territorials, thus confirming their role as an important source of support for the civil power should a 'knock out blow' threaten.¹²⁵⁶

* * *

Hitherto Territorial assistance during air raids has mainly been considered in terms of passive support, acting either as a disciplined labour and decontamination force or as semi-trained reinforcements to the auxiliary fire-fighting service. However, the TA's civil defence responsibilities also extended beyond these tasks. By the late 1930s parallel plans were being made to deal with some of the worst-case scenarios associated with the 'knock out blow,' the most feared outcome being the total collapse of centralised law and order.¹²⁵⁷

¹²⁵² TNA HO 144/22132 War Office to all Commands et al., 28 Sept 1938; WO 32/4649 DGTA to S of S, 15 June 1938.

¹²⁵³ Ibid. War Office to all Home Commands, 22 July 1938.

¹²⁵⁴ TNA WO 32/4649 DGTA to AG, 22 July 1938; WO 32/4611 'Note on the Re-organization of the Territorial Army,' Sept 1938; CAB 54/2 DCOS 33rd Meeting, 30 Jan 1939; CAB 54/5 DCOS.79 'Acceleration of Mobilisation – Army,' 21 Jan 1939; CAB 53/44 COS 838(DC) 'Acceleration of Mobilisation – Draft Report,' 6 Feb 1939; CAB 2/8 CID 347th Meeting, 16 Feb 1939; CAB 4/29 CID Paper No.1526-B 'Acceleration of Mobilisation,' Feb 1939.

¹²⁵⁵ TNA WO 32/4649 DGTA to AG, 22 July 1938.

¹²⁵⁶ TNA WO 32/4652 War Office to all Commands and TA Associations, 3 April 1939; CAB 4/29 CID Paper No.1538-B 'Acceleration of Mobilisation,' 9 March 1939; WO 32/4682 'Memo by the Minister for Co-ordination [of Defence], 24 Feb 1939.

¹²⁵⁷ B. Holman, 'The Next War in the Air: Civilian Fears of Strategic Bombardment in Britain, 1908-1941,' (University of Melbourne, PhD, 2009) pp.50-63, 76-96; R. Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain between the Wars*, (London, 2009) p.345; R. Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe 1939-1945* (London, 2013) p.27; S.R. Grayzel, (2012) p.142.

As a consequence, by 1936 the authorities had begun to explore how the TA could be utilised not only for wartime home defence tasks but also to ensure law and order could be maintained once Regular troops had left British shores. For example, the CID's Joint Planning Committee (JPC) anticipated relieving seventeen Regular battalions in the UK with four Territorial divisions within two weeks of the outbreak of war. These Territorials were to carry out conventional home defence tasks, such as providing garrisons for Northern Ireland and guarding against a possible sea or airborne raids, but they were also on hand against the possibility of internal unrest.¹²⁵⁸

However, for most of this period there was no formal procedure to deploy Territorial units in the event of the collapse of centralised control, although it was assumed they would be available. As one JPC report recorded:

No special arrangements exist for military assistance to be given to the police in maintaining law and order during enemy air attacks. If such attacks were very intense it might be found necessary to employ large numbers of troops. These could be found, if necessary, from the Territorial Army, whose units are embodied initially at their own drill halls, and who thus provide nuclei of disciplined troops at all important centres. The use of the Territorial Army for this purpose would, of course, delay its mobilization and formation into divisions, but it would avoid the unsound alternative of dissipating the regular Field Force on such duties.¹²⁵⁹

Only in late 1937 did the War Office start to consider in detail the Army's wartime responsibilities for internal security, particularly those 'dealing with disorder arising out of intensive air raids on London and other important areas.' In view of the 'heavy scale of air attack to which this country is liable, and the fact that it could be applied immediately on the outbreak of war,' the Army Council anticipated that military assistance could not be confined solely to reinforcing the overwhelmed police in maintaining or restoring order, but would also involve the evacuation of casualties and refugees, demolitions, the isolation of damaged areas and the maintenance of essential services.¹²⁶⁰ As Territorials could not be made available until after mobilisation the breadth of this task represented a considerable drain on Regular manpower, requiring some 22,000 men in London alone (excluding

¹²⁵⁸ TNA CAB 54/1 DCOS 12th Meeting, 30 Nov 1936.

¹²⁵⁹ TNA CAB 53/29 COS.513(JP) 'Appreciation of the Situation in the event of War against Germany in 1939 by the Joint Planning Subcommittee – Provisional Report,' 26 Oct 1936.

¹²⁶⁰ TNA HO 144/22132 War Office to Home Office, 1 Dec 1937.

those troops forming the London garrison) as well as a further 10,000 for the larger provincial cities.¹²⁶¹

These numbers were only set to increase as demands for military assistance became more clamorous. In September 1938 the police refused to guarantee public order in London unless troops were definitely made available, as ‘where there was a risk of panic, or an actual panic existed, the mere presence of a body of disciplined men had a steadying effect.’¹²⁶² By this time the Air Ministry also weighed into the argument, proposing that the Army units previously earmarked for the expeditionary force should now formally re-role as armed support to the domestic authorities.¹²⁶³

Understandably, the War Office was unwilling to see all of its resources diverted to internal security duties. This led Hore-Belisha into arguing against any attempt to re-cast the Army as a domestic police force, pointing out that, although it was certainly available in an emergency, this should not be accepted as its primary function.¹²⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the ongoing tension over German-Czech relations left the Cabinet anxious to see the provision of military assistance placed on a more formal footing, leading to the Home Office and War Office establishing the ‘Civil Emergency Organization,’ a joint body tasked with coordinating the ARP demands that might be made upon the military.¹²⁶⁵

It was this body that decided that emergency internal security demands would henceforth be met predominately by the Territorial Army. The Joint Planning Committee confirmed this in July 1938, whereby the TA now had a definite obligation to assist the Police in maintaining law and order, and would also be required to reinforce the ARP services and help to run essential services.¹²⁶⁶ The Pre-Precautionary Period Committee instructed that Commands should be officially informed of this new responsibility, stating that there was no question of the main role of the TA being changed, ‘but as

¹²⁶¹ Ibid. ‘Note of a Conference held at the Home Office on the 14th February 1938’; Ibid. ‘Military Aid to the Civil Power,’ n.d. but c. March 1938.

¹²⁶² TNA CAB 2/8 CID 332nd Meeting, 15 Sept 1938.

¹²⁶³ D. Waldie, ‘Relations between the Army and the Royal Air Force 1918-1939,’ (University of London, PhD, 1980) p.258.

¹²⁶⁴ TNA CAB 2/8 CID 332nd Meeting, 15 Sept 1938.

¹²⁶⁵ TNA CAB 53/39 COS.733 ‘German-Czechoslovak Relations: Review of Plans for an Emergency,’ 31 May 1938.

¹²⁶⁶ TNA CAB 53/40 COS.747(JP) ‘Appreciation of the Situation in the Event of War against Germany in April 1939: Note by the JPC,’ 15 July 1938.

home defence was the primary role of the army, both regular and territorial, the latter had to be prepared on the outbreak of war to assist the civil population if necessary.¹²⁶⁷

Formalised in September 1938 as part of the 'Regional Commissioner's Scheme,' assisting the civil authorities in the event of air raids thereafter became a core responsibility for all Territorial field army troops, with the Regular Army retained only as a reserve.¹²⁶⁸ Units were duly instructed to keep in close contact with the local police and deploy as soon as possible once the bombs began to fall.¹²⁶⁹ By agreeing to this obligation the War Office was simply following the new direction of policy, which put the focus heavily on anti-aircraft defence. As Hore-Belisha had declared when announcing this reorientation, 'in preparing the Army for war the menace of air attack is a primary consideration. On the outbreak of war defence against air attack may be the primary requirement; in this major respect Home Defence is in the first category of importance and in a form unknown in 1914.¹²⁷⁰ Moreover, internal security was listed as an especial liability, and one 'which assumes a widened scope in the light of air raid precautions.'

Yet, despite the importance in which it was officially viewed, this new role for the Territorials was received with no real enthusiasm, nor was it widely publicised. The GOC Eastern Command, Gen. Ironside, no doubt identified the reason in his diary:

The Cabinet have decided behind closed doors that the Territorial Army is required to keep the peace in England and restore law and order in air raids. They daren't give this out because it would be unpopular and would result in the Terriers fading away.¹²⁷¹

Nevertheless, although only anti-aircraft troops were formally embodied during the Sudeten Crisis, the War Office did consider calling up the Territorial field army in London to provide for internal security. On 18 September the London Division's GOC, the Territorial Claude Liardet, had already begun to prepare his command for a possible embodiment, although little prior preparation had

¹²⁶⁷ TNA WO 163/70 Meeting of the PPPC, 16 Sept 1938.

¹²⁶⁸ Ibid. Meeting of the PPPC, 19 Sept 1938.

¹²⁶⁹ TNA HO 144/22132 War Office to all Home Commands et al., 22 Sept 1938.

¹²⁷⁰ TNA CAB 24/274 CP.26(38) 'The Organization of the Army for its Role in War,' 10 Feb 1938.

¹²⁷¹ R. Macleod and D. Kelly (eds.) *The Ironside Diaries: 1937-1940*, (London, 1962) p.46, entry for 20 Jan 1938.

occurred and none of his officers (who had come out voluntarily) had any experience in the actual duties they would have to perform.¹²⁷² As Ironside recorded in his diary:

I am now told that all the authorities have insisted upon the parceling out of troops all over London during air raids ... It all seems perfectly puerile ... They want the sight of uniforms to quieten the people ... It is a curious ending to a Field Army and it seems stupid that we should go through the motions of training these men for anything other than these new police-duties. For these we are completely untrained.¹²⁷³

In order to deal with the last point commanders were instructed to include ARP and civil/military cooperation into their training programmes, and these new obligations were formally incorporated into the training regulations by the winter of 1938.¹²⁷⁴ The exact nature of these tasks were, however, left vague, outside of the rather anodyne instruction that ‘the primary duty of such troops is to assist the local authority to maintain the public morale during and after air raids.’ A confidential pamphlet, printed in May 1939, attempted to help commanders visualise their likely tasks, but warned that these could be broad in scope, from assisting the police in maintaining order and suppressing panic; supporting the free movement of traffic and essential services; cordoning and clearing bombed areas (including chemical decontamination); and protecting vulnerable points against sabotage. Furthermore, in the absence of effective control, commanders were reminded that the use of lethal force, especially to quell looting or riotous disorder, may well be justified.¹²⁷⁵

Therefore, as war approached a flexible policy was developed which attempted to integrate the Army’s home defence obligations with its ability to maintain a viable expeditionary capability. The Territorial Army retained a clear obligation to assist the civil power in the event of air attack, responsibility for which had been endorsed at high level.¹²⁷⁶ In fact, in examining the practicalities of mobilisation policy the JPC concluded that the speed in which the TA would become available to support the Regular Army overseas largely depended on the extent to which it had been deployed on ARP duties.¹²⁷⁷

¹²⁷² LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/113 Talk with Liardet, 12 Oct 1938, on the use of the Territorial Army for internal security.

¹²⁷³ R. Macleod and D. Kelly, (1962)p.61, entry for 19 Sept 1938.

¹²⁷⁴ TNA WO 231/237 Army Training Memorandum (ATM) No.21: Individual Training Period 1938/39; WO 231/239 ATM No.23: Individual Training Period 1939/40.

¹²⁷⁵ TNA WO 287/121 Security Document No.B.401 ‘Assistance by Troops to Civil Authorities in Civil Defence: London Area’ c. May 1939.

¹²⁷⁶ TNA CAB 54/5 DCOS.79 ‘Acceleration of Mobilisation,’ 21 Jan 1939; CAB 54/2 DCOS 32nd Meeting, 10 Jan 1939.

¹²⁷⁷ TNA CAB 53/44 COS.831(JP) ‘European Appreciation 1939-40: Note by the Joint Planning Committee,’ 26 Jan 1939.

Nevertheless, the Army never fully embraced its civil defence responsibilities, particularly if doing so came at the expense of more conventional military preparations.¹²⁷⁸ By December 1938 the CIGS had already begun to question the Army's limited role, and in particular the absence of any firm policy for the Territorials. Despite acknowledging its importance in connection with ARP tasks, he insisted that the TA had to retain the capability to support the Regular Army overseas, and for this it had to receive the appropriate training, equipment and reserves in peace.¹²⁷⁹ In addition, the General Staff stressed that any ARP training a unit received should not interfere with its general preparation for war.¹²⁸⁰ As a result the War Office ruled that the police should not expect the Army to commit itself solely to providing civil assistance, and warned that effective training required units to be concentrated rather than dispersed, thus reducing to a minimum the number of troops that could be regarded as immediately available.¹²⁸¹

As the government had by then re-affirmed a continental commitment policy the Home Office had little choice but to accept the War Office's priorities.¹²⁸² The Army's main effort was now on preparing the expeditionary force for a European deployment, and Territorials provided a vital component in facilitating that. Yet during the first months of war the TA, and particularly the duplicate 'Second Line' formations, still found itself heavily committed to a civil defence role, as is detailed more fully in chapter seven. Nevertheless, by late 1939 there were more important priorities for the Territorial field army as it prepared for mobilisation.

* * *

Evaluation

During the interwar period home defence encompassed a wide variety of external and internal security responsibilities. While it is true that the nature of the threat shifted over time, the possibility that the

¹²⁷⁸ TNA CAB 54/4 DCOS.71 'Memorandum on the Home Defence Measures which could be put into force should an Emergency arise in the near future,' 12 July 1938; CAB 54/2 DCOS 29th Meeting, 25 July 1938.

¹²⁷⁹ TNA CAB 53/43 COS.811 'Memorandum by CIGS,' 2 Dec 1938.

¹²⁸⁰ TNA WO 231/239 Army Training Memorandum No.23: Individual Training Period 1939/40.

¹²⁸¹ TNA HO 144/22132 'Notes of a Conference held at the War Office on 17th May 1939 in connection with Military Support to the Civil Power under Air Raid Conditions.'

¹²⁸² Ibid. Loch to Dixon, 14 July 1939.

War Office would be called upon to aid the civilian authorities against a domestic or foreign threat was a consistent feature of the period. Ostensibly, as a part-time, citizen force the TA was exempt from this role. Yet in reality it was heavily involved, from the reconstitution and right up to the outbreak of war.

During the 1920s this focused predominantly on measures to maintain law and order against a backdrop of organised industrial and political unrest. As a result military assistance was mainly conceptualised in terms of measures to augment civil and police resources. During the reconstitution the Territorial Army's liability to aid the civil power was hotly debated, and despite Churchill's best efforts the pre-war prohibition on its use was upheld. This, however, only ensured that future Territorial involvement had to be obscured, or based around a Territorial's duties as a citizen rather than a soldier. As a result, when the authorities moved to improvise a response to the internal unrest of the 1920s the formal, transparent use of the Territorials was ruled out, but the organisation was still deeply involved. As a result the paramilitary Defence Force was based entirely around the Territorial Army, as was the Civil Constabulary Reserve. Both organisations were evidently grafted over the existing Territorial structure and both relied on unambiguous appeals to Territorials to fill their ranks.

Moreover, and despite clear flaws in these two examples, by the late 1920s the Home Office clearly believed that a precedent had been set, and this became apparent during the attempt to establish a permanent CCR scheme. This pressure eventually led to the formal acceptance of a plan that committed the TA to aiding the civil power throughout the 1930s, and was only relinquished on the eve of war. Furthermore, the authorities never ruled out embodying the TA if for any reason the domestic situation had worsened to the point when all civil resources had been exhausted.

However, by the mid 1930s concerns over industrial unrest had largely been supplanted by the emerging menace of German air power and anxieties over the 'knock out blow.' Thereafter Territorial aid to the civil power was conceptualised more in terms of civil defence, extending all the way from the provision of an unskilled 'breakdown gangs' to the possible deployment of armed units

to control a panic-stricken population. These measures were designed primarily to provide a reserve of disciplined manpower, and the involvement of Territorials was a significant factor in a number of the early ARP schemes. Whether acting as disciplined labour, a pool to augment the auxiliary fire service or organised military bodies to stiffen public morale, Territorials were intended to provide a measure of local support that the ARP service at that time struggled to match.

However, this is not to say that these additional roles were welcomed. In fact, most attempts to expand the Territorial Army's obligations to aid the civil power were strongly resisted. The War Office was particularly sensitive to the risk that Territorials would be labeled as strikebreakers and, although considerable numbers of Territorials did volunteer for the Defence Force and CCR, a great many did not. This illustrates how a controversial internal security function may not have tallied with individual interpretations of what voluntary Territorial service was for.

The General Staff and War Office were more perturbed as to the impact aiding the civil power would have on Territorial mobilisation and its ability to carry out its military role. Throughout the interwar period it was recognised that the TA could not carry out both roles simultaneously. Admittedly, the War Office, by emphasising its value to air raid precautions during the 'limited liability' period, sought to maintain priority for the TA at a time when military policy placed home defence first, and the needs of an expeditionary field army last. Yet as the threat of war increased, and alongside it the possibility of having to deploy the expeditionary force overseas, the ability to mobilise the TA became the key priority, and considerable efforts were made to extricate the TA from its subsidiary internal security and civil defence obligations. In this mission it was largely successful, although the deficiencies in other services meant that on the outbreak of war the Territorial Army still had to cover a range of internal security and home defence tasks. Although arguably necessary, these proved predictably deleterious to the preparation and training efficiency of those formations involved.

Chapter Nine.

Manpower, Efficiency and Readiness: The Role and Capability of the Territorial Anti-Aircraft Defences, 1919-1939.

Introduction

The effective use of airpower was just one of many advances in military science that emerged from the First World War, but it remained one of the most significant. Despite their largely improvised beginnings, by 1918 increasingly powerful aircraft were being designed, capable of carrying considerable payloads over ever-longer distances. Furthermore, alongside these technical developments evolved a new strategic doctrine that fully reflected the all-encompassing demands of modern 'Total War.' As had been hinted at by the German bombing raids of 1917/18 and the intentions behind the nascent Inter-Allied Independent Air Force, a future war between the great powers would find civilians as much in the firing line as uniformed combatants.

The mounting fear of the bomber had far-reaching consequences on both defence planning and government policy as a whole. As a number of historians have explained, throughout the interwar period the threat of air attack engendered a profound sense of anxiety, shared by the authorities and wider society alike.¹²⁸³ In consequence, between the World Wars home air defence was given a level of importance that has often been glossed over in studies of the Army.

Admittedly, for many decades a fully effective air defence system was believed to be simply unviable, and the idea that 'the bomber would always get through' became almost an axiom, at least until the development of Fighter Command in the late 1930s.¹²⁸⁴ Fortunately, more recent research has offered a valuable corrective to this, showing how Britain had developed a strategic air defence system well

¹²⁸³ U. Bialer, *The Shadow of the Bomber: the Fear of Air Attack and British Politics, 1932-1939*, (London, 1980); I. Patterson, *Guernica and Total War*, (London, 2007); R. Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain between the Wars*, (London, 2009) p.345; R. Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe 1939-1945* (London, 2013) Chap.1; S.R. Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz*, (Cambridge, 2012); M. Haapamaki, *The Coming of the Aerial War: Culture and the Fear of Airborne Attack in Inter-War Britain*, (London, 2014); B. Holman, *The Next War in the Air: Britain's Fear of the Bomber, 1908-1941*, (Farnham, 2014).

¹²⁸⁴ For a discussion on the historiography see J. Ferris, 'The Air Force Brats' View of History: recent writing and the Royal Air Force, 1918-1960,' *International History Review*, Vol.20 (1998) pp.119-143.

before the onset of rearmament.¹²⁸⁵ Nevertheless, there are still important aspects where very little information exists. While a great deal of focus has been given, for example, to the British approach to military doctrine, the development of armoured forces and the evolution of strategic defence policy, little research has been done on the Army's anti-aircraft role. Indeed, with the exception of Colin Dobinson's work on AA Command and the individual memoirs of certain individuals, notably Gen. Sir Frederick Pile, this role remains largely forgotten.¹²⁸⁶

This is a perplexing omission, particularly when the importance afforded to the Territorial Army's anti-aircraft function is taken into account. The First World War had shown how inter-service cooperation was the key to effective air defence, and the ground-based element remained a largely Territorial responsibility from the reconstitution until the outbreak of war.¹²⁸⁷ In fact, in its sheer size and priority of purpose the anti-aircraft role came to dominate the TA by the late 1930s.

This chapter thus intends to illustrate the importance of the Territorial Army's air defence role during the interwar period, but it will also question whether the Territorial organisation, as well as its system of training and recruitment, was capable of fulfilling its requirements. Addressed concurrently, the first area of study involves the manpower dimension, and whether or not the voluntary Territorial system could provide enough personnel to man the defences. The second is concerned with efficiency, and whether amateur Territorials could be relied upon to reach an adequate technical standard or were capable of training themselves sufficiently in the intricacies of anti-aircraft work.

Lastly there is the vital question of readiness, and whether an air defence system based on part-time manpower could mobilise with sufficient speed to defend against a surprise 'knock out blow.' With these issues addressed it will be possible to establish not only the details of the Territorials' role but

¹²⁸⁵ J. Ferris, 'Fighter Defence before Fighter Command: The Rise of Strategic Air Defence in Great Britain, 1917-1934', *Journal of Military History*, Vol.63 No.4 (Oct, 1999) pp.854-856; J. Ferris, 'Achieving Air Ascendancy: Challenge and Response in British Strategic Air Defence, 1915-40,' in S. Cox and P. Gray, (eds.) *Air Power History: Turning Points from Kitty Hawk to Kosovo*, (London, 2002) pp.21-50; J. Ferris, 'Airbandit: C3I and Strategic Air Defence during the First Battle of Britain, 1915-18' in M. Dockrill and D. French (eds.), *Strategy and Intelligence: British Policy during the First World War* (London, 1996); N.W. Routledge, *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery: Anti-Aircraft Artillery, 1914-55* (London, 1994) p.22.

¹²⁸⁶ C. Dobinson, *AA Command: Britain's Anti-Aircraft Defences of the Second World War*, (London, 2001); F. Pile, *Ack-Ack: Britain's Defence against Air Attack during the Second World War*, (London, 1949).

¹²⁸⁷ E.B. Ashmore, 'Anti-Aircraft Defence,' *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol.72 No.485 (Feb, 1927) p.3.

also whether it was capable of providing an effective anti-aircraft function, at least to a degree considered acceptable at the time.

* * *

The Territorial Role in Early Air Defence Planning, 1919-1922

By the Armistice the British Army had accrued a considerable amount of skill and experience in the air defence role. Nearly 20,000 men had been instructed in the techniques of anti-aircraft gunnery, and manning the London Air Defence Area had taught them how to operate a complex command, control, communication and intelligence system with considerable effect. However, with the rush to demobilise there was a genuine concern that this expertise would rapidly be lost. For example, the wartime commander of London's defences, E.B. Ashmore, was anxious to ensure that specialist knowledge was retained, as he considered an effective air defence system to now be a priority at least as important as maintaining a strong fleet.¹²⁸⁸ In pursuit of this aim he began lobbying the C-in-C Home Forces to retain some form of skeleton organisation from as early as 22 November 1918.

Fortunately for Ashmore, these concerns were shared by the Minister for War and Air, Winston Churchill, who in early 1919 convened the first of several committees tasked with keeping 'alive the intricate and specialised art of air defence.'¹²⁸⁹ With the organisational structure and surplus equipment already on hand, the main issue for them to decide was how a streamlined air defence organisation could be manned under peacetime conditions.

From the very beginning Territorial personnel were the obvious choice. The widespread Territorial footprint and the broad distribution of units were useful attributes when it came to manning a scattered organisation of defences at short notice. Brig.-Gen. Walter Kirke, who drafted the General Staff's appraisal of the new TA scheme, realised that only Territorials living near their war stations

¹²⁸⁸ E.B. Ashmore, *Air Defence*, (London, 1929) p.114.

