Civil defence in London 1935-1945: the formation and implementation of the policy for, and the performance of, the A.R.P. (later C.D.) services in London

Woolven, Robin

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Civil Defence in London 1935-1945

The Formation and Implementation of the Policy for, and the Performance of, the Air Raid Precautions (later Civil Defence) Services in the London Region

by Robin Woolven

Department of War Studies
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1 October 2001
Civil Defence in London 1935-1945
The Formation and Implementation of the Policy for, and the Performance of, the Air Raid Precautions (later Civil Defence) Services in the London Region

ABSTRACT
The taking of Air Raid Precautions (ARP) in the 1930s was a politically sensitive subject and no formal ARP policy was announced until July 1935 when responsibility for protecting civilians from aerial bombardment was allocated to local authorities. Compulsion was not introduced until January 1938. Consequently London was grossly unprepared for war during the September 1938 Munich crisis. Sir John Anderson was given the responsibility for accelerating preparations and, by the time the Blitz commenced in September 1940, local authorities, now co-ordinated by a new regional level of (devolved central) government, were reasonably prepared. London local authority ARP Services, manned predominantly by part-time civilian volunteers, performed well under fire and the many shortcomings demonstrated were rectified by reorganisation at regional level. The performance of the borough authorities was generally good but this thesis examines the cases of Stepney and West Ham which both, unnoticed by the official historians, failed their citizens, requiring intervention by the Regional Commissioners. Civil Defence effectiveness and manpower was maintained during the 2½ year lull in bombing and, in the ‘Baby Blitz’ and the V weapon offensives of 1944 and 1945, London’s smaller Civil Defence Services again performed with credit. Using official papers, particularly the previously neglected regular reports by the Senior London Regional Commissioner, this thesis examines the evolution and generally successful implementation of ARP policy and traces the development of local/central government relations in the metropolis. The previously neglected role of the regional organisation during this unprecedented era of local government activity is stressed. London survived but the extent to which those ARP measures implemented were correct and appropriate for their purpose is assessed.

Robin Woolven
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<td>AA</td>
<td>Anti-Aircraft</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARP</td>
<td>Air Raid Precautions</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARP(O)</td>
<td>The CID Air Raid Precautions Committee of Officials</td>
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<td>ARP(P)</td>
<td>The CID Air Raid Precautions Committee of Ministers</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAGS</td>
<td>Central Anti-Gas School</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>Chief of the (RAF) Air Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>CB</td>
<td>County Borough</td>
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<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Civil Defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>CID</td>
<td>Committee of Imperial Defence</td>
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<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>High Explosive</td>
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<td>IB</td>
<td>Incendiary Bomb</td>
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<td>LCC</td>
<td>London County Council</td>
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<td>LFB</td>
<td>London Fire Brigade</td>
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<td>LMA</td>
<td>London Metropolitan Archive</td>
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<td>LRIBR</td>
<td>London Region Intelligence Branch Report</td>
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<td>LRR</td>
<td>Long Range Rocket</td>
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<tr>
<td>MB</td>
<td>Metropolitan Borough</td>
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<tr>
<td>MBSJC</td>
<td>Metropolitan Boroughs Standing Joint Committee</td>
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<td>PM</td>
<td>Parachute Mine</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAF</td>
<td>Royal Air Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>RHQ</td>
<td>Regional Headquarters</td>
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<tr>
<td>RN</td>
<td>Royal Navy</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAAF</td>
<td>United States Army Air Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>UXB</td>
<td>Unexploded Bomb</td>
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<tr>
<td>V1</td>
<td>Flying Bomb, FLY or Doodlebug</td>
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<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>Long Range Rocket or BIG BEN</td>
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Civil Defence in London 1935-1945

The Formation and Implementation of Policy for, and the Performance of, Air Raid Precautions (later Civil Defence) Services in the London Region