¹²⁸⁹ N.W. Routledge, (1994) p.27; E.B. Ashmore, (1929) pp.108-113; C. Dobinson, (2001) p.62.

could provide for this, 'since we shall not be able to keep defences fully manned in peace time, and the danger of a "bolt-from-the-blue" must be regarded as a very real one.'¹²⁹⁰

Thus, when the War Office came to decide on the issue, it was agreed that the personnel to man the guns and lights must, 'for obvious reasons, be found from non-Regular sources such as the Territorial Force.' Envisaging a new organisation of Territorial Special Service units serving under flexible conditions of service, it was thought possible to fully man the air defences within at least 72 hours, which at the time was thought to go a long way towards nullifying the threat of a surprise attack.¹²⁹¹

Therefore, as early as 1919 the Territorial Army had been confirmed as the future manpower base for Britain's air defence structure, reflected in the first official post-war air defence plan, Scheme 'A'. This proposal envisaged retaining the entire wartime organisation, albeit reduced to cadre strength, so as to facilitate training in peace whilst also permitting considerable expansion in war. The plan envisaged no fewer than 15,800 Territorials, drawn from local AA units and Special Service Sections, quickly manning the defences in an emergency.¹²⁹² The importance attached to securing Territorials for this role was reflected in the plans to shape the organisation around proven TF recruiting areas, as the location of each AA Station was based entirely upon this consideration.¹²⁹³

However, without a clear threat to prepare against the scheme was inevitably deemed over-ambitious and prohibitively expensive. The Army Council decided that an aerial attack should not be anticipated for at least ten years, in accordance with the Cabinet's August 1919 principles. In the meantime it was considered better value to direct the limited funding available towards research and experimentation, which led to another proposal, Scheme 'B', being put forward which retained the wartime framework but at a much lower establishment, none of which was to be drawn from

¹²⁹⁰ TNA WO 32/11246 Memorandum by D.DMO, 12 March 1919.

¹²⁹¹ TNA WO 32/3119 'Notes on Conference,' 14 Oct 1919.

¹²⁹² Ibid. DCIGS to CAS and CGS, GHQ Great Britain, 9 Oct 1919; also Scheme 'A': Interim Post War AA Scheme for Defence of Great Britain, 13 Oct 1919.

¹²⁹³ Ibid. Report by MO.4, 2 June 1919.

Territorial personnel.¹²⁹⁴ This effectively placed the whole defence organisation in suspended animation.¹²⁹⁵

As a result, the so-called ‘ten year rule’ has commonly been cited as being responsible for killing the scheme.¹²⁹⁶ However, of at least equal significance for its failure was the delay in the Territorial organisation’s own reconstitution.¹²⁹⁷ Equipment at this stage raised no issues, but raising over 15,000 Territorials was identified as a major undertaking.¹²⁹⁸ After all, this envisaged building up a force larger than that defending London in February 1918, a task few would have considered possible in peace.¹²⁹⁹

From the start, therefore, sourcing sufficient manpower was the greatest challenge, especially as there had been no distinct air defence tradition in the pre-war TF. This meant there was no pre-existing footprint of anti-aircraft units, and so the required personnel would thus have to be recruited anew and in parallel with the re-forming Territorial Army. The prospects for doing so were limited, as Associations never showed much interest in anti-aircraft units before the late 1930s and until that time were more interested in getting their pre-war units up to strength.¹³⁰⁰ It was also considered in some quarters wasteful to enlist 15,000 young Territorials in a role that could be discharged by older reservists or volunteers, and it was even suggested that the number of anti-aircraft stations would be criticised as excessive.¹³⁰¹

Ultimately there was little inclination at this stage, given the Army’s many domestic and foreign commitments, to divert effort and resources away from the Regular Army, and the CIGS, Henry Wilson, whilst agreeing that Territorials were well suited to home air defence duties, only wanted to

¹²⁹⁴ Ibid. Scheme ‘B’, 13 Oct 1919. This envisaged 80 officers and 579 men, all Regular.

¹²⁹⁵ Cited in C. Dobinson, (2001) p.64.

¹²⁹⁶ C. Dobinson (2001) p.63; H. Montgomery Hyde, *British Air Policy between the Wars, 1918-1939*, (London, 1976) p.59.

¹²⁹⁷ TNA WO 32/3119 Notes on Conference considering requirements of AA Defence of Great Britain, 14 Oct 1919.

¹²⁹⁸ TNA WO 32/5286 MO.4 to DMO, 18 Aug 1920.

¹²⁹⁹ T.D. Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare: the Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1914-1945*, (Princeton, N.J., 2002) p.73. These figure were later lowered to some 12,000; see TNA WO 32/3122 ‘Conference on Immediate Policy for Air Defence Units, TA,’ 12 May 1921.

¹³⁰⁰ TNA WO 32/2687 Salt to Thwaites, 15 Feb 1933.

¹³⁰¹ TNA WO 32/2681 Comments by Geddes, Kellaway and Williamson, 9 Jan 1920.

establish a narrow anti-aircraft cadre.¹³⁰² The end result was that the initial 1919 air defence scheme remained a largely paper exercise. Although some effort was made to bring together a formed body of Regular anti-aircraft troops at Aldershot, no new Territorial AA units were raised and attempts to move the scheme forward came to nothing. For example, by early 1920 the committee tasked with reviewing the Army's future organisation had established three Air Defence Divisions, two TA and one Regular, as the ultimate aim. However, when asked what progress had been made in their formation the DRO, Maj.-Gen. Ivo Vesey, had to confess that no arrangements had yet been made to prepare anti-aircraft units for the TA, and furthermore there were no plans to do so until the following year.¹³⁰³

The issue lay in abeyance until January 1921, when the General Staff belatedly authorised the formation of the two Territorial Air Defence Divisions. Although established at a strength of 864 officers and 10,816 men each, the intention was to only recruit fifty per cent of these totals, at a very gradual rate, as this was considered to be the smallest basis for any future expansion. In the meantime they were intended purely as administrative formations, without equipment and with only a skeleton staff of some two hundred Regular personnel and a mere four Territorial officers as attachments.

By this point in time, however, the pressure to cut expenditure over-ruled all other considerations. Therefore, despite being earmarked for inclusion as an 'essential service' in the 1921/22 estimates, the War Office was never given the fiscal and formal authority to authorise recruiting for any Territorial formations.¹³⁰⁴ Furthermore, at this stage air defence was an area where defence spending could be cut with little apparent risk.¹³⁰⁵ As a result the TA found its anti-aircraft commitment further down

¹³⁰² Ibid. CIGS to AG, QMG and MGO, 8 Jan 1920; Comment by CIGS, 9 Jan 1920; WO 32/3120 Notes on Conference, 23 Feb 1920.

¹³⁰³ TNA WO 32/5286 DO to AG, 25 June 1920; See also WO 32/3122 Notes on Conference, 12 May 1921.

¹³⁰⁴ TNA WO 32/3122 MO.4 to DMO, 12 Sept 1921; WO 32/3121 Notes on General Staff Conference on AA proposals, 13 Jan 1921.

¹³⁰⁵ TNA WO 32/11257 'Committee on Reduction of Expenditure upon the Territorial Force,' 21 Sept 1921; WO 163/26 Army Council Précis No.1083 'Reduction of Expenditure on the Territorial Army,' 10 Oct 1921. The title of Air Defence Division was later changed to Air Defence Group, as the former term was considered to be misleading. See CAB 27/164 GRC (DD) 8th Meeting, 27 Jan 1922; WO 32/11271 DGTA to CIGS, 5 July 1922.

scaled, reducing the number of formations to be raised to only two Air Defence Brigades, instead of the eight accepted previously.¹³⁰⁶

By 1922, therefore, the initial post-war air defence plans remained unimplemented. That being said, it remains important to note that neither the General Staff nor the Government were averse to the idea of formalising the Territorial Army's air defence responsibility. Even the 'Geddes Committee' clearly identified the future importance of the air defence role in justifying investment in the Territorial Army:

Aerial attack must be one of the principal considerations of the future, and we suggest that the Territorial Force, in so far as it is cast for the defence of these Islands, cannot be considered without considering at the same time the problem of defence against aerial attack.¹³⁰⁷

Despite being highly critical of expenditure on the TA in general, the General Staff agreed that an anti-aircraft role was 'a logical development of the duties to be undertaken by a force originally constituted for Home Defence.' They knew air defence depended on the effective integration of air and ground elements, and if the Territorial Army could provide for this role they would then offer a valuable and relevant function, which the General Staff admitted would justify a much higher level of expenditure, even if this came at the expense of the Territorial field army.¹³⁰⁸ As such the principle of utilising the TA organisation and Territorial personnel in an anti-aircraft role still remained valid, and indeed would be integral to any future air defence scheme.

* * *

Countering the 'Continental Air Menace:' Money and Manpower, 1922-1925

Although a relatively offhand outlook towards air defence was excusable during the immediate post-war years, such an approach was nevertheless an inappropriate foundation on which to base future planning. This became especially apparent once anxieties over the numerical disparity between the

¹³⁰⁶ TNA WO 32/11306 'Future Military Expenditure: Part V,' 9 Aug 1921; WO 163/26 Army Council 286th Meeting, 3 Nov 1921.

¹³⁰⁷ TNA CAB 24/131 CP.3570 Interim Report of Committee on National Expenditure, 14 Dec 1921.

¹³⁰⁸ TNA CAB 24/132 CP.3619 'The Interim Report of the Committee on National Expenditure: Paper by the General Staff,' 10 Jan 1922.

RAF and the French Air Force (the so-called 'Continental Air Menace,') put home defence squarely back on the policy agenda.¹³⁰⁹

Although the subsequent Home Defence Air Force (HDAF) scheme focused principally on the RAF's successive 23 and 53-squadron programmes, planning also envisaged a considerable expansion in the ground-based organisation. In February 1923 a joint-service committee, chaired by the D.DMO&I, Col. W.H. Bartholomew, and the D.CAS, Air Cdre J.M. Steel, formulated a new scheme, based on London's 1918 defence layout, that required the War Office to man an Inner Artillery Zone (IAZ), provide illumination for a fifteen-mile deep Aircraft Fighting Zone (AFZ), and maintain a further belt of guns to cover an Outer Artillery Zone (OAZ) and various ports. The 'Steel-Bartholomew' plan, as it became known, required the enlistment of no fewer than 22,000 Territorials, operating a total of 264 guns and 672 searchlights scattered across the whole layout.¹³¹⁰ The intention was to organise this manpower near their war stations in thirteen Territorial Anti-Aircraft Brigades, seven Searchlight Battalions, and seven Anti-Aircraft Signal Companies, all to be established at full strength.

Similar to the initial post-war preparations, the Steel-Bartholomew plan was another ambitious scheme that depended for its success on the liberal availability of funding and manpower. Yet with defence cuts still a government priority the General Staff struggled to find the £550,000 needed to set up the scheme without either abolishing existing Territorial formations or reducing them to cadres and persuading their men to transfer into anti-aircraft units.¹³¹¹ Only by protesting that the Steel-

¹³⁰⁹ J. Ferris, 'The Theory of a "French air menace," Anglo-French relations and the Home Defence Air Force programmes of 1921-25', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.10 No.1 (1987) pp.62-83; J. Gooch, (1981) p.18; H. Hall, 'British air defense and Anglo-French relations, 1921-1924' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.4 No.3, (1981) p.272. For the opposing view from France, see J.F.V. Keiger, 'Perfidious Albion?' French perception of Britain as an Ally after the First World War,' in M. Alexander, (ed.) *Knowing your Friends: Intelligence inside Alliances and Coalitions from 1914 to the Cold War*, (London, 1998) pp.37-50; I. Rose, *Conservatism and Foreign Policy during the Lloyd George Coalition, 1918-1922*, (London, 1999) pp.140-141, 228-253; A. Barros, 'Razing Babel and the Problems of Constructing Peace: France, Great Britain, and Air Power. 1916-28,' *English Historical Review*, Vol.CXXVI No.518 (2011) pp.107-108; TNA CAB 53/1 COS 6th Meeting, 8 Jan 1924 and 7th Meeting, 17 Jan 1924; CAB 2/3, CID 150th Meeting, 23 Nov 1921; J. Ferris, (1987) pp.71-72; B. Holman, *The Next War in the Air: Civilian Fears of Strategic Bombardment in Britain, 1908-1941* (University of Melbourne Ph.D thesis, 2009) pp.49-68, 291; P.R.C. Groves, *Our Future in the Air: A Survey of the Vital Question of British Air Power* (London, 1922); *Hansard*, HC Deb 11 March 1924 vol.170 c.2233.

¹³¹⁰ TNA CAB 3/4 CID 118-A Report of the Joint Air Ministry and War Office Committee on Anti-Aircraft Defence, Feb 1923; see also AIR 8/61 Home Air Defence: Steel-Bartholomew Committee Report, Feb 1923; AIR 8/61. Appendix V.

¹³¹¹ TNA WO 32/11271 DGTA to CIGS, 5 July 1923; DGTA to U.S. of S., 10 Nov 1923; DSD to DGTA, 2 Aug 1923; DSD to CIGS, 12 Nov 1923.

Bartholomew plan would necessitate the scrapping of four Territorial divisions could the Army Council managed to convince the CID to transfer the costs to the Treasury.¹³¹²

Yet, even taking into account the domestic pressure to economise, attracting enough volunteers was still the greatest problem. The 'minimum limits compatible with reasonable security,' still involved 19,000 more troops than had previously been authorised, and a further increase was needed following the expansion of the defences further east and west.¹³¹³

Given the limited response to recruitment appeals in general, there was little confidence that the Territorial Army would be able to meet these additional requirements. As such, the Steel-Bartholomew Committee only anticipated that forty per cent of the ground defences would be ready by April 1925.¹³¹⁴ The expansion aim for the TA was thereafter downscaled to only forming one additional brigade, whilst efforts were focused on bringing existing units up to strength.¹³¹⁵ Yet even this smaller objective proved difficult to achieve. When Ashmore took over the two existing Air Defence Brigades he found that recruiting for them had all but collapsed.¹³¹⁶ This was reflected in the fact that by the end of 1923 their combined strength in London came to only 75 officers and 673 men, out of an establishment of 234 and 2,969 respectively.¹³¹⁷ As a result it was officially recognised that the Territorial Air Defence units were incapable of undertaking their duties on mobilisation.¹³¹⁸

For the most part the recruiting problem stemmed from a much broader apathy towards voluntary military service following the First World War, but it remains true that the War Office struggled to find a way of attracting recruits towards the air defence role. There were few incentives to join anti-aircraft units and only limited training opportunities once a man was enlisted. Furthermore, those

¹³¹² Ibid. DGTA to U.S. of S., 10 Nov 1923; DSD to CIGS, 12 Nov 1923; Minute by Harington, 25 Nov 1923; WO 32/11271 DSD (for CIGS) to DGTA, 2 Aug 1923; WO 163/28 Army Council Précis No.1156 and 326th Meeting, 19 Dec 1923; WO 32/11271 Creedy to Secretary of the Treasury, 16 Jan 1924; CID 179th Meeting, 14 Jan 1924.

¹³¹³ *Hansard*, HC Deb 13 March 1924 vol.170 c.2617; TNA WO 32/11271 DSD (for CIGS) to DGTA, 2 Aug 1923; WO 32/11271 Romer to Birch, 2 Aug 1923.

¹³¹⁴ TNA AIR 8/61 Home Air Defence: Steel-Bartholomew Committee Report, Feb 1923.

¹³¹⁵ These were numbered in sequence the 51st to 54th AA Brigades, RA and the 26th and 27th AA Searchlight Groups, RE. In 1925 a further brigade (the 55th) was raised in Kent, alongside four more AA Searchlight Groups (27th–30th) in London and the Home Counties. See N. Routledge, (1994) pp.40–41.

¹³¹⁶ E.B Ashmore, (1929) p.132.

¹³¹⁷ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.2272 General Annual Report of the British Army for the year 1923.

¹³¹⁸ TNA AIR 8/61 Romer Committee Report, 16 May 1924 and 4th Meeting, 20 Feb 1924.

inclined towards part-time military service were more likely to join one of the longer-standing, better equipped and more prestigious field army units.¹³¹⁹ Efforts were made to promote the anti-aircraft role, and in 1925 a seven-day recruiting campaign was organised in London, with the aim of attracting at least 1,500 volunteers.¹³²⁰ Despite showing initial promise, however, this campaign largely failed, there still being a deficiency of 60 officers and 1,415 other ranks by the end of the year.¹³²¹

Admittedly some technical units, notably the Royal Corps of Signals and the Tyne Electrical Engineers, consistently recruited at a high level, although they did have considerably smaller manpower requirements.¹³²² Units that managed to foster a specific identity also did well, such as those in the 53rd Brigade, which were all connected to professions in the City of London.¹³²³ The 159th (Lloyd's, City of London) AA Battery, RA (TA), for example, had been allowed to include the insurers name in its designation precisely to encourage larger organisations to 'adopt' new units.¹³²⁴

Despite the isolated success of a few units, however, overall strengths remained consistently low. The absence of a clear purpose and the lack of investment in accommodation, training facilities and social amenities ensured that recruiting for air defence units had largely come to a standstill by 1926.¹³²⁵ As a result, with little prospect of successful implementation, the Government and Treasury both turned against the HDAF programme and sought to improve Anglo-French relations through more diplomatic means.¹³²⁶ After the CID accepted that a broad deceleration of the 'Steel-Bartholomew' scheme was both politically and financially appropriate, the subsequent Cabinet decision to postpone its completion until 1935 was hardly a surprise.¹³²⁷

¹³¹⁹ F. Pile, (1949) p.53; C. Dobinson (2001) pp.71-72; *Hansard*, HC Deb 15 March 1926 vol.193 c.83.

¹³²⁰ *The Times*, 27 April 1925; 'Anti-Aircraft Recruiting,' *Flight*, 30 April 1925.

¹³²¹ *Parl. Papers*, Cmd.2582 General Annual Report of the British Army for the year 1925.

¹³²² Extracted from 'Regimental Establishments and Strengths of the Territorial Army' in successive Army Estimates for the years 1921-1939.

¹³²³ 'Anti-Aircraft Recruiting,' *Flight*, 30 April 1925, p.253; 'Editorial,' *Flight*, 16 Aug 1923 p.488.

¹³²⁴ *Hansard*, HC Deb 15 March 1923 vol.161 c.1839 After forming in 1923 the Battery had reached full strength and established a waiting list within ten days; TNA WO 163/31 Army Council Précis No.1127: 'Designation of 162nd (City of London) AA Battery, RA (TA),' 1925; WO 163/31 Army Council 349th Meeting, 21 Dec 1925; 'Anti-Aircraft Recruiting,' *Flight*, 30 April 1925, p.253; 'Editorial,' *Flight*, 16 Aug 1923 p.488.

¹³²⁵ E.B. Ashmore, (1927) p.5; E.B. Ashmore, (1929) p.132; TNA WO 32/2685 'Reasons for Retaining Putney for 53rd and 54th AA Brigades, RA'. n.d. but c.Dec 1926.

¹³²⁶ J. Ferris, (1987) p.75; TNA T 161/241 Minute by Barstow, 1 Dec 1924.

¹³²⁷ TNA CAB 2/4 CID 203rd Meeting, 15 Oct 1925; CAB 23/51 Cabinet Meeting, 3 Dec 1925; N. Young, 'British Home Air Defence Planning in the 1920s', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.11 No.4, (1988) p.499; H. Hall (1981) pp.280-281.

Cadreisation: Substituting Efficiency for Readiness, 1926-1933

The decision to suspend implementation of the ‘Steel-Bartholomew’ plan also signalled a shift in the function Territorial anti-aircraft units had to perform.¹³²⁸ Although the CIGS, George Milne, was keen to make the TA entirely responsible for all aspects of home defence (primarily in order to release Regular troops for imperial duties) he was reluctant to invest any further in anti-aircraft units, particularly if it came at the expense of other arms.¹³²⁹ Accordingly, in April 1926 the Chiefs of Staff agreed to delay the provision of anti-aircraft equipment, submitting that only items essential for training purposes were required.¹³³⁰ With the Chiefs regarding postponement as both ‘safe and wise,’ Milne was perfectly content to reduce the TA Air Defence formation to little more than a training cadre.¹³³¹ Accordingly, and in line with other economy-minded reductions to the TA, he authorised a thirty-three per cent cut in their establishments.¹³³² Thenceforth units could only enlist sufficient personnel to man a fraction of their war scales of equipment, which meant that each would have to absorb and train a significant proportion of its men on embodiment.¹³³³

This represented a fundamental change in how the function of the Territorial anti-aircraft organisation was perceived. Until this point the intention had been to gradually build up a viable air defence structure, the efficacy of which was predicated on units being able to reach their war stations, with a full complement of personnel and equipment, within twenty-four hours of being called out.¹³³⁴ To accelerate readiness new conditions of service had been promulgated in 1923, whereby anti-aircraft Territorials were now liable to be called out by the War Secretary via an Order in Council, rather than having to wait for Parliamentary assent.¹³³⁵ In order to man the defences as soon as possible units had also previously been authorised to recruit up to their war strengths in peace. The decision to now

¹³²⁸ TNA WO 163/32 Army Council 353rd Meeting, 4 Nov 1926.

¹³²⁹ TNA CAB 53/1 COS 30th Meeting, 27 May 1926. See also COS ‘Review of Imperial Defence for 1926.’

¹³³⁰ *Ibid.* COS 28th Meeting, 22 April 1926.

¹³³¹ TNA WO 32/2685 Extract from COS Review of Imperial Defence 1926.

¹³³² E.B. Ashmore, (1929) p.133.

¹³³³ Each artillery battery was only authorised to man two guns per four-gun station, and a searchlight company sixteen of its twenty-four lights. TNA WO 32/2685 CIGS to P.U.S. of S., 5 Nov 1926; WO 32/2687 Appendix B: ‘Necessity for maintaining units of Territorial Army Air Defence Formations up to full establishment.’

¹³³⁴ TNA WO 32/11271 DSD to DGTA, 2 Aug 1923.

¹³³⁵ *The Times*, 15 Feb 1923.

move the Territorial air defence formations on to a cadre footing thus ensured this level of readiness was unattainable, a fact that greatly concerned those who took air defence seriously.¹³³⁶

Nevertheless, with voluntary recruitment failing to provide the manpower and without a clear threat on the horizon, the risks of cadreisation were within tolerable limits. To be effective, however, the policy required air defence units to re-model themselves into a specialist training organisation capable of substantial expansion. Yet as recruitment and retention figures continued to drop these formations struggled to meet even the reduced establishments. By 1927 the total strength of TA Air Defence Troops was little over half of its establishment, and afterwards continued to decline steadily until the late 1930s, with there being never more than 3,500 Territorials involved at any one time in anti-aircraft work until 1936.¹³³⁷ This severely limited the organisation's ability to expand and had a knock-on effect on the efficacy of its training, as in some cases units in the 1920s went to camp so under-strength that crew training was impossible to carry out.¹³³⁸

Even if numbers were low, the cadre system may still have worked as long as the technical skill of individual Territorials remained high. The War Office was certainly keen to ensure the Territorial air defence brigades attracted their fair share of capable men.¹³³⁹ For instance, by July 1924 a joint War Office/Air Ministry committee had introduced a ruling to ensure competition with the Auxiliary Air Force did not empty the recruiting grounds for Territorial specialists, especially in the industrial areas around London and the North-East.¹³⁴⁰

¹³³⁶ W.F. MacNeese, 'Certain Aspects of Air Defence', *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol.71 (1926) p.96; E.B. Ashmore, (1927); Col. H.W. Hill, 'Air Defence', *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, Vol.75 (1930) pp.115-116.

¹³³⁷ Figures extracted from General Annual Reports 1924-25 (Cmd.2342, Cmd.2582, Cmd.2806) and from 'Regimental Establishments and Strengths of the Territorial Army' in successive Army Estimates for the years 1921-1939. Such statistics can be misleading. For example, although the establishment total for Air Defence Troops, RA and RE was officially 7,670 all ranks (including permanent staff) until 1935, as described above, recruiting had been capped to a maximum of 4,532. Therefore, although AA troops were at 44.4 per cent of their peacetime establishment in 1930, they were also at 71 per cent of their permissible total.

¹³³⁸ F. Pile, (1949) p.53.

¹³³⁹ For example, see Duff Cooper's statement in HC Deb 15 March 1934 vol. 287 cc.589-664; F. Pile (1949) p.54; E.B. Ashmore, (1929) p.132; 'Editorial,' *Flight*, 16 Aug 1923 p.488.

¹³⁴⁰ TNA WO 163/26 Army Council Précis No.1156 'The Formation of Additional Anti-Aircraft Units', 1923; WO 33/1052 Interim report of Inter-departmental Committee on recruiting personnel for TA Anti-Aircraft Units and Auxiliary Air Force Squadrons, 8 July 1924.

Moreover, attracting these specialists became increasingly important as anti-aircraft equipment became progressively more complex.¹³⁴¹ For example, operating the new 1927 Vickers Predictor No.1 required specialist training but, once mastered, even amateur Territorials could achieve notable successes with it.¹³⁴² In figures accrued largely from TA training camps the percentage of rounds bursting near a target using deflection sights was 19.1 in 1928 and 27.7 in 1929: in contrast, the same results when utilising the Predictor No.1 were 40.9 and 42.8.¹³⁴³

Nevertheless, the overall standard during the 1920s remained low. The official allocation of anti-aircraft equipment to Territorial units was recognised as insufficient, due mainly to a very narrow procurement policy and the fact that Regular AA troops had priority for modernisation.¹³⁴⁴ This led to Territorial units reportedly having to procure their own training supplies from private sources.¹³⁴⁵

The paucity of modern equipment was also exacerbated by the lack of instructional facilities available in the UK and the dispersed, low-intensity manner in which Territorial training was undertaken. As Ashmore recognised, the level of training obtainable under ordinary Territorial Army conditions made it impossible for anti-aircraft crews to reach a high level of efficiency.¹³⁴⁶ Although most of the air defence infrastructure benefitted from taking part in the yearly Air Defence Great Britain (ADGB) Air Exercises, these often failed to include the Territorial Air Defence troops. For example, during the 1926 exercises the Regular 1st AA Searchlight Battalion lit the AFZ for the RAF, instead of the Territorial RE units nominally responsible.¹³⁴⁷ Neither were there enough units to make joint training realistic, as although all available searchlight troops were brought in for the 1928 exercises they still only managed to illuminate three sectors, and without communication links to sector headquarters

¹³⁴¹ TNA CAB 2/5 CID 234th Meeting, 29 March 1928; CAB 4/17 CID Paper No.866-B; CAB 16/67 CID (ARC.34) War Office Progress Report on AA Gunnery Equipment, 26 Apr 1926.

¹³⁴² E.B. Ashmore, (1929) p.142.

¹³⁴³ TNA WO 231/215 Memorandum on Army Training: Collective Training Period 1929; C. Dobinson, (2001) p.73.

¹³⁴⁴ N. Routledge, (1994) p.43.

¹³⁴⁵ F. Pile, (1949) p.55.

¹³⁴⁶ E.B. Ashmore, (1929) p.135.

¹³⁴⁷ TNA AIR 16/313 AOCinC, ADGB to AM, 29 Feb 1928.

they were incapable of reporting aircraft movements, and in any case their height-finding and sound locating calculations were found to be far from accurate.¹³⁴⁸

Although searchlight crews may have had some limited training opportunities during ADGB exercises, the anti-aircraft gunners were rarely involved and were sent instead to the single AA gunnery training camp at Watchet. This resulted in batteries mainly undertaking poorly-conducted technical training and they were only permitted to practice live firing on alternate years, targeting rather unrealistic ‘sleeve’ targets towed slowly along undeviating straight lines.¹³⁴⁹ Even with this measure of assistance, results could be disappointing. On one range in 1926 2,935 rounds were expended at a target flying on a known course, speed and height, but only two hits were registered.¹³⁵⁰

These factors meant that by the end of the 1920s the role of anti-aircraft defence in the TA was fast stagnating. Recruitment and retention were both disappointing. By 1928 the combination of every existing AA unit was still only sufficient to man two out of the ten defence sectors, and in 1932 they had only one-third of the total numbers they needed in war.¹³⁵¹ There was little confidence in Territorial efficiency and morale was depressingly low, leading to a steady decline in recruitment and retention.¹³⁵² This led by the end of 1932 to the thirteen Territorial Anti-Aircraft Batteries still being 335 men under their peace strength, and 994 under their full war establishment. The nineteen Searchlight Companies were even worse off, having only 1,869 men out of a peace establishment of 3,349, which represented little more than a third of their war establishment of 4,976.¹³⁵³

Most of these problems stemmed from the fact that there was little general interest, or indeed confidence, in air defence at the time, a state of affairs the authorities actually contributed to, as the new commander of the TA Air Defence Formations, Maj.-Gen. H.F. Salt, was well aware. His solution lay in convincing the public of the danger of air attack, and he intended to do so through a

¹³⁴⁸ F. Pile, (1949) p.55.

¹³⁴⁹ TNA WO 32/3128 Notes on meeting of the Salt Committee, 6 Sept 1934; C. Dobinson, (2001) pp.74-79.

¹³⁵⁰ F. Pile, (1949) p.55.

¹³⁵¹ B. Collier, *The Defence of the United Kingdom*, (London, 1957) pp.19-20.

¹³⁵² C. Dobinson, (2001) p.79.

¹³⁵³ TNA WO 32/2687 Appendix B: ‘Necessity for maintaining units of Territorial Army Air Defence Formations up to full establishment.’

graphic publicity campaign that left no-one in doubt of its importance.¹³⁵⁴ However, Salt was denied the authority to do so, as such a campaign contravened government policy which stipulated that such efforts might be misconstrued as aggressive and promote distrust at a time when disarmament was still the priority.¹³⁵⁵ For these reasons Salt was instructed to limit himself to only promoting the military value of Territorial anti-aircraft units to home defence in general terms.¹³⁵⁶

These instructions reflected the fact that most politicians and the majority of the population at the time saw general air disarmament or the deterrent value of counter-bombing as the answer to the 'knock-out blow'.¹³⁵⁷ Anti-aircraft guns offered little real protection. As Labour MP Josiah Wedgwood put it:

You can no more hit an aeroplane travelling at ... speed than you can hit a shell, and you might just as well try to defend London by trying to hit shells dropping on London, as try to defend London ... by firing shells from anti-aircraft guns at the new projectile. You have there to meet an entirely new situation.¹³⁵⁸

However, popular anxiety over the threat of air attack soon began to change.¹³⁵⁹ By the mid 1930s Germany had left the Geneva disarmament conference, and it was considered only a matter of time before Hitler re-established an air force.¹³⁶⁰ Faced also with an increasingly bellicose Japan in the Far East, Britain's foreign and defence policy now shifted from the pursuit of disarmament to a serious assessment of the Service's deficiencies and, ultimately, to rearming if necessary.¹³⁶¹ Air defence now became a key priority for the government, and central to this was the Territorial Army's anti-aircraft role.

¹³⁵⁴ TNA WO 32/2687 Salt to Thwaites, 15 Feb 1933; H.W. Hill, (1930) p.115.

¹³⁵⁵ T. O'Brien, *Civil Defence*, (London, 1955) p.18; CAB 3/4 CID Paper No.134-A Protection of Civil Population against Gas Attack, May 1925; CAB 2/5 CID 199th Meeting, 14 July 1927; CID 143rd Meeting, 27 June 1929; CID 252nd Meeting, 19 March 1931; CAB 3/5 CID 189-A 'ARP Publicity', 13 October 1932; CID 257th Meeting, 8 Nov 1932.

¹³⁵⁶ TNA WO 32/2687 DMO&I to U.S. of S., 24 Feb 1933; U.S. of S. to DGTA, 24 Feb 1933.

¹³⁵⁷ B. Holman, 'The Air Panic of 1935: British Press Opinion between Disarmament and Rearmament,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.46 No.2 (2011) p.297; U. Bialer, (1980) pp.7-127; For public opinion on the abolition of bombing and internationalization of civil aviation see P. Kyba, *Covenants without the Sword: Public Opinion and British Defence Policy, 1931-1935*, (Waterloo, Ontario, 1983) pp.75-111; P. Meilinger, 'Clipping the Bomber's Wings: The Geneva Disarmament Conference and the Royal Air Force, 1932-1934', *War in History*, Vol.6 No.3 (1999) pp.306-330; For the issue of deterrence see R.J. Overy, 'Air power and the origins of deterrence theory before 1939,' *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.15 No.1 (1992) pp.73-101.

¹³⁵⁸ *Hansard*, HC Deb 8 March 1934 Vol.286 c.2080.

¹³⁵⁹ U. Bialer, (1980) p.40.

¹³⁶⁰ C. Kitching, *Britain and the Problem of International Disarmament, 1919-1934*, (London, 1999) pp.136-173; B. Holman, (2011) p.294.

¹³⁶¹ N. Gibbs, *Grand Strategy, Vol. 1: Rearmament Policy*, (London, 1976) pp.xx-xxi; B.J.C. McKercher, 'From Disarmament to Rearmament: British Civil-Military Relations and Policy Making, 1933-1934,' *Defence Studies*, Vol.1 No.1, (2001) pp.21-48.

Prioritising Air Defence, 1934-1936

In November 1933 the responsibility for identifying the worst of these deficiencies and suggesting possible remedies fell upon the Defence Requirements Committee (DRC).¹³⁶² Despite the DRC's attempts to argue in favour of a balanced rearmament programme, Chamberlain's advocacy for an air deterrent and protection against the 'knock-out blow,' when combined with his authority as Chancellor of the Exchequer, ensured that home defence measures had precedence.¹³⁶³ As a consequence the mid 1930s witnessed a renewed prioritisation for air defence, manifesting itself largely in a re-focused effort to increase the strength of the Territorial anti-aircraft units. The DRC report recommended re-implementing the full Steel-Bartholomew/Romer scheme, accelerating its completion and maintaining it at higher readiness with their war scales of equipment. As a result the TA was now required to maintain a total force of some thirty-three batteries and twenty-seven searchlight companies, which necessitated a complete overhaul of its existing organisation.¹³⁶⁴

It had been hoped that the reorganisation of anti-aircraft units into training cadres would quickly facilitate an effective expansion, but this proved doubtful, especially after a damning appraisal of the 1933 training season. Territorials were recorded as being inefficient in most regards, having achieved poor shooting averages and shown only a limited aptitude with range-finders and predictors.

Furthermore, any scope for future improvements was severely curtailed, as training opportunities and even obsolescent equipment were in short supply, and the absence of a senior figure accountable for anti-aircraft defence in the War Office had contributed to training progress slowing to a halt.¹³⁶⁵

The CIGS and the Director of Staff Duties, Maj.-Gen. Cecil Heywood, were so alarmed by these reports that they immediately sanctioned a complete review of the organisation, equipment and training of the Territorial anti-aircraft units.¹³⁶⁶ Chaired by the commander of the TA Air Defence

¹³⁶² TNA CAB 16/109 CID Defence Requirements Sub-Committee Report, 28 Feb 1934.

¹³⁶³ K. Neilson, 'The Defence Requirements Sub-Committee, British Strategic Foreign Policy, Neville Chamberlain and the Path to Appeasement,' *English Historical Review*, Vol.118 No.477 (2003) pp.676-678; W. Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933-1939*, (London, 1985) pp.35-51.

¹³⁶⁴ TNA CAB 16/109 DRC Report, 28 Feb 1934.

¹³⁶⁵ TNA WO 32/3129 DSD to CIGS, 22 May 1934; see also F. Pile, (1949) p.61.

¹³⁶⁶ Ibid. CIGS to DSD, 25 May 1934.

Formations, Maj.-Gen. H.F. Salt, the resultant committee took its remit seriously, producing no fewer than thirteen interim reports ranging widely over every facet of anti-aircraft work.¹³⁶⁷ Finding issues in most areas, Salt stressed the importance of overhauling the training programme, especially for technical personnel and instrument specialists, and pushed for a much greater allocation of Regular assistance. Therefore, he argued for the expansion in the Regular anti-aircraft establishment at home, to provide at least another brigade to assist the TA.¹³⁶⁸

Salt's committee identified many of the most pressing problems with the Territorials and offered a number of positive recommendations. However, by 1935 air defence policy was developing so fast that the Army Council could not even begin considering a programme of reform, as they now had to oversee a much larger expansion programme than previously contemplated.¹³⁶⁹ As a result of the emergence of Germany as a strategic threat and the risk of a possible attack from across the Low Countries and the North Sea the existing air defence schemes, facing across the Channel, had to be reorientated and significantly enlarged.¹³⁷⁰ The committee considering this, named after its chairman, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, concluded that, although London remained the main target, the range of modern bombers meant that the industrial North and the Midlands also had to be defended. This significantly extended the existing Steel-Bartholomew/Romer organisation to form a continuous defence zone running from the Solent, curving east around London and ending on the River Tees. Furthermore, the speed of modern aircraft meant that the AFZ and the OAZ would have to be increased to a depth of twenty miles, both of which needed the allocation of extra searchlights to illuminate them.¹³⁷¹ In addition, the manufacturing centres of Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham were all designated 'gun defended areas,' and so also required their own local defences.

Thereafter the TA had to undergo a large-scale expansion programme that only offered to stretch resources and lower standards even further. The enlarged Brooke-Popham scheme called for no fewer

¹³⁶⁷ Ibid. Salt Committee.

¹³⁶⁸ Ibid. Salt Committee 1st Meeting, 6 Sept 1934; 5th Meeting, 23 Oct 1934; Salt Committee Report, 14 Jan 1935.

¹³⁶⁹ Ibid. DMO and I to DSD and AUS, 13 Nov 1935.

¹³⁷⁰ TNA CAB 12/3 HDC 21st Meeting, 4 Aug 1934.

¹³⁷¹ TNA CAB 3/6 HDC Interim Report by the Sub-Committee on Reorientation of the Air Defence of Great Britain, 31 Jan 1935.

than fifty-seven AA batteries and ninety searchlight companies, totalling some 43,500 Territorials. Fortunately, and reflecting the fact that the cost of the complete scheme would be prohibitive, implementation was to be gradual in accordance with a three-stage programme, with the first phase set to be completed by March 1940. This entailed raising a total of seventeen AA batteries and forty-two searchlight companies to full readiness first of all.

Unfortunately, however, the War Office had no clear plan to achieve even these manpower figures. Both the Secretary of State and the CIGS were initially against the wholesale conversion of existing field units, as this would 'practically destroy the Territorial Army as it at present existed.'¹³⁷² Moreover, the TA was so under-strength in any case that further reductions would have serious repercussions on its ability to reinforce the expeditionary force.¹³⁷³ In addition, Montgomery-Massingberd argued, by weakening the Army's ability to intervene on the continent (and thus surrendering the Low Countries) they would actually be putting the country in greater danger of a concentrated air attack.¹³⁷⁴

Therefore, although the Chiefs of Staff and the Cabinet both supported the Brooke-Popham scheme in principle, there was considerable doubt as to whether the Territorial Army was capable of implementing its recommendations. Indeed, the War Office was still having difficulties in meeting the limited demands of the original deficiency plan. As a result the Chiefs of Staff warned the government that introducing some form of compulsory service might prove unavoidable.¹³⁷⁵

Yet conscription at this point was recognised as a political impossibility and, under pressure to provide a solution, the War Office conceded that the only way to meet these targets was through the compulsory conversion of existing units. Although far from ideal, the amalgamation of the two Territorial Divisions in London could potentially release up to 18,000 men, although the DGTA, Lt.-Gen. Bonham-Carter, refused to countenance any further reductions at the expense of the Field

¹³⁷² TNA CAB 2/6 CID 269th Meeting, 16 Apr 1935.

¹³⁷³ TNA CAB 53/24 COS.375 Memorandum by the Home Defence Committee, 25 Apr 1935.

¹³⁷⁴ TNA CAB 2/6 CID 269th Meeting, 16 Apr 1935.

¹³⁷⁵ TNA CAB 53/24 COS 376 Reorientation of the Air Defence System of Great Britain, 14 May 1935.

Force.¹³⁷⁶ Units earmarked for conversion were carefully selected to ensure that volunteers could still join field units if they chose, and that new anti-aircraft units would only be set up within their own air defence sectors.¹³⁷⁷ Under-strength infantry battalions and those suitably located were considered first, with each district retaining at least one infantry unit nearby.¹³⁷⁸ To soften the blow converted units were allowed to preserve elements of their regimental identities and were permitted a changeover period of up to twelve months, so as to get personnel accustomed to the idea of a new role and promote retention, although this could hardly have encouraged a sense of urgency.¹³⁷⁹

Ultimately a total of eight under-performing infantry battalions were selected for conversion and the 56th (1st London) and 47th (2nd London) Divisions were formally ‘telescoped’ together to form the new London Division. Yet, although the conversion scheme successfully contributed three new AA brigades and five searchlight battalions to the Brooke-Popham scheme, in practical terms it added little to ADGB’s capabilities. Bonham-Carter was well aware that the lack of Regular instructors, training equipment and suitable accommodation would ensure these new units remained unusable for quite some time, and did little to assist existing searchlight units now having to expand into unresponsive recruiting grounds in London, Middlesex and Surrey.¹³⁸⁰ As the training infrastructure, distribution of equipment and funding for recruitment was not proportionally increased the War Office was effectively being asked to achieve more with less. Furthermore, re-training infantrymen into useful anti-aircraft personnel was thought to take at least three years, and this presupposed men remained keen and committed.¹³⁸¹ Despite the efforts to promote personnel retention in the converted units, many existing Territorials proved unwilling to re-train in a new, non-infantry role, and in some locations recruiting collapsed and attendance at drills practically ceased.¹³⁸²

¹³⁷⁶ TNA WO 32/2688 DGTA to DF(b), 3 Oct 1934.

¹³⁷⁷ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/139 ‘Conversion to Anti-Aircraft Units’, 19 May 1935.

¹³⁷⁸ TNA WO 32/2688 Conference on Conversion Scheme between F.4, TA.1 and TA.2 (Works), 21 Dec 1934.

¹³⁷⁹ TNA WO 32/2895 Knox to Wigram, 18 Nov 1935; WO 32/2688 Conversion of AA Units: Proposed Programme of Procedure, n.d. but c. Jan 1935; F. Pile (1949) p.63; IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/5 ‘Minutes of 1 May 1939 Meeting of the TA and Air Force Association of the County of London.’

¹³⁸⁰ TNA WO 32/2688 DGTA to DF(b), 7 Feb 1935.

¹³⁸¹ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/5 Sumner to Dunlop n.d. but c. Nov 1934.

¹³⁸² IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/4 Appreciation of a Situation – 16 December 1934; F. Pile (1949) p.64; TNA WO 32/2688 Lt.-Col. Abbott to Maj.-Gen. Pereira, 1 April 1935; WO 32/2859 DGTA to DF(b), 6 June 1935; I.F.W. Beckett, *Territorials: A Century of Service*, (Plymouth, 2008) p.114.

Neither did conversion help to solve the re-emergence of another major problem, namely the poor state of readiness in anti-aircraft units and the pressing need to accelerate their rate of mobilisation. Working under the shadow of the 'knock out blow,' the Brooke-Popham Committee had stipulated that the whole of the air defence system had to be capable of operating at full efficiency in the first hour of war.¹³⁸³ Yet by the mid 1930s the Territorial Air Defence Formations would need at least four days before the defences could be partially manned, and Regular anti-aircraft troops would still be needed to plug the gaps left by the Territorial units yet to be raised.¹³⁸⁴

Furthermore, these units were incapable of accelerating their level of readiness due to their pre-existing organisational, logistical and administrative flaws. In 1935 the Territorial air defences were still organised in a largely ad hoc manner, with some parts being administered by several different authorities within Commands and others dealt with directly by the War Office. Units lacked the transport to physically get them to their war stations and only held a small proportion of training equipment at their own locations, and so the balance of their war scales had to be transported from central ordnance depots, particularly Woolwich, the transference of which promised to be both slow and highly vulnerable once attacks began.¹³⁸⁵

There were also no clear and detailed mobilisation procedure, and in March 1936 the CIGS and his fellow service chiefs were still uncertain as to the exact circumstances in which Territorial anti-aircraft troops could be called out.¹³⁸⁶ Although a supplement to their mobilisation regulations had been issued in May 1933, units had little indication as to how they were to achieve their wartime manpower and equipment establishments, or even reach their war stations.¹³⁸⁷

In an effort to address these more practical problems a new committee was convened under Salt's successor, Maj.-Gen. R.H.D. Tompson, who had the task of reducing mobilisation to within a new

¹³⁸³ TNA CAB 13/18 ADGB.25 (HDC.166) Reorientation of the Air Defence System of Great Britain, Interim Report, 31 Jan 1935.

¹³⁸⁴ F. Pile, (1949) p.58.

¹³⁸⁵ Ibid. p.64.

¹³⁸⁶ TNA CAB 53/5 COS 168th Meeting, 17 March 1936.

¹³⁸⁷ TNA WO 33/1314 Supplement to Provisional Regulations for Mobilization of the Territorial Army (Coast Defence and Anti-Aircraft Units, Home Defence), 17 May 1933.

forty-eight hour time limit. A number of key advances were made from this committee's recommendations, notably the re-organisation of the Territorial anti-aircraft troops into a southern and northern divisional structure, later formalised as the 1st AA and 2nd AA Divisions.¹³⁸⁸ Thompson stressed that increased readiness could only be achieved if mobilisation equipment was kept near the war stations, and to reach them each unit was to be issued a 3cwt lorry, while a centralised Divisional RASC of 162 lorries was to be formed to ensure that at least the 1st AA Division could be moved and supplied once in position.¹³⁸⁹

As Dobinson has noted, the Thompson Committee's unglamorous but important work illustrates the new level of realism in dealing with the practicalities of air defence by 1936.¹³⁹⁰ However, the Territorials' continued inability to raise their efficiency and rate of mobilisation meant that there was mounting unease over the advisability of utilising them for tasks that required a high level of skill and availability at a moment's notice.

This issue came to a head after the 1935 Portsmouth Anti-Aircraft Exercise had exposed serious failings in Territorial training and preparation. By the end of three nights of sorties the searchlight units had hardly managed to locate and hold any of the raiding aircraft and the directing staff frankly admitted their efforts had totally failed.¹³⁹¹ Although their equipment was recognised as inadequate, blame was primarily placed on the lack of efficiency within the Territorial sections themselves, particularly on the specialists operating the sound locators and height-finders. Moreover, the observing training team doubted Territorials could ever achieve the proficiency required, and recommended transferring the responsibility to a local volunteer organisation, similar to the observer corps system, instead.¹³⁹²

¹³⁸⁸ TNA WO 163/41 Army Council 384th Meeting, 30 July 1935 and Précis No.1390 'Organization of Air Defence Formations, TA', 12 July 1935.

¹³⁸⁹ TNA WO 163/42 Army Council Précis No.1397 'Organization of the Air Defence Formations, TA: Second Interim Report of Maj.-Gen. Thompson's Committee', and 386th Meeting, 12 May 1936; See also WO 32/2832.

¹³⁹⁰ C. Dobinson, (2001) p.95.

¹³⁹¹ TNA WO 32/3127 Comments by DMT, n.d. but c.July 1936; Report on the Portsmouth Anti-Aircraft Defence Exercise, 1935. The OC 57th (Wessex) AA Brigade, RA, (TA) commanded the defences, whilst Territorials from Hants Fortress RE, Surrey Group AA Searchlight Companies, RE and 27th (London) AA Searchlight Battalion, RE provided illumination.

¹³⁹² TNA WO 32/3127 MT.3 to DMT, 17 July 1936.

The Portsmouth Exercise publicly exposed the clear limitations in the air defences' capabilities, and the main fault was to be found with the voluntary Territorial system itself.¹³⁹³ The fortnight-long annual collective training period was not considered sufficient to fully integrate and train a searchlight or gun team. As a member of the Training Directorate commented:

The whole weakness of the TA system lies in the fact that whereas AA SL work is almost entirely a matter of constant team work ... The regular units consider that 40 nights (or 80 hours) practice a year are required for efficiency in addition to very many hours spent on individual training and manning drill. It is difficult to see how TA units can ever get together to this extent.¹³⁹⁴

For the Director of Military Training the lessons from the Portsmouth Exercise were clear.