Chapter One - Literature on Air Raid Precautions

Introduction

The taking of Air Raid Precautions (ARP), later Civil Defence (CD), in the run up to and during the Second World War cost the British taxpayer, at then existing prices, over £1 billion and employed millions of civilians in the ARP Services\(^1\) organised and administered by the local government authorities. These authorities worked closely with central government and its regional organisation to operate a range of services both to protect the public from the effects of aerial bombardment and to provide post-raid help. London's industries and its dense population presented an attractive and vulnerable target to the German bombers while responsibility for London's ARP organisation was divided between two layers - the London County Council (LCC) and the City and the 28 Metropolitan Boroughs. ARP became the predominant local government responsibility in the period 1938-45 and included the raising, training and operation of the Air Raid Wardens' Service, the Decontamination Parties, First Aid and Casualty Services, Rescue Parties and the Fire Services, which actively involved many citizens and impacted on the wartime way of life of almost all of the civilian population. In general, nearly all London local authorities were very successful in discharging their ARP responsibilities. However, for a variety of reasons, there exists no balanced record of why and how the ARP Services in London were raised and administered or of their relative performance 'under fire'.

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The lack of a detailed study of the organisation, administration and performance of ARP in London is compounded by the sometimes misleading picture that is given in many post-war books on ‘The Home Front’ which tend to over-simplify a complex situation when civil defence is summarised in a few lines or paragraphs. A recent authoritative book on archive sources on London 1939-45 noted that ‘some of the published offerings constantly recycle the same material rather than re-examining the original sources.’ Furthermore, readers are occasionally misled when items originally published in wartime are repeated in spite of contrary evidence having become available. The authors of the otherwise excellent two relevant volumes of the Official History of the Second World War occasionally give an incomplete, or perhaps a less than candid, account of some events. But the ARP field was vast and it may have been convenient to generalise or even ignore some aspects of the record. Although the official histories and subsequent authors note the painfully slow evolution of ARP policy and its sometimes difficult implementation, no coherent record exists of just why and how policy developed as it did, how it was implemented or the efficiency with which the ARP Services were organised and administered. This is particularly true of ARP matters in London where the complicated local government system operated in a densely populated metropolis and where co-operation and mutual support were essential.

The main barriers to the presentation of a clear and balanced account of the evolution of ARP policy and its implementation and operation in London are, firstly, that the ARP duties allocated to local authorities were unprecedented and covered a wide range of authorities and services. Secondly, the whole subject of ARP was initially a very political matter for both central and local authorities so some of the archived papers need to be read critically as, even if they may not have had an overtly political origin, the authors often had a range of local, national or even international constituencies to please. Thirdly, although the LCC had developed a high reputation for efficiency, local government in England lacked public esteem.
as ‘town hall’ matters were often considered trivial and some authorities were considered much in need of reform. Yet it was these London local authorities who generally performed with great credit in discharging their ARP responsibilities and, by doing so, staved off reform of London government for another twenty years. Whatever the reason, there exists no proper account of the organisation, administration and control of ARP Services developed in London from the difficult early days, when the taking of any precautions was sometimes considered as warmongering, through the gradual acceptance of the need to take precautions culminating in the ‘Munich crisis’ of September 1938 and on, at an accelerated pace, to the outbreak of war. The final stage to be properly recorded is the generally successful operation of the protection and post-raid services by those London local authorities in whose operations it had once been thought impossible to have secured a high degree of efficiency. In this initial chapter only major quotations are referenced as the topics and arguments are fully sourced in the more detailed discussions in subsequent chapters.

The Evolution of ARP Policy - The Committee of Imperial Defence (CID)

The general form and many of the details of the air raid precautions taken and the services operated during the Second World War were the result of policies somewhat painfully evolved over the two inter-war decades when the stated policy of successive British governments was that of disarmament and collective security. Through the 1930s air power was used by the Japanese in China, the Italians in Abyssinia and by both Germany and Italy during the Spanish Civil War. In Spain the bombing of Barcelona and the destruction of Guernica were well covered by the British press and witnessed by a range of British observers, many of whom became members of a range influential pressure groups in the Parliamentary and public debate on ARP.