Territorials needed a period of at least three weeks of intensive training before an acceptable standard was reached, which was obviously unacceptable given that they had to be ready within forty-eight hours. Therefore, if the TA showed no signs of progress he insisted that another organisation be made responsible, which in the short term could only be extracted from the Regular Army.¹³⁹⁵

Coupled with these reservations was the lingering doubt that Territorials could not be mobilised quickly enough in an emergency. The QMG, Lt-Gen. Sir Reginald May, was far from confident that Territorial RASC units could be called up in time to get anti-aircraft units to their positions.¹³⁹⁶ The Adjutant General, Lt.-Gen. Sir Harry Knox, shared his concern:

I hope and trust that that the RASC of [1st AA] division will be of exceptional efficiency; but I fear that, however efficient, we are asking them to do more than is humanely possible ... my whole impression ... is that we are asking too much of Territorial troops, and that these units will require a stiffening of Regulars, not only for training purposes in peace, but also to enable them to have some reasonable chance of carrying out their duties in the initial stages of a war.¹³⁹⁷

The conviction that the TA could not carry out its responsibilities without a large injection of Regular manpower became increasingly prevalent, and the Minister for the Coordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip, was adamant that the Regular Army had to step in to ensure home defence if Territorials could not.¹³⁹⁸ This same issue also troubled the General Staff, who had formally raised

¹³⁹³ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/140 'Notes on the Portsmouth Air Defence Exercise', 19 Aug 1935; A.J. Manson (War Office) to The Editor via J.G. Hartley (Acting News Editor), 19 August 1935; see also Hartley to Liddell Hart, 19 August 1935.

¹³⁹⁴ TNA WO 32/3127 MT.3 to DMT, 17 July 1936.

¹³⁹⁵ Ibid. Comments by DMT, n.d. but c.July 1936.

¹³⁹⁶ TNA WO 32/2832 QMG to PUS, 13 March 1936.

¹³⁹⁷ Ibid. Minute by AG, 24 March 1936.

¹³⁹⁸ TNA CAB 53/28 COS 473 'Invasion from the Air: Note by the Minister for Coordination of Defence,' 9 June 1936.

their concerns in June 1936.¹³⁹⁹ Their unease was such that they appointed a sub-committee under Lord Gort later in 1937 to examine whether the AA role could be transferred away from Territorial control.¹⁴⁰⁰ It was thought that, even if the individual Territorial could attain a high enough standard of efficiency, the Territorial system itself militated against maintaining them in a high state of readiness. This was a growing problem after the acceptable deployment period had been progressively reduced, from an assumption of forty-eight hours to less than twelve.¹⁴⁰¹

Despite these concerns, however, the Chiefs of Staff knew there was no realistic alternative to the existing system. The over-stretched Regular Army could not afford to divert its limited anti-aircraft manpower to the TA, and the War Office and the Chiefs of Staff both acknowledged that attempting any significant re-organisation during such a volatile period posed obvious risks. As neither additional equipment nor alternative manpower was available there was no option but to keep what they called the ‘Territorial experiment’ in operation.¹⁴⁰²

Yet whether or not the General Staff itself was doing all it could to assist the air defence Territorials was certainly questioned at the time.¹⁴⁰³ In September 1936 a frustrated Hastings Ismay, then a deputy secretary to the CID, penned a paper lambasting the War Office for trying to maintain the expeditionary force and its Territorial reinforcements, and so disproportionately prioritised ‘the *ultimate* reinforcement’ of the TA Field Force units over the ‘*immediate* necessities of Home Defence,’ provided by the Territorial AA formations.¹⁴⁰⁴

¹³⁹⁹ ‘Note on Organization of the Anti-Aircraft defences included in the Air Defence Scheme for Great Britain, by General Staff War Office,’ 11 June 1936, attached to TNA CAB 53/8 COS 219th Meeting, 19 Oct 1937.

¹⁴⁰⁰ F. Pile, (1949) pp.72-73; The CID also shared lingering doubts as to whether the proposed 4.5-inch heavy AA gun would be too complicated for Territorials to operate. See TNA CAB 2/6 CID 280th Meeting, 10 July 1936.

¹⁴⁰¹ TNA WO 32/4643 Tompson Committee: Third Interim Report, 15 Dec 1936; CAB 3/6 CID 265-A ‘Deployment of the Anti-Aircraft Defences of Great Britain,’ 25 Oct 1937; WO 32/4623 CIGS to AG, 19 March 1937; WO 32/2682 DST to DF(c), 3 May 1937.

¹⁴⁰² TNA CAB 3/7 278-A ‘The Organization of the Anti-Aircraft Defence of Great Britain,’ 24 Jan 1938.

¹⁴⁰³ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/89 ‘Outline of the Opposition to the Development of the Anti-Aircraft Defence of Great Britain,’ 30 July 1938.

¹⁴⁰⁴ TNA CAB 21/622 ‘Anti-Aircraft defence of Great Britain: Home Defence: Part II – The Present Situation as regards Air Defence,’ 17 Sept 1936. The memorandum is also attached to CAB 64/3 ‘Review of Air Defence Scheme.’ Hankey forwarded it to Inskip with the suggestion that he take up the issue of WO priorities at the ministerial level. See G. Peden, *British Rearmament and the Treasury, 1932-1939*, (Edinburgh, 1979) p.126.

Nevertheless, even Ismay had to concede that as things presently stood the Territorials could provide little guarantee of protection. By the latter 1930s the experience of expanding from a cadre of limited utility to a large and efficient force had left the Territorial anti-aircraft arm in a fragile, transitional state. The inherent flaws in relying on the Territorial system had been clearly identified, but solutions were yet to be found. There were neither sufficient men nor equipment to meet even the existing deficiency plans and, due to their part time character, units were incapable of attaining the required standard of readiness or efficiency.¹⁴⁰⁵

* * *

Pursuing the 'Ideal' Defence, 1937-1939

As the international situation continued to deteriorate and the risk of war became perceptibly more real, the importance accorded to air defence only increased. By 1937 the state of Britain's air defences had become a pressing political and public concern, especially when it was contrasted with what was apparently being achieved in Germany.¹⁴⁰⁶ As General Ironside observed, the Cabinet were 'terrified now of a war being finished in a few weeks by the annihilation of Great Britain. They can see no other kind of danger than air attack and discount all other dangers.'¹⁴⁰⁷ Spurred on by his strategic preference for home defence, the new Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, increasingly directed rearmament to the benefit of the air defences, particularly after the aerial 'knock out blow' was endorsed as an official policy assumption.¹⁴⁰⁸ As a corollary the War Office was instructed to give anti-aircraft defence 'absolute priority' over every other commitment.¹⁴⁰⁹

Thereafter the War Office had to deal with spiralling demands to expand ADGB, despite the fact that these were seriously undermining the balance of the existing rearmament programme. Commissioned to draw up the 'Ideal' scheme of air defence, the ADGB Sub-Committee recommended that the War Office more than double its expenditure on anti-aircraft defence. The number of heavy AA guns was increased from 608 to 1,264, whilst light AA guns were doubled from 300 to 600. The further

¹⁴⁰⁵ TNA CAB 3/7 278-A 'The Organization of the Anti-Aircraft Defence of Great Britain,' 24 Jan 1937.

¹⁴⁰⁶ TNA FO 371/20746 'A Comparison of Germany's AA defences with those of Britain,' 18 Aug 1937.

¹⁴⁰⁷ R. Macleod and D. Kelly (eds.) *The Ironside Diaries* (London, 1962) entry for 29 Dec 1937, p.42.

¹⁴⁰⁸ U. Bialer, (1980) pp.137-144; TNA CAB 3/6 CID 241-A, 'Anti-Aircraft Defence,' 7 Oct 1936.

¹⁴⁰⁹ TNA CAB 3/7 CID 241-A 'Anti-Aircraft Defence,' 4 Dec 1937.

enlargement of the AFZ required the number of searchlight companies to increase from 108 (2,547 lights) to 196 (4,704 lights).¹⁴¹⁰ Although approved in principle, the 'Ideal' scheme was regarded as impossible to implement in both practical and financial terms, and Cabinet, spurred on by the Sudeten Crisis, did not finally agree to implement it until November 1938.¹⁴¹¹ Nevertheless, public demand ensured the government continued to push for ever-larger air defence coverage.¹⁴¹²

On the other hand, with air defence already absorbing much of the available funding and industrial capacity, political support for an expeditionary role for the TA had now largely disappeared.¹⁴¹³ In December 1937 the strategic defence review undertaken by the Minister for the Coordination of Defence, Sir Thomas Inskip, had re-orientated Britain's defence priorities, putting air defence top of the list.¹⁴¹⁴ With air defence now the cornerstone of the 'limited liability' policy, its formal adoption put the anti-aircraft Territorials at the forefront of Britain's rearmament efforts.

This decision placed a great deal of responsibility of the Territorial air defence organisation, and represents the final test of whether the Territorial system was capable of successfully fulfilling this role. Yet to stand a chance of doing so the War Office had to find a way to both manage a considerable expansion in its size whilst simultaneously improving its efficiency and readiness to mobilise. In order to ascertain this the next section will assess these aspects in order.

First of all it will establish whether the TA was capable of raising and equipping the necessary manpower as the air defence organisation expanded from a force of two AA divisions to an AA Corps of five divisions, before being reorganised again into an AA Command of seven divisions. Secondly, it will be seen whether or not these volunteers, once they had enlisted, could be trained and equipped

¹⁴¹⁰ TNA CAB 3/6 CID 255-A 'Ideal' Air Defence of Great Britain, 8 May 1937.

¹⁴¹¹ TNA CAB 3/6 HDC.220 'Ideal' Air Defence of Great Britain, 9 Feb 1937; WO 199/2970 Survey of the AA Defence of the United Kingdom, Part I. Vol.I – 1914-1939, p.85; CAB 3/7 'Review of Arrangements or the Anti-Aircraft Defence of Great Britain,' 7 Feb 1939.

¹⁴¹² TNA CAB 3/7 CID 288-A 'Revised Layout of Searchlights and Guns for the Air Defence of Great Britain,' 9 June 1938.

¹⁴¹³ TNA CAB 64/3 DPRC Meeting, 26 Nov 1936; AIR 9/8 'The Potential Danger to the Security of the British Empire and our consequent Defence Requirement,' 15 Jan 1936; CAB 2/7 CID 310th Meeting, 14 Feb 1938; B. Bond, (1980) p.257; University of Birmingham, NC 2/23A Chamberlain Diary: entry for 25 Oct 1936; G. Peden, (1979) p.127; P. Dennis, *Decision by Default: Peacetime Conscription and British Defence, 1919-39* (London, 1972) p.112; R. Macleod and D. Kelly, (1962), entry for 20 Jan 1938, p.46.

¹⁴¹⁴ TNA CAB 24/273/41 'Defence Expenditure in Future Years: Interim Report,' 15 Dec 1937.

to a sufficiently high standard. Thirdly, it will clarify whether the organisation itself was capable of manning the defences within the accepted mobilisation time limit. The answers to these questions, taken together, will then indicate to what extent the AA Territorials managed to fulfil their role.

Of Arms and Men: Developments in the Procurement of Manpower and Equipment

Without the option of conscription the War Office had to rely upon voluntary enlistment and the conversion of existing units to maintain AA units. By 1938 the conversion expedient had been recognised as a mistake. Many of the units converted under Bonham-Carter's 1935 scheme had made little progress two years later. Of the eighteen Territorial AA brigades in existence by May 1937, for example, seven were still 'in course of conversion' and were neither trained nor equipped.¹⁴¹⁵ In 1936 the 2nd AA Division had been formed by breaking up another infantry formation (the 46th (N. Midland) Division), but conversion only supplied fifty-six of the eighty-four units required, and it came at the cost of seriously disrupting the field army formations based in the North and Midlands.¹⁴¹⁶ As a result conversion was not considered a successful method of expansion, and the War Office sought to deflect any further attempts to transfer additional manpower via this method.

This meant that the Territorial anti-aircraft organisation had to rely purely on volunteers for its augmentation. Fortunately, by 1937 the rate of voluntary recruitment into the TA had risen dramatically, to the extent that the number of Territorials involved in air defence work soon rivaled that of the field army. Brought about mainly through an increased public awareness of defence issues and a widespread, government-led recruitment campaign, the total strength of the Territorial Air Defence Troops jumped from 5,289 in January 1936 to 14,893 the next year. This figure continued to rise, to 26,876 in 1938 and then 69,610 by 1939. Indeed, at its fully established strength in 1939 some 42 per cent of the entire Territorial Army would be dedicated to air defence.¹⁴¹⁷

¹⁴¹⁵ C. Dobinson, (2001) p.107.

¹⁴¹⁶ TNA WO 32/2688 Knox to Wigram, n.d. but April 1936; WO 32/2686 DGTA to DSD, 6 Jan 1936; WO 32/2686 'Provision of AA Units for Northern Scheme,' 25 June 1935; Minute by AG, 30 Jan 1936, Minute by QMG, 31 Jan 1936; WO/32/4534 DMO&I to GOsCinC Northern, Western and Southern Command, 10 March 1937.

¹⁴¹⁷ *Parl. Papers*, Army Estimates, 1939 p.56. The establishment for Air Defence Troops was 105,407, out of a total TA establishment of 249,121.

Indeed, if the main problem for the TA air defences during the interwar period was lack of manpower, by the end of the 1930s almost the opposite was true. Nevertheless, voluntary enlistments still did not keep pace with the figures demanded by the ever-increasing expansion programmes. Furthermore, in too many cases the Territorial system failed to handle the new influx of keen and intelligent recruits effectively. Partly this was due to the incapacity of the administrative machinery to process the sheer volume of applications.¹⁴¹⁸ However, once men had been attested they were often deeply disappointed by the quality and availability of the training they subsequently received.¹⁴¹⁹

Consequently, after reviewing the defences on taking over command of 1st AA Division in December 1937, Maj.-Gen. Frederick Pile stated he was ‘frankly appalled at the fools’ paradise in which London is living.’¹⁴²⁰ Pile knew that the fundamental objective of anti-aircraft training was two-fold: firstly, they had to aim at maximum possible efficiency on the outbreak of war but, secondly, their training also had to be designed individually and still produce an effective team. Yet achieving these aims were impossible given the constraints on continuity and intensity of training possible under the existing system. As he explained in January 1938:

Under present arrangements an AA Battery becomes moderately efficient at the end of its fortnight’s camp. On its first arrival in Camp (i.e. a date corresponding to the first day of war) it is very far from moderately efficient. Even this “moderate efficiency” which is achieved after a fortnight’s camp is of a very doubtful order ... To sum up at present our AA gunners are trained on archaic principles. If the present system is continued we can never hope to be efficient when the first enemy plane reaches England.¹⁴²¹

However, reforming the training process proved difficult, as instruction remained the preserve of each Commanding Officer, many of whom were deemed incapable of effecting change. Whilst Pile considered the AA personnel ‘simply first class,’ he found their commanders ‘somewhat mixed ... some of the COs are excellent. Others are just wet.’¹⁴²² After investigating complaints that units lacked the time to train to a high standard, he found that some COs were still insisting on practicing

¹⁴¹⁸ TNA WO 163/47 Informal Army Council 15th Meeting, 4 Feb 1938 and 18th Meeting, 23 March 1938; IWM 892 Col. G. Kidston-Montgomerie.

¹⁴¹⁹ TNA WO 32/4610 ‘Memorandum on the London Division of the Territorial Army’ n.d. but May 1938; DGTA to DCIGS, 31 May 1938; DCIGS to PS to the S. of S., 9 June 1938.

¹⁴²⁰ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 “‘Note on ‘Anti-Aircraft Defence of London’ by Maj.-Gen. Pile, cmdg 1st AA Division,’ 13 Dec 1937.

¹⁴²¹ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/575 ‘Memorandum on the Training of AA Units: 1st AA Division,’ January 1938.

¹⁴²² LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 “‘Note on ‘Anti-Aircraft Defence of London’ by Maj.-Gen. Pile, cmdg 1st AA Division,’ 13 Dec 1937.

ceremonial drill when they should have been drilling with their lights and guns.¹⁴²³ This corroborated an anecdotal report from one Territorial, who claimed to have spent twenty-five hours of his anti-aircraft training being instructed exclusively on sloping, ordering and presenting arms and tying a clove-hitch knot.¹⁴²⁴ Yet improving professional standards amongst commanders proved difficult. Although Pile acknowledged that the upcoming generation of junior officers showed great promise, their lack of experience meant he dared not accelerate their promotion.¹⁴²⁵

This gap in effective leadership meant that greater pressure was put on Regular Adjutants and Permanent Staff Instructors to make up for the inevitable shortfalls in training. Unfortunately the ratio between instructors and Territorials continued to widen over the 1930s, and by the end of the decade the existing cadre of instructors could not keep pace with the increased number of volunteers and their demands for additional training.¹⁴²⁶ Moreover securing extra Regular instructors became increasingly harder, as the expanded Territorial demands still had to be met from the same number of Regular units.¹⁴²⁷ This forced Pile to concede in 1938 that the system of supply for PSIs had effectively broken down, and that both the Regular RE and RA anti-aircraft units were incapable of meeting the extra demands of expansion.¹⁴²⁸

¹⁴²³ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/575 'Memorandum on the Training of AA Units: 1st AA Division,' January 1938.

¹⁴²⁴ TNA WO 32/4610 Memorandum on the London Division of the Territorial Army' n.d. but May 1938.

¹⁴²⁵ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 "'Note on 'Anti-Aircraft Defence of London' by Maj.-Gen. Pile, cmdg 1st AA Division,' 13 Dec 1937.

¹⁴²⁶ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 'Confidential Report by Maj.-Gen Pile to Commanders, 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th AA Groups,' 17 June 1938.

¹⁴²⁷ TNA WO 32/4610 DCIGS to PS to S of S, 9 June 1938.

¹⁴²⁸ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/574 Pile to Liddell Hart, 18 Jan 1938.

Number of Permanent Staff Instructors attached to Territorial Air Defence Troops, 1926-1939.

Date	Strength on 1 Jan	Number of PSIs	Ratio (PSIs: Territorials)
1926	3,416	50	1:68
1927	3,916	55	1:71
1928	3,641	57	1:64
1929	3,706	59	1:63
1930	3,216	59	1:55
1931	3,217	58	1:55
1932	3,272	56	1:58
1933	3,087	44	1:70
1934	3,179	44	1:72
1935	3,442	45	1:76
1936	5,289	67	1:79
1937	14,893	224	1:66
1938	26,876	320	1:84
1939	69,610	652	1:107

Source: Extracted from the 'Regimental Establishments of the Territorial Army' in the Army Estimates for each year, 1922-1939.

A similar situation existed for Adjutants, who increasingly had to carry out the role of instructor whilst simultaneously dealing with a growing administrative burden. As Pile admitted, 'practically all of our Adjutants are pressed men ... and therefore the tendency must be for these [men] to allow things to drift.'¹⁴²⁹

This overstretch in PSIs and Adjutants also resulted in a chronic lack of professional supervision during training. After reviewing the 1938 reports Pile noted that the 'crying need for more supervision must be obvious to anyone who has visited a Practice Camp ... all sorts of slackness [is] creeping in and, as both anti-aircraft gunnery and searchlight work depend for success on meticulous accuracy, the result is often deplorable.'¹⁴³⁰ Yet the only solution that Pile could offer to raise the efficiency of his AA Groups was a considerable uplift in Regular assistance, the prospects of which were slim.

* * *

The provision and distribution of modern equipment was a particularly controversial issue during rearmament, especially with regard to the anti-aircraft Territorials. Although a few modern items had

¹⁴²⁹ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 'Confidential Report by Maj.-Gen Pile to Commanders, 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th AA Groups,' 17 June 1938.

¹⁴³⁰ Ibid.

been gradually introduced throughout the interwar period, notably predictors, the Air Defence Formations remained largely dependent on the same basic equipment set-up as in 1918. Despite attempts to modernise the 3-in gun, most Territorials were well aware that the equipment they would use in war was obsolescent.¹⁴³¹ Indeed, frustration over the lack of modern guns and equipment sparked a major Parliamentary scandal when Duncan Sandys, then MP for Norwood and a subaltern in a Territorial anti-aircraft unit, challenged Hore-Belisha's optimistic production figures, using confidential information supplied by his Adjutant to show how bad the equipment situation really was.¹⁴³²

The lack of modern equipment certainly alarmed Pile when he took over command of 1st AA Division. Furthermore, he found that even obsolescent 3-in guns were in short supply, and he had no accurate idea of how much ammunition was available in an emergency.¹⁴³³ There was also a confusing lack of standardisation. During the Anschluss crisis, for example, eight different varieties of 3-in. gun were provided to one battery alone, all of which required different ancillaries and ammunition.¹⁴³⁴

Efforts were certainly made to accelerate production, although wrangling over financial authority and the narrow base of British industrial capacity ensured that supply never matched demand, and Territorial units continued to rely on outdated items.¹⁴³⁵ For example, in the absence of any effective light anti-aircraft guns newly formed LAA units had to make do with reserve stocks of .303 Lewis guns, despite the fact they were known to be ineffectual.¹⁴³⁶ Even after the Swedish 40mm Bofors

¹⁴³¹ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/575 Pile to Liddell Hart, 1 April 1938; 15/3/144 'Review of the Anti-Aircraft Defences of London,' c. April 1938; F. Pile, (1949) pp.76-77; TNA WO 163/47 Informal Army Council 16th Meeting, 14 Feb 1938; B.H. Liddell Hart, *Memoirs; Vol.II*, (London, 1965) p.113.

¹⁴³² J.P. Harris, 'The "Sandys Storm" of 1938: The Politics of British Air Defence in 1938,' *Historical Research*, Vol.62 No.149 (1989) pp.318-336.

¹⁴³³ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 "'Note on 'Anti-Aircraft Defence of London' by Maj.-Gen. Pile, cmdg 1st AA Division,' 13 Dec 1937.

¹⁴³⁴ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/31 Talk with Pile, 14 March 1938.

¹⁴³⁵ TNA CAB 3/6 CID 233-A 'Note by the War Office on the Prospects of Munition Production for Anti-Aircraft Defence,' 8 July 1936; CAB 2/6 CID 280th Meeting, 10 July 1936; CAB 3/6 CID 241-A 'Anti-Aircraft Defence,' 7 Oct 1936; WO 32/4243 Acceleration of ADGB – Supply of Guns, 1936/37; WO 32/4458 Expediting the AA Defence Programme, 1937; IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/5 Wadden (AG 10 branch) to Dunlop, 29 May 1936; 74/164/6 Memo by Dunlop, 23 July 1937.

¹⁴³⁶ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/575 "Memorandum on the Training of AA Units: 1st AA Division", Jan 1938; 1/575 'Emergency Manning Scheme,' 14 Sept 1938; TNA WO 32/4458 'Plan for Accelerating the Present Programme for the AA Defences,' 2 Dec 1937; DMO&I to S. of S., 8 Dec 1937.

was selected for service, delays in establishing a licensed production line ensured issue remained slow.¹⁴³⁷

Such deficiencies not only compromised the overall capability of the air defences but also limited the breadth of a Territorial's ability.¹⁴³⁸ This lack of experience was compounded by the fact that the opportunity to practice under realistic conditions had been severely constrained for most of the interwar period. Before 1936 the opportunity for Territorial AA units to fire live had been limited to the single practice camp at Watchet. As expansion proceeded the War Office pursued the acquisition of several new anti-aircraft ranges, often in the face of considerable local opposition.¹⁴³⁹ As a result eight practice camps had been established by April 1939, five for heavy AA and three for light AA training, with authority to increase this number to twelve being given in June.¹⁴⁴⁰

However these were not formed quickly enough to satisfy the demands of the expanding AA establishment, and lack of ammunition and facilities, as well as sleeve-towing aircraft or target drones, meant that the opportunity for a unit to actually fire during their two-week camp period was much reduced.¹⁴⁴¹ In addition firing practice remained dependant on the vagaries of both the weather and local bylaws.¹⁴⁴² As a consequence, Pile claimed to be 'horrified' by the training being undertaken at Weybourne by 1938, and the situation at the new light AA camp at Stiffkey was 'even more deplorable. ... I know there are considerable difficulties as regards this training but at present it is obviously a complete waste of money.'¹⁴⁴³

Pile was keen to overhaul the entire Practice Camp organisation, and subsequent efforts to raise standards did lead to improvements in some areas, such as the increase in the number of qualified height-finders from 83 in 1937 to 209 in 1938 and the higher number of shells classed as effective,

¹⁴³⁷ TNA WO 32/4458 DGMP to S. of S., 7 Dec 1937.

¹⁴³⁸ TNA WO 199/2975 'AA Survey Part III Vol.1: Technical History of HAA Gunnery,' p.4.

¹⁴³⁹ TNA WO 32/4370 Weybourne AA Practice Camp; WO 32/4369 Provision of 3rd AA Practice Camp, Manorbier; WO 32/4368 Provision of 4th AA Practice Camp.

¹⁴⁴⁰ TNA WO 32/4368 WO Memorandum N.783, TISC, 5 April 1939; 'Memorandum on the Provision of Heavy AA Practice Camps,' 22 June 1939.

¹⁴⁴¹ Ibid. DTO(CD & AA) to DUS, 24 Feb 1939.

¹⁴⁴² TNA WO 32/4370 'Extract for Annual Report of 1st Anti-Aircraft Division, TA,' 1936.

¹⁴⁴³ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 'Confidential Report by Maj.-Gen Pile to Commanders, 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th AA Groups,' 17 June 1938; Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/96 Talk with Pile, 14 Sept 1938.

rising from 11.47 per cent to 29.64 per cent.¹⁴⁴⁴ Yet Pile readily admitted that the reasons for the improvements were largely due to the keener and more intelligent men then enlisting, and the fact they were voluntarily committing themselves to three times the amount of training time as previously.¹⁴⁴⁵ Nevertheless, he was still dissatisfied with the number of mistakes he witnessed, and the Territorials' performance during the August 1938 Home Defence Exercises only indicated to him how 'depressingly bad' they still were.¹⁴⁴⁶ In fact he believed that 1938 marked the highest peak of efficiency attainable under existing training method, and he was thereafter increasingly concerned whether any further progress was possible, particularly after the 'anxious enthusiasm' for training engendered by the successive crises that year wore off.¹⁴⁴⁷

Readiness for Mobilisation

Compounding these anxieties, at the same time the doubts over Territorial readiness once again came to the fore. Pile knew the Territorial AA defences would still take at least forty-eight hours to deploy, and he continued to regard a twelve-hour response time as 'still only a pious hope.'¹⁴⁴⁸ Furthermore, even once they were in position Territorials were anticipated to need another twenty-four hours to acclimatise themselves to their instruments before being ready for action.¹⁴⁴⁹ Consequently, Pile always stressed that the call out process had to be authorised as soon as possible if the anti-aircraft sites were to be manned in time.¹⁴⁵⁰ His anxiety was undoubtedly warranted, as the War Office's Emergency Manning Scheme envisaged it taking between six and seven days to mobilise the defences, a far cry from the twelve hours stipulated.¹⁴⁵¹

¹⁴⁴⁴ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 'Memorandum on the Employment of Regular Units in Anti-Aircraft Formations, Territorial Army,' 10 Nov 1938; 1/575 Pile to Liddell Hart, 12 June 1939 and attached 'Notes: Anti-Aircraft Defence.'

¹⁴⁴⁵ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/575 Pile to Liddell Hart, 12 June 1939 and attached "Notes: Anti-Aircraft Defence."

¹⁴⁴⁶ F. Pile, (1949) p.80.

¹⁴⁴⁷ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 'Memorandum on the Employment of Regular Units in Anti-Aircraft Formations, Territorial Army,' 10 Nov 1938; TNA WO 32/4610 DGTA to DCIGS, 31 May 1938.

¹⁴⁴⁸ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 'Confidential Report by Maj.-Gen Pile to Commanders, 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th AA Groups,' 17 June 1938.

¹⁴⁴⁹ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/575 'Emergency Manning Scheme,' 14 Sept 1938.

¹⁴⁵⁰ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/29 Talk with Pile, 12 March 1938.

¹⁴⁵¹ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/31 Talk with Pile, 14 March 1938. For the Emergency Manning Scheme see TNA CAB 54/4 DCOS.71 'Memorandum on the Home Defence Measures which could be put into force should an Emergency arise in the near future,' 12 July 1938. For its later development see AIR 20/267.

Nevertheless, little was done until the imbroglio over the Sudetenland made a ‘knock out blow’ attempt appear increasingly likely. After reviewing the options after the May ‘weekend crisis,’ the Chiefs of Staff realised that a twelve-hour readiness time for ADGB was still impossible to achieve. Men and equipment simply could not be called out, collected and transported in time.¹⁴⁵² This was still the case when the crisis peaked in September, when the shortfalls in the defences played a major role in influencing the government’s decision-making. As the air defences would need at least forty-eight hours of preparation the Chiefs warned that no belligerent action should be taken before then, as to do so ‘would be to place ourselves in the position of a man who attacks a tiger before he has loaded his gun.’¹⁴⁵³

With war appearing imminent, the War Office eventually called out the Territorial air and coast defence units on the afternoon of 26 September. By the next morning some 58,000 Territorials had deployed to their war stations in a total of twenty-four AA regiments and thirty searchlight batteries. The Territorials’ ability to achieve this task in itself surprised some in the War Office.¹⁴⁵⁴ Henry Pownall remarked how ‘it all went much more smoothly and quickly than we had dared to hope ... Although, in the end, no war came this “rehearsal” has been of quite invaluable aid. Apparently very little went wrong and everyone played up amazingly well.’¹⁴⁵⁵ Pile, in his memoirs, also recorded how ‘it was all very amateurish, but it worked,’ and that ‘in general we gave an external impression of a fair degree of efficiency.’¹⁴⁵⁶

However, it soon became clear that this outward show of efficiency masked some very real problems, particularly regarding flaws in planning. The whole mobilisation procedure had to be largely improvised and the process for calling men out, from countless locations and civil occupations, was particularly complicated.¹⁴⁵⁷ Insufficient transport meant that volunteers with their own cars had to be

¹⁴⁵² TNA CAB 53/39 COS.733 ‘German-Czechoslovak Relations: Review of Plans for an Emergency,’ 31 May 1938.

¹⁴⁵³ TNA CAB 53/41 COS.770 ‘The Czechoslovak Crisis,’ 23 Sept 1938.

¹⁴⁵⁴ P. Dennis, (1987) p.228.

¹⁴⁵⁵ B. Bond (ed.) *Chief of Staff: The Diaries of Lt.-Gen. Sir Henry Pownall, Vol.1 1933-1940*, (London, 1973), entry for 26 Sept 1938, p.163.

¹⁴⁵⁶ F. Pile, (1949) p.81.

¹⁴⁵⁷ TNA WO 199/2977 AA Survey Part.III Vol.III: Searchlight – Technical and Practical, p.15

relied upon to transport the men, or commanders had to resort to commandeering local buses and other civilian vehicles.¹⁴⁵⁸

Compounding these were other delays due to administrative confusion and procedural inefficiency, especially in drawing equipment from centralised stores. For example, the situation at Woolwich Arsenal during the crisis was described as one of ‘sheer chaos,’ with Territorials kept waiting for hours, or told to report again the next day, or that no items would be issued until the correct indents were provided in quadruplicate.¹⁴⁵⁹ Oversights also ensured that key items, such as batteries, dials, fuze keys or the correct ammunition, were sometimes missing, and poor maintenance had left some guns and searchlights inoperable on delivery.¹⁴⁶⁰

As a result, although the bulk of the defences were manned within twenty-four hours, only 90 out of 176 guns and 400 out of 600 searchlights were in position within the stipulated twelve-hour timeframe. More alarmingly, after two days only 32 gun positions (93 guns) out of 54 were capable of engaging an aircraft, and of these only 18 of the 34 3.7-in guns available were operational. Even after six days the number of guns in action had only risen to 99.¹⁴⁶¹ Furthermore, although 1,420 searchlight sets were in place within twenty-four hours, a considerable number of searchlight units had no equipment and were hurriedly issued with machine-guns and tasked with providing local light anti-aircraft protection instead.¹⁴⁶²

As Pownall reflected, some of the problems encountered during the mobilisation were not attributable directly to the TA, as it had deployed ‘necessarily with only half of its equipment and under arrangements largely extemporised. After all we are but half way through a four year scheme of

¹⁴⁵⁸ *Hansard*, HC Deb 3 Nov 1938 vol.340 c.527; F. Pile, (1949) p.81; TNA WO 199/2970 Survey of the AA Defence of the United Kingdom, Part.1 Vol.I – 1914-1939, p.112.

¹⁴⁵⁹ *Hansard*, HC Deb 3 Nov 1938 vol.340 cc.518-519.

¹⁴⁶⁰ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/139 ‘Report on the Occupation of 54 Gun Positions, up to 1500 hours, Saturday, 1st October 1938,’ *Hansard*, HC Deb 3 Nov 1938 vol.340 c.528.

¹⁴⁶¹ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/107 ‘Note on the Anti-Aircraft Mobilisation,’ Sept 1938; 11/1938/93 Diary Notes September 1938; 15/3/139 ‘Report on the Occupation of 54 Gun Positions, up to 1500 hours, Saturday, 1st October 1938’ and Instructor-in-Gunnery to GOC 1st AA Div., 30 Sept 1938.

¹⁴⁶² TNA WO 199/2977 AA Survey Part.III Vol.III: Searchlight – Technical and Practical, p.15.

development, with the money spread over those four years. If mid-way a stand-to is ordered, as it was, the equipment will *not* be all there, nor was it.¹⁴⁶³

Nevertheless, the partial mobilisation of September 1938 cast many of the Territorials' failings in sharp relief. It became increasingly difficult to argue that the efficiency the Territorials had achieved was anything more than a veneer. Although the bulk of the manpower was available faster than the War Office anticipated, they were still incapable of manning the defences within the twelve-hour limit. Furthermore, once they were in place only a fraction of the guns and searchlights could start engaging the enemy with any effect.

In response to this it was assumed that the Territorial system was fundamentally incapable of maintaining itself at the level of readiness required. This led in turn to further misgivings regarding the feasibility of leaving the responsibility for anti-aircraft defence exclusively in the hands of Territorial personnel. From late 1938 the War Office increasingly moved towards the conclusion that any real improvement depended on a further increase in Regular assistance and the introduction of some form of permanent manning. 'Stiffening' AA units with Regular personnel had initially been rejected, as doing so would obviously reflect badly on Territorial ability and impact on their morale.¹⁴⁶⁴ Neither was it thought possible to make anti-aircraft defence a purely Regular responsibility, on the grounds of expense as much as anything else.¹⁴⁶⁵ Even so, the idea of directing Regular AA units towards a broader home defence role increasingly gained traction as war became more likely.

The experience of the Munich mobilisation provided the final impetus. With the TA's limitations now clearly apparent, Pile believed 1st AA Division needed as much assistance as it could get.¹⁴⁶⁶ For him the only solution was to increase the level of Regular support, in addition to the establishment of a specially organised Depot Brigade in each AA Division. Consisting of a cadre of highly expert

¹⁴⁶³ B. Bond, (1973), entry for 10 Oct 1938, p.165.

¹⁴⁶⁴ TNA WO 163/47 Informal Army Council 11th Meeting, 11 Nov 1937.

¹⁴⁶⁵ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/57 Talk with Pile, 23 May 1938.

¹⁴⁶⁶ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/139 'Report on the Occupation of 54 Gun Positions, up to 1500 hours, Saturday, 1st October 1938,' attached memorandum by Pile, n.d. but Sept/Oct 1938.

observers, trained specialists and instructors, these personnel would assist in the supervision of drill hall training and act as Depot Batteries at practice camps. In addition these cadres would hold a certain proportion of guns and searchlights so that, if war was deemed imminent, they could deploy to cover the preliminary manning of key positions until the Territorials arrived.¹⁴⁶⁷ At the very least Pile urged an increase in the number of supervisory Gunnery Instructors attached to each brigade.

A similar demand for higher Regular Army inclusion was forming within the War Office. At the height of their 'partnership' Liddell Hart had pressed Hore-Belisha to establish a permanent outpost line or screen of Regular AA troops to guard against the 'knock out blow.'¹⁴⁶⁸ Although concerned that a permanent AA covering force might be beyond War Office means, he was reassured by Pile that even a limited allocation of Regular personnel to each gun-position would considerably improve readiness times.¹⁴⁶⁹

A similar idea was proposed during the Parliamentary vote of censure in November 1938, although Hore-Belisha opposed calls to entrust air defence to a Regular nucleus, as this 'would deprive the Territorials of the most responsible part of their trust.'¹⁴⁷⁰ However, strong arguments were still put forward to redirect Regular anti-aircraft troops to cover the Territorials' deficiencies. For example, after the Home Defence Committee concluded that the Territorial system could still only provide partial coverage after forty-eight hours at best, Inskip wanted the re-armament of the Regular AA Groups to be given priority, so at least these units would be in a position to offer some defence against a sudden 'knock out blow.'¹⁴⁷¹

¹⁴⁶⁷ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 15/3/144 'Confidential Report by Maj.-Gen Pile to Commanders, 26th, 27th, 28th and 29th AA Groups,' 17 June 1938; 'Memorandum on the Employment of Regular Units in Anti-Aircraft Formations, Territorial Army,' 10 Nov 1938. Pile envisaged allocating 170 Regular specialists per battery, totalling 510 per AA Division. See LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/115 Letter from Pile, 22 Oct 1938.

¹⁴⁶⁸ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/107 'Note on the Anti-Aircraft Mobilisation,' Sept 1938; B.H. Liddell Hart, (1965) p.105.

¹⁴⁶⁹ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1938/115 Letter from Pile, 22 Oct 1938; 1/575 'Memorandum n.d. but Oct 1938.' The two AA Divisions would require approximately 2,000 Regulars.

¹⁴⁷⁰ *Hansard*, HC Deb 3 Nov 1938 vol.340 cc.516-529.

¹⁴⁷¹ TNA CAB 21/263 HDC.48-M 'Conspectus of Arrangements as at 1st January 1939: Arrangements for the higher direction of the AA defences,' 21 Dec 1938; Inskip to Hore-Belisha, 7 Jan 1939.

Hore-Belisha, while continuing to insist publicly that to do so would undermine the trust given to the Territorials, recognised that such precautions made sense, and agreed that a number of Regular personnel should be retained at high-readiness, available to quickly deploy to cover certain key fixed sites.¹⁴⁷² As a result, in February two Regular AA Regiments were quietly re-assigned to provide cover for the London defences.¹⁴⁷³

Ultimately, however, if a wide degree of defence coverage was required then the authorities would have to continue relying on Territorial manpower, and the only way to ensure they would be ready was by substituting Regulars for Territorials in certain key roles. As a result the War Office authorised an additional injection of Regular officers, PSIs and administrative staff in early 1939, intended mainly to aid in the distribution of mobilisation stores, to help organise transport services and war stations and also to assist in the setting up of mobilisation ‘key parties.’¹⁴⁷⁴ Despite requiring only around 1,000 men for all five AA Divisions, the use of full-time Regulars in these posts promised to substantially cut readiness times.¹⁴⁷⁵

At the same time improvements in training also began to be registered, with Pile noting a substantial increase over 1939 in the number of qualified height-finders, the speed of gun drill and the proportion of shell being recorded as effective in live fire practices. He assigned this to the fact that the average Territorial was now willing to volunteer for far more training than he had ever done previously, and in his view many could now be classed as ‘extremely efficient.’¹⁴⁷⁶

Regardless of this progress, such measures were not considered to be sufficient as the international system steadily deteriorated over the summer of 1939. In April the Chiefs of Staff were particularly concerned with the upcoming Easter public holiday, noting that ‘there is no means of controlling the movement of these men, and it must be realised that if a sudden emergency occurred ... it would take

¹⁴⁷² TNA CAB 21/263 Hore-Belisha to Inskip, 12 Jan 1939.

¹⁴⁷³ P. Dennis, (1987) p.230.

¹⁴⁷⁴ TNA CAB 54/5 DCOS.79, 21 Jan 1939.

¹⁴⁷⁵ TNA WO 199/2970 Survey of the AA Defence of the United Kingdom, Part.1 Vol.I – 1914-1939, p.216.

¹⁴⁷⁶ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 1/575 Pile to Liddell Hart, 12 June 1939 and attached “Notes: Anti-Aircraft Defence.”

considerably longer to provide an effective defence than in ordinary times.’ The inevitable conclusion was that the existing Territorial system was incapable of guaranteeing the required level of security:

We desire to draw special attention to the impossibility under our present system of making any provision, either of Anti-Aircraft guns or searchlights, to meet the contingency of a “bolt from the blue.” Insurance against that type of attack can only be provided if a proportion, say at least a quarter, of the total AA ground defences were permanently in position and manned.¹⁴⁷⁷

With the Chiefs insisting that a part-time force was incompatible with the demands for a high-readiness defence, a more permanent solution to the manning problem had to be found.

* * *

Thereafter the movement towards compulsory military service increasingly gathered pace, although several factors combined to influence its final endorsement. Political signalling was one, as Chamberlain was under pressure to find a way to demonstrate Britain’s resolve in front of both a domestic and foreign audience.¹⁴⁷⁸ There was also a clear argument in favour of organising the nation’s manpower as early as possible, as the demands of the armed forces were already conflicting with those of industry and the broader rearmament effort.¹⁴⁷⁹

Nevertheless, it was still the deficiencies in the Territorial air defences that provided the spark that precipitated its eventual introduction. Indeed, after it was finally agreed that Territorials were incapable of providing round-the-clock cover, a level of compulsory manning became a practical necessity.¹⁴⁸⁰ Fearful of an imminent surprise attack, by March 1939 Chamberlain was unwilling to countenance even a twelve-hour delay in mobilisation, and wanted the anti-aircraft sites manned on a permanent basis, day and night.¹⁴⁸¹ This obviously required well-trained personnel capable of giving a full-time commitment, most likely serving on Regular terms and conditions.

¹⁴⁷⁷ TNA CAB 53/11 COS 288th Meeting, 5 April 1939.

¹⁴⁷⁸ D. Hucker, ‘Franco-British Relations and the Question of Conscription in Britain, 1938-1939,’ *Contemporary European History*, Vol.17 No.4, (2008) p.453.

¹⁴⁷⁹ H. Strachan, ‘The Territorial Army and National Defence,’ in K. Neilson and G. Kennedy (eds.), *The British Way in Warfare: Power and the International System, 1856-1956*, (Farnham, 2010) p.170; P. Dennis, (1972) p.149.

¹⁴⁸⁰ TNA WO 199/2970 Survey of the AA Defence of the United Kingdom, Part.1 Vol.I – 1914-1939, p.129; R.P Shay, *British Rearmament in the Thirties: Politics and Profits*, (Princeton NJ, 1977) p.272.

¹⁴⁸¹ TNA PREM 1/306 Wilson to Chatfield, 9 April 1939.

Yet, as had been proved in the past, handing this responsibility over to the Regular Army was not an option, as these troops could only man a small fraction of London's defences. This had become apparent on 22 March, after the Regular 1st and 2nd AA Brigades had been deployed to their war stations in response to further German aggression in Eastern Europe.¹⁴⁸² Regulars, however, could only cover a fraction of the defences, so Chamberlain began exploring the possibility of instituting a broader form of partial mobilisation, whereby Territorials would be utilised to man their war stations at night.¹⁴⁸³

Given that this would be in addition to their normal daytime activities, such a proposal was hardly realistic. In fact, asking Territorials to volunteer, in contravention of their conditions of service, for any prolonged period of service was acknowledged to be unworkable. The Deputy Chiefs of Staff, for example, concluded that if they did make a voluntary appeal to call out Territorials, in this case under the guise of a six-day exercise, there was no way they could guarantee a sufficient response.¹⁴⁸⁴ The War Office thus had to accept the inherent limitations of relying on voluntary, part-time personnel to provide round-the-clock defence coverage. As Henry Pownall recorded, 'it just *can't be done* on a voluntary basis. The TA will come out gladly if there is an emergency but not merely because H.M.G. can't decide whether there is an emergency or not.'¹⁴⁸⁵ With voluntary efforts incapable of guaranteeing the required level of defence, the only realistic alternative was, therefore, conscription.¹⁴⁸⁶

The issue finally came to a head in April, when the CIGS, Lord Gort, informed Hore-Belisha that the Army's anti-aircraft units could no longer be held at high readiness without initiating a partial mobilisation based on compulsory service. Gort therefore recommended immediately calling out the Territorial anti-aircraft units in order to create a 'breathing space' to build up a nucleus of Regular

¹⁴⁸² TNA PREM 1/306 'Notes on the Emergency Deployment of the First and Second Regular Anti-Aircraft Brigades,' 23 March 1939. These Brigades deployed a total of fifty-two searchlights and seventy-three anti-aircraft guns (of which only eight were modern 3.7-in models and fourteen 40mm Bofors).

¹⁴⁸³ B. Bond, (1973) p.193, entry for 20 March 1939; TNA PREM 1/306 de la Warr to Chamberlain, 21 March 1939; Churchill to Chamberlain, 21 March 1939; Wilson to Chatfield, 9 April 1939.

¹⁴⁸⁴ TNA CAB 54/5 DCOS.80 'Emergency Measures: Report,' 23 March 1939.

¹⁴⁸⁵ B. Bond, (1973) p.198, entry for 3 April 1939.

¹⁴⁸⁶ R.J. Minney, (1960) pp.195-199.

personnel, first made up of mobilised Reservists and then by compulsory trained men, who would man the defences on a more permanent footing.¹⁴⁸⁷

Similarly convinced that these measures were now necessary, Hore-Belisha promptly brought this proposal before Cabinet. As he informed his colleagues:

The universal opinion had been that it was impossible to work a voluntary system within a voluntary system. Unless an emergency existed, it would be an intolerable burden on Territorial officers and men to be called upon to serve whole-time for indefinite periods. It was impossible to combine the duties in question with civilian work, more particularly in the case of the searchlights, which were situated at considerable distances from the headquarters of the units.¹⁴⁸⁸

Therefore he pushed for authorisation to call out the Territorial air defence units for a three month period, in which time Regular Reservists could be trained up to relieve them before more permanent, compulsory arrangements could be made. Justifying his reasons to Chamberlain, Hore-Belisha stressed that there was no longer any alternatives:

As we cannot in the circumstances for the present day rely any longer solely on a Citizen Force for our permanent defence against air attack, it follows that a permanent force must be enlisted for the purpose. As it is quite beyond the capacity of the existing voluntary system ... it behoves us to take steps which will remove the present deficiency by a compulsory scheme.¹⁴⁸⁹

Despite Chatfield considering this proposal rather like ‘employing a sledge hammer to crack a nut,’ Chamberlain eventually conceded that the political situation rendered such measures necessary.¹⁴⁹⁰ In the meantime the War Office had already drafted a plan to conscript up to 200,000 home-service ‘Militiamen,’ aged between 20 and 21, for six months continuous training, followed by an obligation to serve a further three and a half years in either the Territorial Army or within a new Militia reserve unit.¹⁴⁹¹ Of the total number called up, 80,000 would be directed towards ADGB duties, in quarterly batches of 20,000, with the aim that 40,000 men would always be stationed at the anti-aircraft sites at any one time. The remainder would be allotted to newly formed Militia training units or attached to Regulars, whilst voluntary recruitment would continue in order to replace the anticipated wastage and new manpower requirements of 1939/40.¹⁴⁹²

¹⁴⁸⁷ TNA PREM 1/296 Hore-Belisha to Chamberlain, 15 April 1939.

¹⁴⁸⁸ TNA CAB 23/98/11 CC.21(39) Cabinet Minutes, 19 April 1939.