* The Home Office view - see p.37
When the British government considered what air raid precautions might be taken in London they were conditioned by the experience of the German bombing during the Great War, in particular the two raids on London in June and July 1917 when each ton of bombs dropped caused 50 casualties, one third of which were fatal. In 1924 the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) had set up an official ARP Sub-Committee and a Policy (i.e. Ministerial) Sub-Committee was added in 1929. The Secretary of both committees from 1929 was Wing Commander E.J. (later Sir John) Hodsoll. Official Air Staff threat assessments suggested that an enemy might attempt an aerial 'knock out blow' resulting in thousands of casualties each day for weeks on end. With the Royal Air Force maintaining its own independent strategic bomber force, it was held that 'the bomber would always get through.' Stanley Baldwin used that much quoted phrase to Parliament in 1932, but few who quote him mention that he added the assurance that preparations were in hand:

I will not pretend that we are not taking any precautions in this country. We have done it.
We have made our investigations, much more quietly and hitherto without any publicity.

Official plans were indeed being made but such authoritative assurances were rare, so great was the official concern at the likely results of an aerial attack on the UK. An official policy of refusing to comment on the bombing threat was enforced and CID officials were forbidden to consult with outside bodies on ARP matters. The failure of the disarmament talks and the decline of the international situation eventually caused the British government, in the early 1930s, to make discreet overtures to selected outsiders. Some clandestine research was carried out by at least one local government officer, apparently largely without the knowledge of his elected members. It may not have been coincidence that one man honoured for his discreet work for the CID was Dr R.H. Tee, the Town Clerk of Hackney, whose close friend and MP, Herbert Morrison, had been a member of the CID ARP Policy Sub-Committee 1929-31 and

5 House of Commons Debates Volume 270 Columns 632-3. 10 November 1932
was thus privy to the scale of the air threat and the likely precautions necessary. Morrison later had an influential and significant role in ARP as Secretary of the London Labour Party, Leader of the LCC and ultimately as Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security.

**The Home Office ARP Department**

Aware that the armed services did not wish, even if they had the capacity, to be involved in ARP for the civilian population, the Home Office accepted responsibility for ARP. In 1933 a retired military officer was appointed as Air Raid Commandant for London to liaise with local authorities but the secrecy ban was still in force so he had no discussions outside the CID. It was not until 1935 that the government finally publicly addressed the problem by replacing the Commandant with a newly established Air Raid Precautions Department of the Home Office. This was headed by Wg Cdr Hodsoll and a staff of four who issued their *First Circular*, defining the ARP responsibilities of local authorities, in July 1935. Hodsoll immediately opened negotiations with these authorities but both sides were disadvantaged because the financial question of who was to pay for local ARP, vital for the local authorities anxious not to commit their ratepayers’ money, was not settled for a further 28 months. The rather loosely stated government policy in the *First Circular* was that of passive defence against air attack by ‘protection and dispersal.’ Civilians were encouraged to provide their own protection from bombs by converting basements into ‘refuges’ and by constructing a gas-proof room in their homes. The government agreed to provide a gas mask for each citizen and local authorities were to provide a range of post-raid Services as well as gas decontamination teams and some shelter accommodation for those caught in the open. The dispersal element of the policy was to include the evacuation from cities of many children and some mothers, the sick and the elderly. Dispersal also involved the discouragement of building large communal shelters as, to maximise protection, the population should be dispersed into smaller household refuges so that a single direct hit should cause fewer casualties. The emphasis was on

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6 The War Office considered that recruiting would suffer if the army were to be used for such non-military duties - see p.40.
protection against gas attack and, probably because this aspect was assured of being centrally funded, it was anti-gas measures that progressed ahead of the other ARP measures.

With the ARP Department initially only able to advise and encourage local authorities to prepare ARP schemes and set up their own ARP Services, progress in London was patchy as authorities generally restricted their contributions to establishing a special ARP Committee of councillors. These committees requested their Town Clerks and Chief Officers to make ARP plans for their own departments so long as no significant expenditure fell upon ratepayers. Some authorities appointed ARP Officers, generally former military officers with gas warfare experience, to supervise the training of volunteers that came forward to man the range of Services, but recruiting levels fell well below the numbers laid down by the Home Office. Most local authorities refused to spend money on much more than paper plans or the travel expenses of staff attending the courses run at the newly established government Central Anti-Gas Schools.7 The government had been warned of the likely reluctance of local government to spend their ratepayers' money on what was considered to be a national defence responsibility. The authorities formed a 'United Front' with Herbert Morrison MP, Leader of the Labour controlled LCC since 1934, as their spokesman to negotiate with the Home Office. The Labour Party eventually officially supported ARP measures although some elements, led by the pacifist former party leader George Lansbury (MP for Poplar), had severe reservations about what were considered by some to be warlike preparations. Eventually, and with the ARP Bill about to be tabled, the negotiations resulted in the government agreeing to fund between 60% to 75% of local authority ARP expenditure (on block grant rules) and the ARP Act (1937) made the taking of ARP by local authorities compulsory.