¹⁴⁸⁹ R.J. Minney, (1960) p.194.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹¹ B. Bond, (1973) p.197, entry for 3 April 1939.

¹⁴⁹² TNA CAB 24/285/13 CP.91(39) ‘Appendix: The War Office Scheme for Compulsory Military Training,’ April 1939.

Formally authorised by the passing of the Military Training Act on 26 May 1939, the scheme's eventual intention was for the bulk of the new Militia to man ADGB until an emergency was declared, whereafter Territorials would mobilise to relieve them.¹⁴⁹³ Yet, as several months would elapse before the first Militiamen were trained, the Territorials would have to step forward to man the defences in the meantime. Referred to as the 'Couverture,' this process involved four contingents of Territorials being called out in rotation, all serving one month at their respective war stations.¹⁴⁹⁴ In all this would involve calling out some 1,000 officers and 22,000 Territorials, to man 288 guns covering the key areas around London, the Thames and Medway, Dover and Portsmouth, in addition to 960 searchlights arranged in a 25-mile deep belt running from Portsmouth to Newcastle.¹⁴⁹⁵

Once in place, the 'Couverture' sought to reduce the threat of the 'knock out blow' by ensuring that approximately one-eighth of the gun positions and one-quarter of the searchlights were continuously manned.¹⁴⁹⁶ However, its actual implementation proved more difficult than hoped, and Hore-Belisha admitted that handing over responsibilities from Territorial to Militia personnel would inevitably result in disorganisation should the defences have to be fully manned.¹⁴⁹⁷ It also complicated the War Office's work more generally, as it now had to organise three separate auxiliary groups: the air defence Territorials manning the 'Couverture;' those not called out but still expanding; and the new conscripts in their purpose-built Militia camps.¹⁴⁹⁸ Yet the advantages of its implementation were thought to outweigh these problems. It was calculated that if a proportion of guns, ammunition and equipment were already emplaced at their war sites the period of deployment for the London defences could be reduced to some three hours, and Gort, believing that the greatest risk of war was likely to come in August and September, wanted to ensure that Territorials were manning the defences rather than newly-trained conscripts during these critical months.¹⁴⁹⁹

¹⁴⁹³ TNA WO 199/2970 Survey of the AA Defence of the United Kingdom, Part.1 Vol.I – 1914-1939, p.131.

¹⁴⁹⁴ *Hansard*, HC Deb 9 May 1939 vol.347 c.329.

¹⁴⁹⁵ C. Dobinson, (2001) p.152; LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1939/52 Talk with Pile, 5 May 1939.

¹⁴⁹⁶ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1939/59 Talk with Pile, 7 June 1939.

¹⁴⁹⁷ TNA CAB 2/8 CID 355th Meeting, 2 May 1939; B. Bond, (1973) pp.201, diary entry for 30 April 1939.

¹⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹⁹ TNA CAB 2/8 CID 355th Meeting, 2 May 1939.

Nevertheless, the same Territorials did not necessarily welcome being called up to man the ‘Couverture.’ Although the government rushed through legislation legalising their embodiment, the AA Territorials were still, in the words of the then GOCinC AA Command, being required ‘to honour a liability for which they did not contract.’¹⁵⁰⁰ Further antipathy was due to the memories of their treatment during the September 1938 partial mobilisation, when in many cases their embodiment had entailed a significant drop in income (especially as they were denied the £5 mobilisation gratuity designed to ameliorate this). A number of Territorials had subsequently struggled to regain employment after they had been stood down, whilst an unlucky few even lost their jobs.¹⁵⁰¹ As a consequence there was reluctance amongst some personnel to risk being mobilised again, particularly when the country was still nominally at peace.¹⁵⁰²

This dissatisfaction in the most part reflected the realisation that there were no real legislative safeguards for mobilised Territorials. Although the Reserve and Auxiliary Forces Act included a clause that included a measure of employment protection, these rules were not well defined and it was claimed that they offered no real security, either for the embodied Territorial or his employer.¹⁵⁰³ The War Office tried to reassure those called up that employment and rent protection was available, and Commanding Officers had authorisation to grant an individual up to two weeks of unpaid leave on compassionate grounds. Additionally, those in serious financial hardship could apply for special monetary assistance.¹⁵⁰⁴ Despite these concessions, however, there were still serious cases of financial and domestic hardship being reported as a consequence of the ‘Couverture’ embodiment.¹⁵⁰⁵ Such examples only added to a general feeling that the enthusiasm and voluntary spirit of Territorials was being abused, particularly when their experiences were compared against the preferential treatment being offered to the Militia.¹⁵⁰⁶

¹⁵⁰⁰ TNA WO 199/2970 Survey of the AA Defence of the United Kingdom, Part.1 Vol.I – 1914-1939, p.134.

¹⁵⁰¹ LHCMA Alanbrooke MSS 11/63 ‘Letter from Lt.-Gen. Sir John Brown,’ c.1939; TNA WO 199/2970 Survey of the AA Defence of the United Kingdom, Part.1 Vol.I – 1914-1939, p.132.

¹⁵⁰² F. Pile, (1949) pp.90-92.

¹⁵⁰³ *Hansard*, HC Deb 9 May 1939 vol.347c.347, c.355, cc.396-399; HC Deb 12 May 1939 vol.347 cc.911-952; TNA WO 199/2970 Survey of the AA Defence of the United Kingdom, Part.1 Vol.I – 1914-1939, p.132.

¹⁵⁰⁴ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 War Office to GOCinC AA Command and all AA Divisions, 10 July 1939.

¹⁵⁰⁵ TNA WO 199/2970 Survey of the AA Defence of the United Kingdom, Part.1 Vol.I – 1914-1939, p.135.

¹⁵⁰⁶ F. Pile, (1949) p.92.

Territorials and Militiamen: *Whither the TA?*

At this point it is necessary to evaluate just how significant the establishment of the Militia was for the TA, and in particular how far it signalled the effective failure of the Territorial organisation and the voluntary system on which it was based. For some it was a fateful decision, as it represented the negation of all the promises made since the 1919 that the Territorial organisation would be the sole framework for military expansion. This was a point recognised by Liddell Hart, who noted how the War Office was now ‘constrained ... to repeat the methods which were adopted in training Kitchener’s Army – which is somewhat ironical, in view of all the protestations during the post-war years that they had learned by experience the unwisdom of Kitchener’s methods and were determined to base any future expansion on the Territorial Army organisation.’¹⁵⁰⁷ This fact has also been picked up more recently by Hew Strachan, who has argued that conscription undermined the entire Territorial *raison d’être*, as ‘having been reassured that it would be the means to expand the army in time of national emergency, it now confronted a situation in which that no longer necessarily pertained.’¹⁵⁰⁸

There is certainly a case for this argument, although it does not reflect the message the authorities wanted to convey at the time. The Military Training Bill was designed, in Chamberlain’s words, as a practical measure for meeting immediate but limited requirements, and was not intended to supersede voluntarism in peace. In fact it would only apply as a special supplementation for ADGB and home defence, remaining on the statute books for no more than three years unless hostilities intervened.¹⁵⁰⁹ Nevertheless, by endorsing the Militia the Government did effectively declare the Territorial system insufficient to meet Britain’s defence requirements. During the debate on the motion Chamberlain conceded as much, telling the Commons that ‘to-day we no longer believe that the needs of the country can be met by the voluntary system if that system is to stand alone.’¹⁵¹⁰

¹⁵⁰⁷ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1939/53 ‘Note on the Compulsory “Military Training Bill”’, 8 May 1939.

¹⁵⁰⁸ H. Strachan, (2010) p.171.

¹⁵⁰⁹ TNA CAB 24/285/13 CP.91(39) ‘Proposals for Compulsory Military Training,’ 22 April 1939; *Hansard*, HL Deb 26 April 1939 vol.112 c.742.

¹⁵¹⁰ *Hansard*, HC Deb 27 April 1939 vol.346 c.1346.

Furthermore, there was now a greater acceptance that the Territorial Army system was dangerously outdated and incapable of responding to the demands of modern war, especially the prospect of the ‘knock out blow.’ As the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, William Morrison, described it:

The fact is that the Territorial Army is an instrument which was framed in times when we could expect comparatively long notice of any attack upon this country ... it is evident that to-day we must take account of the new element of speed of attack, and must ask ourselves whether this instrument, created under different assumptions, is adequate for the task we have to face.¹⁵¹¹

Hore-Belisha agreed that this inadequacy had necessitated the creation of a new ‘instrument’ of defence:

The Territorial Army is composed of men engaged in civil avocations, and we cannot keep these men long enough at a time to give them intensive training. If, then, we cannot properly discharge our commitments to the full extent desired, either with the Regular or the Territorial Army, it is plain that there is a gap in our organisation. It is this gap we must close by this scheme [i.e. the Militia].¹⁵¹²

Those agitating for conscription welcomed the proposal, as in their opinion the Territorial system had already failed. Leo Amery, a staunch advocate of military rearmament, pointed out that the nation had failed to truly embrace voluntary service as Territorials only represented some six per cent of Britain’s military-aged manhood.¹⁵¹³ Furthermore, no Territorial was capable of offering immediate service on the outbreak of war:

The idea that homeopathic doses of training, in the form of a few drills in the evenings and an annual period of a week or two in camp, would give either the individual skill or the collective cohesion that would enable you to put troops into the field is ludicrous. To send the Territorial Army to the front without some months of training after war had broken out would be sheer massacre.¹⁵¹⁴

Regardless, there still remained a widespread feeling that the decision to introduce even a limited measure of conscription in peacetime would kill off the existing Territorial Army.¹⁵¹⁵ The Labour frontbench MP Hastings Lees-Smith accused the War Office of misleading Territorials and ignoring the unprecedented recruiting success they had achieved over 1938/39. For him the Military Training Bill ‘sign[ed] the death warrant’ of the existing organisation and only ensured the future Territorial Army would only consist of ‘pressed men.’¹⁵¹⁶ Some feared that the Militia’s obligation to serve a further three and a half years in the Territorials would encourage the War Office to abolish both payments for drills and the bounty, as they would no longer have to incentivise volunteers. As one

¹⁵¹¹ *Hansard*, HC Deb 8 May 1939 vol.347c.59.

¹⁵¹² *Ibid.* vol.346 c.1448.

¹⁵¹³ *Ibid.* c.1390.

¹⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.* c.1389.

¹⁵¹⁵ L.V. Scott, *Conscription and the Attlee Governments: The Politics and Policy of National Service, 1945-1951*, (Oxford, 1993) pp.1-6; *Hansard*, HC Deb 27 April 1939 vol.346 c.1360.

¹⁵¹⁶ *Hansard*, HC Deb 4 May 1939 vol.346 cc.2110-2112; HC Deb 9 May 1939 vol.347c.377.

MP and Territorial CO warned, ‘their spirit will be killed, and we shall find that they will gradually melt away in numbers, and then it will be found that the compulsory system has come to stay as the only system, because the excuse will be that men for the Territorials cannot be obtained.’¹⁵¹⁷

Nevertheless, it has to be stressed that there were no convincing calls to abolish the TA and replace it with a new, fully conscripted National Army. Chamberlain’s government continued to stress that in broader terms defence plans still depended entirely on the Territorial Army and the voluntary principle. The expanded field army would be manned by what Hore-Belisha regarded as being ‘the best material that we have, of volunteers who have sacrificed their leisure and their holidays to fit themselves to defend our cause.’ Militiamen would only reinforce the Territorials temporarily, to ‘fill the gap while the slower process of assembling and preparing the new Territorial formations is taking place...[as] No voluntary scheme on a part-time basis could secure so rapid an accretion of trained strength.’ In one of his favourite idioms to describe the process, Hore-Belisha reassured those concerned that the Militia would only be ‘holding the fort’ until the arrival of the Territorials.¹⁵¹⁸

In purely practical terms the introduction of the Militia did lead to a certain amount of confusion, both amongst serving Territorials and those trying to volunteer. The details of the plan itself had been hurriedly conceived, with the Adjutant General only having 96 hours to finalise its finer points.¹⁵¹⁹ Thereafter its initial announcement was poorly handled, which led to differing accounts of the scheme’s specific obligations being reported in various media.¹⁵²⁰ Hore-Belisha, in his effort to convey that in no sense had the voluntary system been abandoned, reported that those who joined the TA before the 27 April would be exempted from the compulsory training period, and those under 20 who joined would be allowed to count the period they served against the three and a half years subsequent reserve obligation.¹⁵²¹ Territorial units were informed of the same, and were also told not

¹⁵¹⁷ *Hansard*, HC Deb 4 May 1939 vol.346 c.2168.

¹⁵¹⁸ *Hansard*, HC Deb 27 April 1939 vol.346 cc.1447-1448; See also IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 ‘Notes of a Speech to be made by the Secretary of State for War at a luncheon given by the Constitutional Club on April 27th 1939.’

¹⁵¹⁹ LHCMA Adam MSS 3/2 ‘Paper by AG on Use of Manpower in the Army,’ 21 Nov 1941.

¹⁵²⁰ *Hansard*, HC Deb 16 May 1939 vol.347 cc.1180-1181.

¹⁵²¹ *Hansard*, HC Deb 27 April 1939 vol.346 cc.1447-1448.

to enlist any volunteers between 20 and 21.¹⁵²² However, two days later this policy was altered so that 20 year olds could now enlist, but they had to do so within fourteen days.¹⁵²³ With men keen to enlist in a unit of their own choice, drill halls were suddenly inundated with candidates demanding a certificate to prove their voluntary credentials, which added to the more general confusion as to who was actually liable for conscription and who was not.¹⁵²⁴

There is also a clear argument that, at least in the short term, the Militia lowered the efficiency of Britain's defences, as it disrupted both Territorial and Regular training and re-directed expenditure away from more immediate needs.¹⁵²⁵ Furthermore, there were doubts whether conscripts would ever be more effective at anti-aircraft work than volunteer Territorials, and indeed whether they were needed at all.¹⁵²⁶ Given the improvements made to their readiness times, by the summer of 1939 Pile did not think a permanent force could necessarily get into action any faster than Territorial troops, and the Militiamen were at that point certainly not as well trained.¹⁵²⁷

Regardless of these issues, how the fully established Militia scheme would have impinged on the Territorial Army is hard to evaluate, as the first draft of 20,000 Militiamen were still undertaking their initial training by the time war broke out.¹⁵²⁸ Even so, there would appear to be little evidence to suggest that the Territorial Army's position was threatened by the move, and the DGTA himself fully supported Hore-Belisha's efforts to introduce it.¹⁵²⁹ Moreover, after the event the Deputy Adjutant General (Territorial) related that the advent of the Militia made no fundamental difference to the TA. Indeed, he believed that conscription was only made possible by the 'intense Recruiting Campaign of the Territorial Army over a period of years whereby the public was convinced that Service was a

¹⁵²² IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/8 DDTA to GOsCinC All Commands, 26 April 1939.

¹⁵²³ Ibid. DDTA to GOsCinC All Commands, 28 April 1939; *Hansard*, HC Deb 10 May 1939 vol.347 c.493W.

¹⁵²⁴ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/6 Minutes of Recruiting Committee for Greater London, 9 May 1939; PUS to Secretaries of all TA Associations, 8 May 1939.

¹⁵²⁵ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1939/60 Talk with Pile, 12 June 1939; 11/1939/63 Talk with Maj.-Gen. C.N.F. Broad, 11 July 1939; B. Bond, (1980) pp.310-311, 326-329; B. Bond, 'Leslie Hore-Belisha at the War Office,' in I. Beckett and H. Gooch (eds.), *Politicians and Defence: Studies in the Formulation of British Defence Policy*, (Manchester, 1981) pp.122-123; P. Dennis, (1972) pp.222-225; D. French, (2000) p.157; W. Philpott and M. Alexander, 'The French and the British Field Force: Moral Support or Material Contribution?' *Journal of Military History*, Vol.71 No.3 (2007) p.765.

¹⁵²⁶ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1939/53 'Note on the Compulsory "Military Training Bill"', 8 May 1939.

¹⁵²⁷ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1939/52 Talk with Pile, 6 May 1939.

¹⁵²⁸ LHCMA Alanbrooke MSS 11/63 'Letter from Lt.-Gen. Sir John Brown,' c.1939; Anon, 'Army Notes,' *RUSI Journal*, Vol.84 (1939) p.648; TNA WO 277/12 *Manpower Problems 1939-1945*, (London, 1949) p.9.

¹⁵²⁹ LHCMA Kirke MSS 9/1 Unpublished Memoirs.

national duty.’¹⁵³⁰ This is certainly the opinion taken by Peter Dennis, who believes that the introduction of limited conscription actually helped fill the ranks of Territorial Army as men rushed to enlist into their preferred units before they lost the option.¹⁵³¹ In addition, a Militiaman’s liability to serve an additional three and a half years in a reserve capacity promised a steady flow of manpower into the TA in the future. As Dennis concluded, ‘it was this meshing of the Territorial system into the hastily improvised national service proposal that gave the Territorial Army the reassurance that it needed in the face of the decision to overthrow the system of expansion that it had always held as essential to its survival.’¹⁵³²

* * *

Evaluation

Although not formally declared until 3 September, it has been said that the war for the Territorial anti-aircraft troops began with the ‘Couverture.’¹⁵³³ In accordance with the plan, the first batch of Territorial AA troops moved to their war stations on 11 June 1939.¹⁵³⁴ By most accounts they did so without any major problems. As Pile remarked, these units ‘went into action with remarkable smoothness, and I am convinced that the lessons we learnt in September have done us a lot of good. We can most certainly man most of our positions in about six hours.’¹⁵³⁵

The ‘Couverture’ embodiment was set to end on 30 September, but of course events intervened before this timeframe elapsed. On the morning of the 24 August it was decided to order the air defences to mobilise, with the first telegrams reaching units around 14:00. Although the call out process was delayed by the need to recall some men from their holidays, the streamlined and well-rehearsed mobilisation machinery worked efficiently and by 20:00 that evening all the London defences were

¹⁵³⁰ IWM Dunlop MSS 74/164/7 DAG(T) to AG, 28 Nov 1939.

¹⁵³¹ For example, IWM 19806 Wilmott; Lt.-Col. D. Jackson, *The Territorials of Surrey, 1908-1958*, (London, 1958) p.18; W. Saunders, *Dunkirk Diary of a Very Young Soldier*, (Birmingham, 1989) p.2; D. Edgar, *The Day of Reckoning*, (London, 1984) p.2; C.W. Reynolds, *Little Did We Know: A Territorial Soldier’s View of his War*, (Stockport, 1997) p.12; H. Secombe, *Arias and Raspberries Vol.1: The Raspberry Years*, (London, 1989) p.57.

¹⁵³² P. Dennis, (1987) p.250.

¹⁵³³ C. Dobinson, (2001) p.152.

¹⁵³⁴ LHCMA Liddell Hart MSS 11/1939/59 Talk with Pile, 7 June 1939.

¹⁵³⁵ Ibid. 1/575 Pile to Liddell Hart, 17 June 1939.

manned.¹⁵³⁶ This was a far better performance than had occurred twelve months previous, and the War Office's Pre-Precautionary Period Committee was pleased to report that by midnight on the 25/26 August 72 per cent of all HAA guns, 80 per cent of searchlights, and 74 per cent of LAA guns were in place, and that the organisational reshuffle from 'Couverture' to war stations had been completed smoothly.¹⁵³⁷

As a result, the actual outbreak of war did not find the defences unmanned and, in any case, the 'knock out blow' never materialised. In fact the AA Territorials had very little to do over their first winter of mobilised service, apart from training, improving their accommodation and absorbing conscripted recruits.¹⁵³⁸ The Territorials were never, therefore, tested in the most feared scenario.

Nevertheless, it has been possible to trace how the anti-aircraft role was perceived and developed in the TA, and also to see how there were both positives and negatives in giving Territorials the responsibility. Although it was suggested that the TA were given an anti-aircraft role purely on the grounds of economy, it remains clear that the War Office accepted there were other advantages in doing so. The Territorial system was seen as an important asset in keeping alive anti-aircraft capabilities, especially after the 1914/18 air defences were dismantled. Its localised footprint also made it easier for a broader and more evenly distributed defensive layout to be manned than could be achieved by Regular Army manpower alone. It was also considered appropriate that a force with a long home defence lineage should adopt what was seen as a modern anti-invasion responsibility.

Nevertheless, there were still clear (and arguably inherent) flaws in relying on part-time amateurs for this task. The voluntary nature of Territorial service meant that manning levels could never be assured. Anti-aircraft units had to be held near war establishment in peace if they were to man the defences effectively from the very beginning of hostilities. Yet for much of the period anti-aircraft units were seriously under-strength, which severely undermined the viability of the defences.

¹⁵³⁶ Ibid. 11/1939/74 Note: 25 August 1939.

¹⁵³⁷ TNA WO 163/71 Meeting of the PPPC, 26 August 1939.

¹⁵³⁸ C. Dobinson, (2001) pp.157-192.

Conversely, when from 1937 onward the number of volunteers started to increase the organisation lacked the training and command infrastructure to process them effectively.

Furthermore, under the standard TA training syllabus Territorials could never achieve the time necessary to gain competency, at least until the late 1930s when men were willing to commit three or four times their normal training requirement. Poor professional standards amongst the Territorial commanders and instructors, coupled with a limited availability of Regular assistance, meant that for most of the interwar period the standard of technical efficiency was below what was required. The general lack of modern equipment, effective training facilities and the scarcity of opportunities to practice under realistic conditions further compounded this. It was only the enthusiasm, commitment and perhaps higher individual standard of those volunteers coming forward in the late 1930s that resulted in the improvements witnessed just before war broke out.

Nevertheless, the greatest flaw in the Territorial system, reflecting as it does the influential spectre of the 'knock out blow,' was the difficulty in maintaining it at high readiness. Despite making impressive improvements to mobilisation times over the 1930s Territorials never managed to convince the authorities that they were capable of manning the defences in time. Admittedly, for much of the interwar period the deficiencies outlined above prevented anything more than only partial coverage, even when mobilisation was measured in days rather than the required hours. By 1939 the reforms implemented over the previous few years in an effort to accelerate mobilisation began to take effect, but lingering doubts regarding Territorial capabilities, and the obvious inability of a part-time force to make a full-time commitment, led to the introduction of a limited but compulsory measure of military service to fill this perceived gap.

Yet this does not necessarily mean the Territorial anti-aircraft troops failed to fulfill their role in its entirety. By the late 1930s it had become clear that, with sufficient investment and motivation, Territorials were capable of achieving the required standard, although this did require the stimulating impulse of an impending war. Albeit not without difficulty, the Territorial organisation had managed

to absorb a rising flood of keen volunteers who by 1939 were willing to commit to the higher level of training necessary. Although deficiencies were still to be found, the progress being made in raising the standards of efficiency and readiness was unparalleled.

Therefore, the Territorial anti-aircraft troops only really failed to perform their role once it had shifted away from being one appropriate for a part-time reserve force. In this light, the decision to introduce conscription was not prompted simply by the Territorials' failure to fulfil their home air defence role, but rather the fact that by the eve of war the stakes had been considerably raised. Raising the Militia did little to assist in the actual manning of the defences in August 1939. When the decision was made to introduce a measure of permanent manning it was Territorials who manned the 'Couverture' and then their war stations when full mobilisation was ordered. It was also the same Territorials who provided the core of AA Command's manpower during the war.¹⁵³⁹ It was only once policy dictated the need for round-the-clock coverage that Territorials could no longer be considered a viable source of manpower to operate the air defences. This is understandable, as to do so would have required them to abandon their identity as a voluntary reserve and become a full time, front-line force. With this in mind, what the introduction of conscription really illustrates is the fact that by 1939 the air defence role had evolved into something that the Territorial system itself had never been intended to provide.

¹⁵³⁹ I.F.W. Beckett, (2008) pp.132-133.

Conclusion.

*The Territorial Army is the Army. It is the only Army we have got in the modern sense of the term.*¹⁵⁴⁰

Comment by Lt.-Gen. Sir Percy Radcliffe,
(GOCinC Scottish Command), Jan 1933

Interposed between the twentieth century's two cataclysmic conflicts, the interwar years were a period of both transformative change and remarkable continuity for the British military. As Britain's strategic focus shifted periodically between imperial and continental priorities the Army had to prepare for a multitude of potential deployments. These possibilities extended from traditional tasks such as countering insurgencies and small wars within the Empire, to engaging in medium scale inter-state conflicts, and escalated all the way to 'total wars' of national survival. All of these, to one extent or another, required the existence of an effective reserve, as the Regular Army alone was only capable of engaging in a minor commitment of relatively short duration.

In the absence of an effective intermediary between the Army's 'first' and 'second' line it was the Territorial Army that provided this reserve capability. Indeed, during this period the General Staff relied on the TA to an extent that has not been appreciated to this day. Not only was the TA the sole responsible agent through which any large scale expansion of the Army would take place, but it also acted as the primary source of formed reinforcements for any war not involving national conscription. In addition it retained its traditional association with home defence, both in a domestic sense by providing a reserve for internal security purposes, as well as contributing to the active defences against the greatest external threat of the interwar period, the aerial 'knock out blow.' As a consequence the TA always held an important position in defence policy, and it continued to do so throughout both the 1920s and 1930s.

As this thesis has illustrated, the interwar TA therefore had not one but a number of varied roles, encompassing almost every aspect of Britain's likely military commitments. Moreover, even though the Territorial Field Army never had to be mobilised in support of the expeditionary force before

¹⁵⁴⁰ TNA WO 33/1308 Supplementary Report on the Staff Conference, Camberley, 9-11 Jan 1933.

1939, its availability remained a key assumption for mobilisation planning throughout the period. Unlike their predecessors, Territorials now enlisted under a formal liability to serve overseas in an emergency, an eventuality usually interpreted as another full-scale national war. Although any such deployment was subject to Parliamentary approval, this obligation removed the ambiguity surrounding manpower planning that had plagued mobilisation in 1914. At the same time, even though Territorials could not be compelled to mobilise for a medium scale war, General Staff planning still relied heavily on the voluntary impulse of individual Territorials to form the composite formations necessary to reinforce a foreign expedition.

The TA was therefore drawn in to nearly every aspect of military planning outside of imperial policing and small-scale garrison duties, but it also had an important function in ensuring domestic stability and resilience. Its role as the framework for a paramilitary or civil constabulary reserve force was a principal element in War Office provision of military aid to the civil power, and its civil defence role provided the Home Office with an important safeguard before the development of its own ARP organisation. Furthermore, the Territorial contribution to air defence gained increasingly in scale and importance until it arguably dominated the organisation by the late 1930s. In fact, by this juncture there were effectively two separate branches of Territorial service, one geared to reinforce a British commitment to an overseas ground war and the other exclusively enlisted for home service, a fact that is often forgotten in modern studies.

Bearing in mind the breadth of these responsibilities, the suggestion that the military authorities neglected the TA and regarded it as an unwanted encumbrance are certainly misguided. Instead they fully recognised the importance of its various functions, and were keen to ensure it was capable of carrying them out as effectively as possible, given the circumstances and constraints of the time. In fact the General Staff consistently tried to re-model the TA as a reserve force relevant to Britain's ever-shifting strategic policy demands. They correctly identified the Territorial Army's faults throughout the interwar period, and also worked out how to ameliorate many of them. Consistent efforts were made to improve the Territorials' standard of efficiency and also increase their readiness

to mobilise. As a result, although the War Office presided over a period of relative decline in the Territorial organisation, it was careful to ensure this atrophy was never terminal, and the TA was certainly not ill treated in comparison with the reductions made to some other aspects of defence.

However, the aspiration to fully integrate the TA with the Regular Army and reorganise it into a general-purpose reserve organisation met with only limited success. Despite being cogently argued, most of the progressive reforms the General Staff proposed throughout the 1920s and early 1930s were rejected, or only partially implemented. Admittedly the Army's low prioritisation for expenditure, as well as the general lack of urgency that pervaded defence planning before rearmament, were partly to blame for this. Yet more often than not opposition to reform came from elements within the TA itself, and especially the County Associations, who showed a conservative aversion to any policies they considered were being imposed on the TA. In taking this stance they were largely facilitated by a parallel reticence within the War Office, who wished to avoid accusations of 'breaches of faith' from what was still a voluntary and largely civilian body.

These factors were then compounded by the absence for much of the period of any formal direction from the government on how fast and how far the TA should be prepared. As a consequence the War Office lacked the full political backing and authority necessary to implement its plans, which during the 1920s in particular had allowed the Associations to repeatedly challenge the War Office's interpretation of Territorial policy. This led in turn to a breakdown in trust between the two administrative and executive bodies that was never fully repaired. Indeed, it was not until the eve of war that decisions concerning the Territorials were made purely on the grounds of their military merit and necessity.

At the same time the War Office was equally hindered by the Cabinet's proclivity, at least until the Inskip review, for deferring any firm decision on the Territorials' role at all. This had predictably baleful results on the TA's rearmament, especially in relation to its expeditionary force role, although lack of industrial capacity was the main reason for the slow re-equipment of the anti-aircraft units.

Yet, even if clearer political direction had been forthcoming, preparing the Territorial Army was still immensely problematic. Indeed, throughout the 1930s opinion within the army differed as to how to manage its reform without undermining it. For example, the General Staff developed a clear policy during Montgomery-Massingberd's tenure as CIGS, but these were at odds with those of his successor, Deverall, who subsequently reversed it. This illustrates the fact that there was no comprehensive formula through which the TA was to be made ready.

Yet perhaps the opposite problem was encountered by the Territorial anti-aircraft troops, where the political urgency to accelerate their expansion put them under enormous pressure and stretched their capabilities to the maximum. At first the decision to utilise Territorial manpower to operate the air defences was not simply due to their lower cost or an acknowledgement of their home defence lineage, but based on practical considerations. After 1918 the existing defences were quickly dismantled, the hope being that Territorials would provide a specialist pool to retain the technical anti-aircraft skills and knowledge accrued during the war. Furthermore, the localised distribution of Territorial units was thought ideal for manning a decentralised air defence layout. In any case, throughout the interwar years the few Regular Army anti-aircraft units in existence were always earmarked to deploy with the expeditionary force, rather than contribute to home defence. Defending the skies above Britain was thus always considered to be a Territorial Army responsibility.

In reality, however, it proved impossible for the part-time Territorial system to guarantee any degree of full time defensive coverage. Unlike the field army, the air defences could not assume several months of post-mobilisation training before an attempted 'knock out blow.' The reliance on voluntary recruitment meant that manpower levels in anti-aircraft units fluctuated, but rarely approached full strength. This was a fundamental weakness, as these units had to be capable of fully manning their war stations from the outset of hostilities. It was also recognised that the limited training opportunities available under the Territorial system made it unlikely that personnel could attain the required level of technical skill. As a result poor standards of ability combined with a general lack of modern equipment in ensuring standards of efficiency remained low. Furthermore, it was found that

part-time Territorials simply could not be mobilised quickly enough in an emergency, or be held at the high level of readiness demanded. Such doubts were a major contributory factor towards the introduction in 1939 of a measure of peacetime conscription. On the other hand, this decision alone indicates that the tasks the Territorial anti-aircraft troops were being asked to perform were no longer appropriate for a part-time amateur force.

Indeed, inherent in this voluntary amateur system were a number of key flaws that prevented the TA from acting as a truly effective reserve. For a start the TA always struggled to attract the right sort of man in sufficient numbers, at least until 1938/39. As a result the force operated for most of the interwar period far below its established strength, which affected both the realism of its training as well as its physical capacity to mobilise. Furthermore, the voluntary principle effectively ruled out any progressive continuity in training, as Territorials could never be compelled to attend. This fact was compounded by the force's failure over the early 1920s to retain war-experienced veterans and the subsequent high turnover of its peacetime trained personnel throughout the 1930s.

This may not have been a problem as long as the men willing to commit themselves to Territorial service were maintained at a high level of individual efficiency. After all, the Territorial Army's training goal was not to prepare to fight but to prepare for mobilisation and, as evinced in the cadre system, the Territorial organisation was intended to provide the leadership, instructional and specialist skills-based framework on which to graft an expanded army. Whether it could or not depended on a number of factors. These included the ability of its own commanders and instructors to design and deliver an appropriate training programme, the direction and focus of the programmes themselves, the availability of equipment and other aids, and the degree of professional assistance it could expect from the Regular Army. However, the support the TA received in all these areas was never truly sufficient, and by 1938/39 the War Office was seriously struggling to control the pace and direction of its expansion.

The outbreak of war caught the TA in a state of transition as it dealt with the organisational ramifications of duplication and an expanded rearmament programme. Yet, despite these deficiencies, the Territorial Field Army still managed to carry out its responsibilities when war was declared. At the organisational level the TA provided the military with a valuable framework upon which the wartime national army could be formed. There was no need to improvise another 'New Army' on the Kitchener model, and in purely numerical terms Territorial formations and manpower provided the chief source of strength behind Britain's initial military commitment. The vast majority of first-line units succeeded in mobilising and carried out their allotted wartime duties without mishap, even though doing so often came at the expense of their duplicate second-line. Furthermore, although those formations earmarked to reinforce the BEF would undoubtedly have benefitted from more pre-deployment training, they were still despatched largely complete and according to timetable. Similarly the Territorials manning the searchlights and guns of AA Command did so quickly and efficiently, and continued to provide the core manpower for Britain's ground-based air defences throughout the war.

Although the Territorial Army's subsequent performance during the 1940 campaign has been described as poor, this is perhaps unfair given the challenges it faced. Historians tend to view the experiences of 1939/40 through the prism of defeat, but if the German offensive had been successfully repelled, and the French campaign developed into the stalemate that allied planners had anticipated, Territorial formations may well have had the time to adequately prepare. This may have resulted in a very different evaluation of the TA's contribution, and certainly the BEF was in a much better position than had been the case during the military build-up of 1914/16. In any case, by 1940 Territorial, Regular and conscripted servicemen were rapidly becoming indistinguishable, and the outcome of the campaign in France and Belgium was a result of much broader failings. Yet without the TA Britain would have been entirely incapable of deploying the BEF as quickly as it did, or really of making any meaningful commitment to the defence of Western Europe at all.

Reviewing the interwar period as a whole, it is clear that the War Office and General Staff did not view the Territorial Army as an impediment but an essential element of Britain's broader military capabilities. Although the importance of its roles varied according to the strategic focus at any one time, the TA provided a number of valuable functions that the Regular Army alone was simply incapable of fulfilling. Therefore, clarifying how the role and organisation of the Territorial Army developed is essential if a balanced understanding of Britain's military policy and its capabilities is to be gained.

Admittedly, in terms of its efficiency the standard the Territorial Army achieved was still disappointing. Nevertheless, many of the reasons for this were due to the inherent flaws in accepting a voluntary, part-time reserve system, and thus were an inevitable concomitant to the abandonment of conscription after the First World War. Yet making Territorial service compulsory was never a viable option, as the voluntary principle was at the heart of the amateur military tradition and the corporate identity of the Territorial Army. This was not always seen as an advantage, as although it encouraged an *esprit de corps* amongst Territorial volunteers it also hindered their effective integration with the rest of the Army. Ultimately, however, the positives outweighed the negatives. Territorials may well have appeared on the surface to be 'pinchbeck regulars,' but throughout the interwar years and on the outbreak of war the Territorial Army's contribution remained a vital element in Britain's military system.

Appendix 1

War Office and Army Council Key Personnel, 1918 to 1939 (arranged by date of appointment)

Secretary of State for War

Winston Churchill – 10 Jan 1919
Sir Laming Worthington-Evans – 13 Feb 1921
The Earl of Derby – 24 Oct 1922
Stephen Walsh – 24 Jan 1924
Sir Laming Worthington-Evans – 7 Nov 1924
Thomas Shaw – 8 June 1929
The Marquess of Crewe – 26 Aug 1931
Viscount Hailsham – 9 Nov 1931
Viscount Halifax – 7 June 1935
Alfred Duff Cooper – 27 Nov 1935
Leslie Hore-Belisha – 28 May 1937

Parliamentary Under-Secretary

Viscount Peel – 14 Jan 1919
Sir R.A. Sanders – 2 Apr 1921
Hon. W.E. Guinness – 31 Oct 1922
C.R. Attlee – 23 Jan 1924
The Earl of Onslow – 12 Nov 1924
The Duke of Sutherland – 4 Dec 1928
The Earl de la Warr – 10 June 1929
Lord Marley – 13 June 1930
Earl of Stanhope – 11 Nov 1931
Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal – 3 Feb 1934
The Earl of Munster – 31 Jan 1939

Financial Secretary

H.W. Forster – 19 June 1915
Sir A. Williamson – 23 Dec 1919
Hon. G.F. Stanley – 2 Apr 1921
R.S. Gwynne – 16 March 1923
J.J. Lawson – 23 Jan 1924
H.D. King – 12 Nov 1924
A. Duff Cooper – 14 Jan 1928
E. Shinwell – 10 June 1929
W.S. Sanders – 6 June 1930
A. Duff Cooper – 1 Sept 1931
Douglas Hacking – 2 July 1934
Sir Victor Warrender – 29 Nov 1935

Permanent Under Secretary (PUS)

Sir Reginald Brade – 15 Jan 1914
Sir Herbert Creedy – 15 Jan 1920

Chief of the Imperial General Staff

FM Sir Henry Wilson – 19 Feb 1918
General The Earl of Cavan – 19 Feb 1922
General Sir George Milne – 19 Feb 1926
General Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd – 19 Feb 1933
FM Sir Cyril Deverell – 7 April 1936
General The Viscount Gort – 6 Dec 1937

Adjutant-General to the Forces

Lt.-Gen. Sir G.M.W. Macdonogh – 11 Sept 1918
Lt.-Gen. Sir Philip Chetwode – Sept 1922
Lt.-Gen. Sir Robert Whigham – 1 March 1923
Gen. Sir Walter Braithwaite – 1 March 1927
Gen. Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd – 1 March 1931
Gen. Sir Cecil Romer – 19 Feb 1933
Lt.-Gen Sir Harry Knox – 1 March 1935
Lt.-Gen Sir Clive Liddell – 13 Dec 1937
Gen. Sir Robert Gordon-Finlayson – July 1939

Master-General of the Ordnance [ceased to be a member of the AC after 1937]

Lt.-Gen. Sir William Furse – 4 Dec 1916
Lt.-Gen. Sir John Du Cane – 1 Jan 1920
Lt.-Gen. Sir Noel Birch – 1 Oct 1923
Lt.-Gen. Sir Webb Gillman – 1 Oct 1927
Maj.-Gen. Sir Ronald Charles – 1 March 1931
Lt.-Gen. Sir Hugh Elles – 5 May 1934

Quartermaster-General

Lt.-Gen. Sir Travers Clarke – 16 March 1919
Lt.-Gen. Sir Walter Campbell – 16 March 1923
Lt.-Gen. Sir Hastings Anderson – 16 March 1927
Lt.-Gen. Sir Felix Ready – 2 Feb 1931
Lt.-Gen. Sir Reginald May – 2 Feb 1935
Lt.-Gen. Sir Walter Venning – 1 Feb 1939

NB: The Director-General of Munitions Production, Vice-Admiral Harold Brown, was a member of the AC by Order in Council from 26 Sept 1936. The DGTA was a member from 22 Oct 1937

Appendix 2

Director-Generals of the Territorial Army, 1917 to 1939

Maj.-Gen. the Earl of Scarbrough

Appointed aged 60 in Feb 1917, departed Feb 1921 (retired in post)

Commissioned into the Cavalry/Yeomanry

Lt.-Gen. Sir J.F. Noel Birch

Appointed aged 56 in Feb 1921, departed Oct 1923 (on appointment as MGO)

Commissioned into the Royal Artillery (RHA)

Lt.-Gen. Sir Hugh S. Jeudwine

Appointed aged 61 in Oct 1923, departed Oct 1927 (retired in post)

Commissioned into the Royal Artillery

Lt.-Gen. Sir Reginald Stephens

Appointed aged 58 in Oct 1927, departed Oct 1931 (retired in post)

Commissioned into the Infantry

Gen. Sir William Thwaites

Appointed aged 63 in Oct 1931, departed Oct 1933 (retired in post)

Commissioned into the Royal Artillery

Lt.-Gen. Sir Charles Bonham-Carter

Appointed aged 57 in Oct 1933, departed April 1936 (retired as Governor of Malta)

Commissioned into the Infantry

Lt.-Gen. Sir Walter M St.G Kirke

Appointed aged 59 in April 1936, departed June 1939 (on appointment as Inspector General Home Defences/CinC Home Forces)

Commissioned into the Royal Artillery

Lt.-Gen. Sir W. Douglas S. Brownrigg

Appointed aged 53 in June 1939, departed Sept 1939 (on post being dissolved)

Commissioned into the Infantry

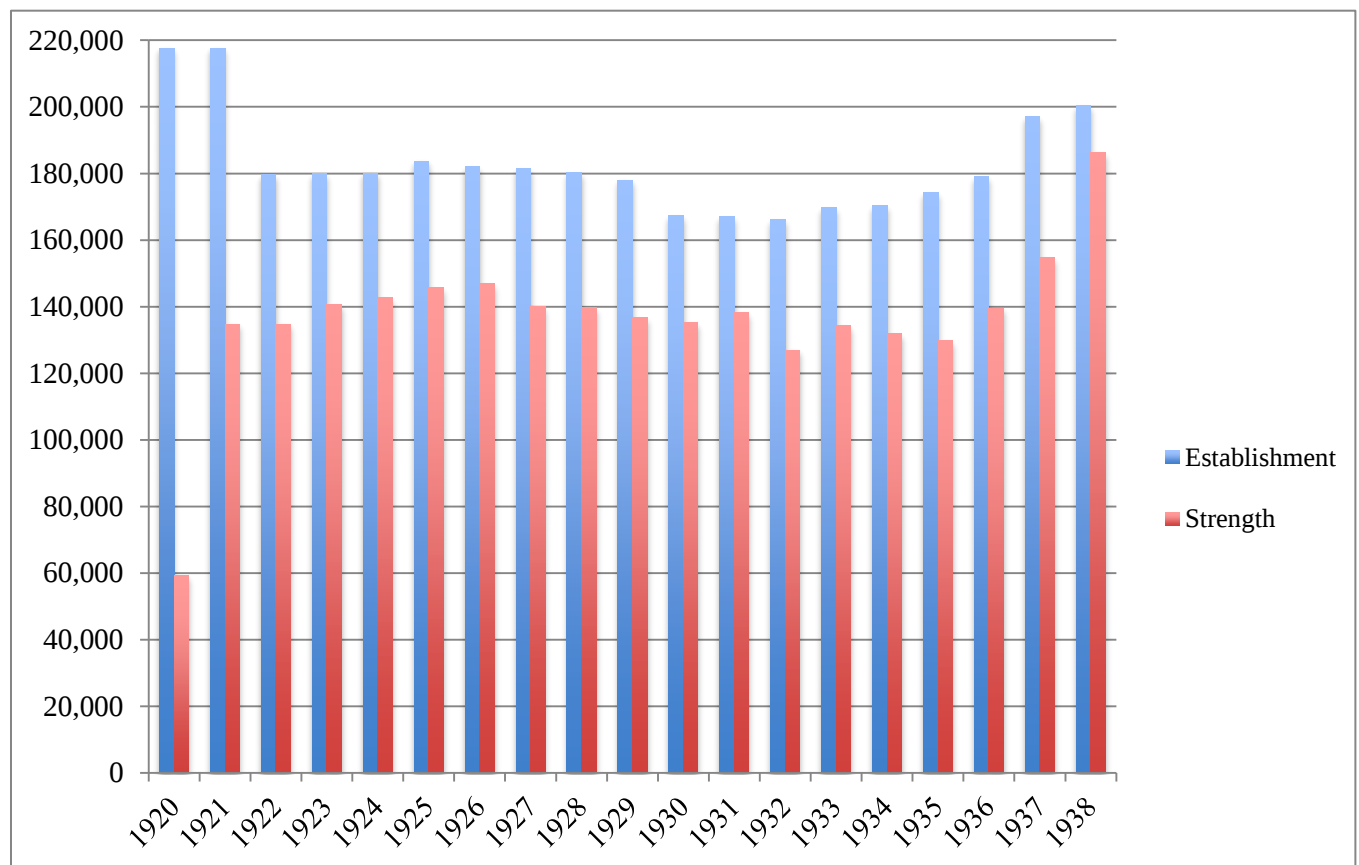
Table I**Establishment and Strength of the Territorial Army (All Arms,
including Permanent Staff), 1920 to 1938.**

Year	Establishment	Strength
1920 Territorials	-	59,343
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	-	2,129
1921 Territorials	-	134,753
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	-	2,279
1922 Territorials	179,622	134,769
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,807	1,831
1923 Territorials	180,089	140,626
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,824	1,814
1924 Territorials	180,132	142,804
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,828	1,808
1925 Territorials	183,732	145,684
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,850	1,841
1926 Territorials	182,141	146,904
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,831	1,838
1927 Territorials	181,460	139,901
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,801	1,797
1928 Territorials	180,276	139,683
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,798	1,798
1929 Territorials	178,002	136,791
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,798	1,786
1930 Territorials	167,267	135,358
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,797	1,783
1931 Territorials	167,203	138,231
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,785	1,780
1932 Territorials	166,193	126,975
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,786	1,782
1933 Territorials	169,869	134,343
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,801	1,791
1934 Territorials	170,370	131,937
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,804	1,798
1935 Territorials	174,362	129,811
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,810	1,806
1936 Territorials	179,000	139,577
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	1,844	1,822
1937 Territorials	197,146	154,802
<i>Perm. Staff</i>	2,035	1,963
1938 Territorials	200,302	186,421

Source: *Parliamentary Papers*, General Annual Reports for the British Army for each Year; TNA WO 287/248 Part VI: Establishment, Strength and Camp Attendance for the Territorial Army and Supplementary Reserve.

Table II

Establishments and Strengths of the Territorial Army (Excluding Permanent Staff), 1920 to 1938



Source: *Parliamentary Papers*, General Annual Reports for the British Army for each Year; TNA WO 287/248 Part VI: Establishment, Strength and Camp Attendance for the Territorial Army and Supplementary Reserve.

Table III**Establishment and Strength of the Territorial Army (Officers)
on 1 October of each Year**

Year	Establishment	Strength
1920	10,623	5,023
1921	10,623	6,582
1922	7,855	6,036
1923	8,054	6,259
1924	7,748	6,096
1925	7,789	6,340
1926	7,764	6,539
1927	7,706	6,615
1928	7,732	6,656
1929	7,699	6,784
1930	7,699	6,765
1931	7,675	6,693
1932	7,657	6,662
1933	7,718	6,771
1934	7,746	6,809
1935	8,851	6,965
1936	8,994	7,482
1937	9,715	8,625
1938	9,900	9,845

**Establishment and Strength of the Territorial Army (Other
Ranks) on 1 October of each Year**

Year	Establishment	Strength
1920	207,009	54,320
1921	207,009	128,171
1922	171,767	128,733
1923	172,341	134,679
1924	172,384	136,708
1925	175,943	139,344
1926	174,377	140,365
1927	173,754	133,286
1928	172,542	133,027
1929	170,303	130,007
1930	159,568	128,593
1931	159,528	131,538
1932	158,536	120,313
1933	162,151	127,572
1934	162,624	125,274
1935	165,511	122,846
1936	170,006	132,095
1937	187,431	146,177
1938	190,402	176,576

Source: *Parliamentary Papers*, General Annual Reports for the British Army for each Year; TNA WO 287/248 Part VI: Establishment, Strength and Camp Attendance for the Territorial Army and Supplementary Reserve, 1938.

Table IV

Increase in Strengths (Other Ranks) in the Territorial Army, 1920 to 1931 (each year ending 30 September)

Recruits and Re-enlistments	1913	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931
With previous service in TA:													
1) Before 16/2/1920	3,644	18,624	13,422	2,864	1,582	987	968	475	190	109	138	191	70
2) After 16/2/1920													
1 Year engagement			597	1,079	732	401	367	216	139	112	127	73	70
2 Year engagement				199	475	305	219	67	48	50	35	35	28
3 year engagement				8	117	355	353	159	97	93	64	49	40
4 year engagement					26	207	839	873	679	1,112	1,229	1,607	1,783
Others with previous military service before 1920	1,089	9,523	18,758	6,949	3,941	2,977	3,036	1,876	1,015	1,056	799	615	440
Regular Army Service after 1920			4,908	3,078	2,235	1,746	1,712	1,315	913	1,107	900	870	1,138
Militia/Supp. Res.			64	204	15	25	14	10	20	14	87	72	51
Recruits with no previous service	67,205	26,889	46,314	23,770	24,789	24,952	29,072	26,386	19,618	25,276	24,762	24,952	26,343
TOTAL Increase (all sources)	72,293	55,512	113,355	43,491	35,788	36,306	40,611	32,844	23,671	29,809	28,870	29,103	30,729

Source: *Parliamentary Papers*, General Annual Reports for the British Army for each Year.

Table V**Decrease in Strengths (Other Ranks) in the Territorial Army, 1920 to 1931 (each year ending 30 September)**

Discharges	1912-13	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931
On termination of engagement	62,978	1	4,157	12,169	11,380	14,614	19,206	16,210	16,844	16,612	18,020	17,060	13,572
At own request (purchase)	1,320	9	44	126	201	222	268	305	280	315	304	185	135
At own request (free)	8,376	59	1,080	3,789	3,470	3,616	3,314	3,262	3,440	3,293	3,638	3,433	2,905
Misconduct	1,366	53	783	1,384	1,781	1,752	1,079	767	661	642	507	470	675
Medically Unfit	1,526	30	268	542	761	620	553	553	566	534	422	502	473
Not likely to become an efficient soldier	935	30	594	1,535	2,043	1,122	414	273	207	251	281	253	347
Struck off as deserters or absentees	1,504	2	23	107	166	487	1,660	1,369	891	960	640	652	684
Joined Regular Army	3,346	624	4,301	5,456	3,768	3,423	3,530	3,630	3,097	3,171	3,274	3,220	3,938
Special Reserve	2,208	8		3		5	638	243	10	50	175	108	69
Royal Navy/Marines	1,463	13	302	179	204	278	253	359	281	88	63	63	108
Royal Air Force		4	151	174	180	207	110	62	65	113	88	108	78
TOTAL Decrease	88,058	1,192	39,504	42,929	29,842	34,277	37,975	31,823	30,750	30,068	31,890	30,517	27,784
Net Increase/Decrease	-15,765	54,320	73,851	562	5,946	2,029	2,636	1,021	-7,079	-269	-3,020	-1,414	2,945
<i>Strength at end of year</i>	236,389	54,320	128,171	128,733	134,679	136,708	139,344	140,365	133,286	133,027	130,007	128,593	131,538

Source: *Parliamentary Papers*, General Annual Reports for the British Army for each Year.

Table VI**Increase in Strengths (Other Ranks) in the Territorial Army, 1932 to 1939 (each year ending 31 March)**

	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
Strength at beginning of year	128,832	122,997	122,735	125,333	123,474	122,434	139,532	158,126
INCREASE								
Recruits and Re-enlistments:-								
(1) With previous service in TA:-								
(a) Prior to 16/2/1920 -	48	44	52	51	31	141	193	405
On 1 year's engagement	48	43	77	54	39	78	63	177
On 2 year's engagement	19	13	29	16	23	33	21	77
On 3 year's engagement	26	23	34	31	28	29	54	90
On 4 year's engagement	1440	1904	2414	2228	2189	4338	3276	5115
(2) Other with previous military service before 16/2/1920	304	227	316	248	158	414	654	1234
(3) Other with previous military service after 16/2/1920								
(a) In Regular Army	917	1045	1518	1462	1135	2007	1914	3192
(b) In Supplementary Reserve	20	17	101	29	14	34	72	119
(c) Others with service in Cadet Corps								308
(4) Recruits with no previous military service	18057	21330	23947	21799	20077	36236	40956	76868
(5) Recruits whose documents have not been received	70	94	112	116	72	7	559	92
(6) Other causes (e.g. previous service in RAF etc.)	68	77	96	85	49	163	167	233
Total Recruits (1-6)	21017	24817	28696	26119	23815	43480	47929	87915
Other Causes		4	6	5	6	5	103	614
TOTAL INCREASE	21,017	24,821	28,072	26,124	23,821	43,485	48,032	88,529

Source: TNA WO 287/248 Statistical Review of officers and other ranks in the Regular Army, Reserve, Supplementary Reserve and Territorial Army: Part V.

Table VII**Decrease in Strengths (Other Ranks) in the Territorial Army, 1932 to 1939 (each year ending 31 March)**

	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939
Strength at beginning of year	128,832	122,997	122,735	125,333	123,474	122,434	139,532	158,126
DECREASE								
Run Out:-								
Discharged on termination of engagement	14,161	14,608	14,596	15,924	11,900	11,628	12,986	11,462
Discharged on attaining age limit	292	332	279	378	517	406	432	494
Total Run Out	14,453	14,940	14,875	16,302	12,417	12,034	13,418	11,956
Wastage:-								
Died	338	331	284	321	257	310	314	323
Discharged at own request:-								
By purchase	110	110	114	96	95	97	124	94
Free	2725	1880	2601	2844	2745	3029	3312	4705
For all cases of misconduct	697	543	511	406	483	477	577	609
Service no longer required (Normal)	3567	3232	3366	3240	3261	3575	3883	4336
Service no longer required (On Conversion)					580	1352	112	2259
False answer on attestation	14	10	4	8	7	9	8	18
Irregularly enlisted	10	6	11	9	7	13	11	26
Claimed as an apprentice								3
Mis-statement as to age on enlistment	25	8	20	9	15	12	27	34
Medically unfit	475	301	436	444	358	371	350	604
Not likely to become an efficient soldier	346	181	376	290	229	220	247	309
To join Regular Army	3160	2992	2597	3017	2774	2743	3759	5539
To join Supplementary Reserve	80	51	63	25	116	491	706	943
To join Royal Navy or Marines	107	78	163	261	352	601	795	987
To join RAF	69	20	28	84	423	360	698	1967
For other causes	84	68	100	137	96	2	138	671
Appointed to Commission in:-								
Territorial Army		61	61	69	99	100	119	366
Supplementary Reserve		7	6	2	7	8	17	21
RAF	77 (All)	4	2	5	25	27	50	23
Regular Army					2	4		4
Royal Navy or Marines						1		19
Struck off for Desertion or Absence (Net)	515	260	486	414	513	551	773	627
Total Wastage	12,399	10,143	11,229	11,681	12,444	14,353	16,020	24,487
Total Transfers (including conversions)	449	377	516	553	1898	6871	3318	15393
Total Decrease	26,852	25,083	26,104	27,983	24,861	26,387	24,938	36,443

Strength at end of year	122,997	122,735	125,333	123,474	122,434	139,532	158,126	210,212
Average strength during year	129,748	120,917	126,429	124,964	122,830	131,936	147,676	184,455
Percentage of Net Wastage on Average Strength	9.56%	8.39%	8.88%	9.35%	10.10%	10.88%	10.84%	13.30%
Establishment (Army Estimates)	159,568	162,405	161,486	165,821	172,720	191,202	191,426	233,943
Deficit at end of year	36,571	39,670	36,153	42,347	50,286	51,670	33,324	23,731

Source: TNA WO 287/248 Statistical Review of officers and other ranks in the Regular Army, Reserve, Supplementary Reserve and Territorial Army: Part V.

Table VIII

The Ages of Warrant Officers, NCOs and Men serving in the Territorial Army on 1 October of each year, 1921 to 1938 (Permanent Staff excluded)

Ages	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
17-19	49,557	35,641	29,936	28,499	29,667	29,500	25,837	27,059	28,800	30,556	31,758	24,210	26,457	24,631	23,280	25,774	33,177	45,495
20-24	36,042	51,877	62,950	64,150	60,954	60,567	56,971	54,505	50,190	47,062	48,092	46,335	47,845	46,316	44,057	45,352	44,030	48,011
25-29	18,184	18,190	18,993	20,283	22,393	22,794	22,835	22,712	21,907	21,618	21,810	20,074	21,078	20,890	20,969	23,193	26,068	31,346
30-34	10,893	10,335	10,386	11,071	12,778	13,655	13,724	14,356	14,237	13,939	13,928	13,662	14,907	15,294	15,804	17,630	19,073	22,410
35-39	9,117	8,093	7,201	6,928	7,203	7,409	7,302	7,531	7,853	8,301	8,943	9,077	9,781	10,325	10,594	11,148	13,429	16,590
40-44	3,013	2,988	3,429	3,858	4,226	4,228	4,301	4,310	4,295	4,242	4,238	4,112	4,442	4,659	5,086	5,952	6,945	8,347
45-49	1,188	1,325	1,414	1,491	1,581	1,602	1,633	1,815	1,998	2,087	2,013	2,050	2,206	2,263	2,312	2,322	2,741	3,384
50+	172	284	350	428	542	627	683	745	727	788	756	788	856	926	932	925	915	993
TOTAL	128,171	128,733	134,679	136,708	139,344	140,365	133,286	133,027	130,007	128,593	131,538	120,318	127,572	125,274	123,034	132,296	146,378	176,576

Source: General Annual Reports for the British Army for each year; TNA WO 287/248 Statistical Review of Officers and Other Ranks, 1938-1939, Part V Table 8.

Table IX

The Ages of Recruits who enlisted in the Territorial Army on 1 October of each year, 1921 to 1938

Ages	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
17-19	35,854	16,146	16,346	15,988	17,591	16,016	12,363	17,080	17,002	17,389	18,018	8,774	16,508	12,649	12,950	15,444	21,085	29,268
20-24	22,725	10,933	8,909	8,071	9,707	8,196	5,495	7,551	6,797	6,676	7,203	3,472	9,038	6,669	6,522	8,140	9,607	12,502
25-29	11,520	5,350	4,058	3,610	3,936	2,774	1,811	2,431	2,358	2,303	2,543	1,236	3,513	2,538	2,606	4,053	5,361	8,134
30-34	6,735	2,384	1,888	1,585	1,923	1,470	923	1,262	1,191	1,192	1,420	753	2,298	1,859	1,930	2,802	3,663	5,571
35-39	5,474	1,472	932	831	895	662	393	512	559	613	638	255	863	749	741	1,237	2,117	3,341
40-44	1,641	474	374	360	388	254	198	242	242	267	238	126	379	271	244	453	1,027	1,588
45-49	599	251	197	114	138	74	62	66	85	97	71	34	167	116	109	126	337	622
50+	65	40	19	14	41	8	7	9	32	34	11	3	17	15	32	16	35	63
<i>TOTAL</i>	<i>84,613</i>	<i>37,050</i>	<i>32,723</i>	<i>30,573</i>	<i>34,619</i>	<i>29,454</i>	<i>21,252</i>	<i>29,153</i>	<i>28,266</i>	<i>28,571</i>	<i>30,142</i>	<i>14,653</i>	<i>32,783</i>	<i>24,866</i>	<i>25,134</i>	<i>32,271</i>	<i>43,232</i>	<i>61,089</i>

Source: General Annual Reports for the British Army for each year; TNA WO 287/248 Statistical Review of Officers and Other Ranks, 1938-1939, Part V Table 6.

Table X

**The Number of Territorial Officers Commissioned into the Regular Army,
compared with officers commissioned through the Royal Military Academy and
Royal Military College**

Year	TA	RMA Woolwich	RMC Sandhurst
1926/27	16	100	261
1927/28	22	134	248
1928/29	21	144	220
1929/30	14	144	233
1930/31	10	127	245
1931/32	12	117	263
1932/33	16	118	276
1933/34	7	109	239
1934/35	18	110	189
1935/36	20	140	270
1936/37	23	163	279
1937/38	45	160	262

Source: TNA WO 287/251 Statistical Review of Officers and Other Ranks; WO 287/248 Statistical Review 1938/39.

Table XI

**Number of Territorials Enlisted into the Civil Constabulary
Reserve, 1926**

	Serving Territorials	Ex-Soldiers	Others (OTC, civilians, etc.)	Total
Met. Police District	3,625	5,671	1,866	11,162
Eastern Command	74	31	-	105
Northern Command	2,319	820	124	3,163
Southern Command	788	339	94	1,221
Scottish Command	816	368	102	1,286
Western Command	1,194	229	23	1,446
<i>Total</i>	<i>8,816</i>	<i>7,458</i>	<i>2,209</i>	<i>18,483</i>

Source: TNA WO 287/251 Statistical Review of Officers and Other Ranks for the Financial Year 1926/27.

Table XII**Regular Assistance (Personnel and Funding) Rendered during the 'Territorial Year,'
1930/31**

Command	Divisions	Regular assistance to Territorial Army		Command Allotment	Finance	
		Officers	Other Ranks		Average cost <i>per caput</i> Officers rendering assistance	ORs rendering assistance
Eastern	44th	76	236	£3,000	£9 7s 0d	£1 15s 0d
	54th	78	515			
London District	56th	54	564	£2,500	£7 9s 10d	£0 19s 9d
	47th	50	563			
Northern	50th	38	76	£5,500	£10 8s 7d	£3 0s 0d
	49th	58	80			
	46th	90	183			
Scottish	51st	20	56	£1,500	£10 10s 0d	£3 0s 0d
	52nd	16	34			
Southern	43rd	71	878	£3,500	£6 14s 0d	£0 16s 0d
	48th	83	822			
Western	42nd	37	74	£6,000	£8 0s 0d	£1 8s 0d
	53rd	87	475			
	55th	91	719			

This shows the number of regular officers and other ranks who actually assisted each of the 14 divisions of the TA in 1930, the amount of money allotted to each command for the purpose, and the average cost expended *per caput* in each command for officers and NCOs rendering this assistance.

Source: TNA WO 231/217 Army Training Memorandum, No.1A: Collective Training Period 1930 - Report on the "Territorial Army Year," 1930-31: Appendix B.

Table XIII

**The Strength of the Territorial Army and Attendance at Annual
Training for the full duration**

Year	Strength (1 Oct of each year)		Attended Camp (15 Days)	
	Officers	Other Ranks	Officers	Other Ranks
1913	9,390	236,389	7,099	157,827
1920	5,023	55,049	1,063	23,173
1921	6,582	128,171	3,546	92,849
1922	6,036	128,733	4,083	96,482
1923	6,259	134,679	4,436	101,471
1924	6,096	136,708	4,587	102,512
1925	6,340	139,344	4,769	106,812
1926	6,539	140,365	3,169	64,601
1927	6,615	133,286	5,354	98,379
1928	6,656	133,027	5,380	98,774
1929	6,784	130,007	5,425	93,842
1930	6,765	128,593	5,393	93,117
1931	6,693	131,538	5,502	98,449
1932	6,662	120,313	-	-
1933	6,771	127,572	5,672	95,034
1934	6,809	125,274	5,425	90,320
1935	6,965	122,846	5,703	87,784
1936	7,482	132,095	6,250	98,308
1937	8,625	146,177	7,229	111,516
1938	9,845	176,576	8,174	140,292

NB: No camps were held in 1932

Source: *Parliamentary Papers*, General Annual Report on the British Army for each Year (Table 4); TNA WO 287/248 Part VI: Establishment, Strength and Camp Attendance for the Territorial Army and Supplementary Reserve.

Table XIV**Increase of Officers each Year and their main sources, 1932-1939**

Year (Ending 31 March)	Commissioned from Civil Life	Ex-Cadet OTC	From the Ranks (TA)	Total
1932	223 (29.2%)	393 (51.4%)	44 (5.8%)	764
1933	176 (24.4%)	376 (52.2%)	61 (8.5%)	720
1934	223 (26.9%)	394 (47.5%)	64 (7.7%)	830
1935	234 (29.2%)	351 (43.8%)	71 (8.9%)	801
1936	253 (27.3%)	433 (46.7%)	100 (10.8%)	928
1937	550 (32.3%)	832 (48.9%)	101 (5.9%)	1,701
1938	544 (31.8%)	693 (40.5%)	119 (6.9%)	1,713
1939	827 (25.2%)	1,506 (45.9%)	386 (11.7%)	3,286

Source: TNA WO 287/251 Statistical Review of Officers and Other Ranks, 1926-1938; WO 287/248 Statistical Review of Officers and Other Ranks, 1938-1939.

Table XV**GOC Training Grant for Use Outside of the Annual Training Period (Week-End Camps, Courses of Instruction, Etc.)**

Year	Training Grant (£)	Total Net Cost (TA)	Cost of Additional Regular Army Assistance
1921	-	7,573,300	-
1922	163,000	5,653,500	-
1923	165,000	5,239,600	-
1924	165,000	4,734,800	-
1925	165,000	4,329,700	-
1926	160,000	4,765,000	-
1927	149,450	4,752,000	-
1928	149,500	4,650,600	-
1929	144,500	4,495,700	-
1930	144,500	4,228,100	-
1931	144,500	4,268,900	-
1932	193,400	3,203,000	6,100
1933	121,000	4,040,000	7,000
1934	133,400	4,073,000	6,530
1935	133,300	4,212,000	9,000
1936	133,000	4,918,300	9,000
1937	171,300	6,640,500	9,000
1938	223,500	8,832,600	9,000
1939	541,000	13,190,000	-

Source: *Parliamentary Papers*, Army Estimates (Vote 2, Part F - Training) for each year.

Table
XVI

Establishment and Strength of Territorial Air Defence Troops, 1922 to 1937

Year	Establishment		Strength	
	Officers	Other Ranks	Officers	Other Ranks
1922	232	2,969	-	-
1923	234	2,969	75	673
1924	234	2,977	102	983
1925	184	3,661	124	2,246
1926	272	5,812	196	3,205
1927	272	5,814	197	3,013
1928	315	6,950	215	3,217
1929	315	6,950	233	3,017
1930	315	6,950	222	3,027
1931	315	6,950	233	3,112
1932	316	6,954	241	2,916
1933	316	6,454	239	2,956
1934	329	8,251	260	3,221
1935	367	9,594	286	3,741
1936	840	20,422	683	9,006
1937	1,873	47,830	1,515	25,854

Source: *Parliamentary Papers*, General Annual Reports for the British Army for each Year.

Table
XVII

**The Share of the Territorial Army Vote in each Year's Army Estimates, 1920
to 1939**

Year	Total Army Vote (£)	Territorial Expenditure (£)	Percentage
1920	125,000,000	8,137,000	6.5%
1921	106,315,000	7,573,000	7.1%
1922	62,300,000	5,653,000	9.1%
1923	52,000,000	5,239,600	10.1%
1924	45,000,000	4,734,800	10.5%
1925	44,500,000	4,329,700	9.7%
1926	42,500,000	3,315,500	7.8%
1927	41,565,000	3,291,000	7.9%
1928	41,050,000	3,233,000	7.9%
1929	40,545,000	3,085,300	7.6%
1930	40,500,000	2,845,200	7.0%
1931	39,930,000	2,948,000	7.4%
1932	36,488,000	2,064,800	5.7%
1933	37,950,000	2,758,500	7.7%
1934	39,600,000	2,814,600	7.1%
1935	43,550,000	2,900,700	6.7%
1936	49,281,000	3,544,500	7.2%
1937	63,120,000	5,177,500	8.2%
1938	85,357,000	6,849,400	8.0%
1939	81,923,000	10,813,500	13.2%

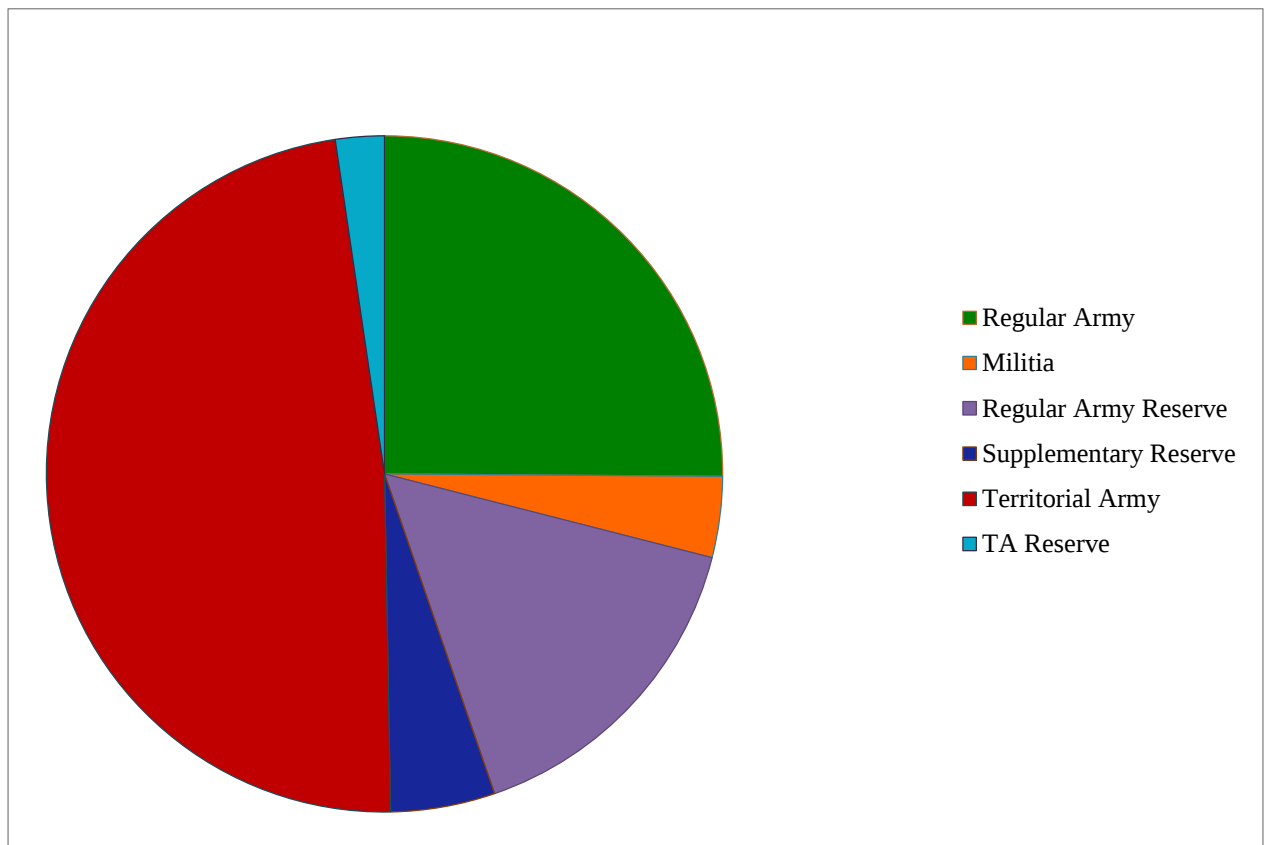
NB: The figures given represent the initial amounts provided in each year's Army Estimates, and do not include any additional supplementary estimates or subsequent reductions.

Source: *Parliamentary Papers*, Army Estimates for each Year: Head II - Territorial Army and Reserve Forces.

Table XVIII

British Army Manpower Assets and Potential Assets on 1 September 1939

	Called up or Embodied			Unembodied			Total Strength
	Officers	ORs	Total	Officers	ORs	Total	
Regular Army	14,552	209,636	224,188	-	-	-	<i>224,188</i>
Militia	-	34,542	34,542	-	-	-	<i>34,542</i>
Regular Army Reserve	-	28,742	28,742	9,414	102,354	111,768	<i>140,510</i>
Supplementary Reserve	-	1,096	1,096	2,666	40,799	43,465	<i>44,561</i>
Territorial Army	4,883	108,154	113,037	13,996	301,039	315,035	<i>428,072</i>
TA Reserve - Lt. AA Units	-	-	-	145	2,575	2,720	<i>20,824</i>
NDCs	-	-	-	303	10,473	10,776	
TARO	-	-	-	7,328	-	7,328	



Source: TNA WO 277/12 Maj.-Gen. A.J.K. Pigott, *Manpower Problems*, (1949): Appendix A.

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