Compulsion and War

The Act came into force on 1 January 1938 but, even with ARP measures now a compulsory

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7 At Falfield, Gloucestershire and at Easingwold, Yorkshire.
duty of local authorities, the progress of preparations remained slow. Only nine months later, and well before the necessary measures had been implemented by the majority of public authorities, only half of the required number of volunteers had come forward to man the ARP Services. The September 1938 Munich crisis exposed the gross unpreparedness for war of the armed forces and the ARP Services. Over a period of a few days some 38,000,000 gas masks were assembled and issued by local authorities, across London miles of public trench shelters were dug in parks and the public at last accepted the need to prepare for war. Hodsoll later wrote that ‘Munich, from a civil defence point of view, was a godsend’ for the crisis produced more volunteers as the consensus grew that ARP was necessary. A Regional Organisation for London was established with Sir John Anderson (who had chaired the CID ARP Sub-Committee from 1924-32 and was now an MP) as Regional Commissioner. The Clerk of the LCC, Sir George Gater, was appointed ARP Officer for London and Mr (later Sir) Harold Scott was made the Principal (Administrative) Officer with a huge organisational task but a very small staff. Shortcomings were admitted by civil servants and the senior politicians involved, although most people had tried their best to improvise in what was seen as a true national emergency. Scott later admitted that ‘The crisis had stripped bare the weakness of the civil defence organisation’ and, within days, Sir John Anderson was appointed Lord Privy Seal with responsibility for the Co-ordination of Civil Defence and National Service and with a seat in the Cabinet.

In London the regional authority was not dissolved when the crisis subsided but remained in being to enable Anderson and Scott to continue co-ordinating preparations across the woefully unprepared metropolis. Measures were accelerated by Anderson and, in particular, he requested local authorities to concentrate their work on ARP to the exclusion of other matters. Disputes about what would constitute adequate ARP measures continued to dog

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10 Harold Scott Your Obedient Servant Andre Deutsch (1959) p 108
preparations as almost all measures proposed by the government met with opposition from critics who alleged that measures were either inappropriate or insufficient to deal with the threat. Some alleged that the civilian gas masks were ineffective, that shelters would not stand direct hits and that the Air Raid Wardens' Service was both undemocratic and represented the thin edge of conscription. Anderson accepted the report on shelters from his specially constituted Hailey Conference 11 which confirmed that bomb-proof deep shelters would be too expensive for the nation whereas the civilian gas masks were being produced at only 2s.6d. each. Government policy therefore rejected deep shelters and authorised the local authorities to sell the corrugated steel 'Anderson' shelters to those householders who could afford them and issue them free of charge to those of limited means. Londoners were warned that, for safety reasons and the need to keep the system running, London Underground stations would not be opened as shelters.

By the outbreak of war, and only 11 months after Anderson's appointment, London was reasonably ready to face attack from the air, but the expected 'knock out blow' did not arrive. The subsequent 44 weeks of 'the phoney war' allowed valuable further training and preparation. Large numbers of full time (paid) members of the ARP Services in London, recruited because volunteers did not come forward in sufficient numbers, were often perceived as 'doing nothing' and this soon led to public criticism and cuts in their establishment.

The first bombs fell on London in August 1940 and 'The Battle of London' started in earnest on 7 September 1940 with a massive attack on East London where the population was intermingled with the docks and other industries. The scale of devastation, destruction and homelessness produced in East and West Ham, Stepney and Poplar resulted in at least one of the local authorities collapsing under the weight of problems produced. The attack by the

11 See p. 94 - The Hailey Conference's recommendations were accepted by the Government. They supported its shelter policy.
Luftwaffe (German Air Force) developed as regular night raids on London which quickly became known as the 'Blitz' and that term will be used in this thesis. As the nature and effect of the enemy bombing attacks differed from that forecast and prepared for, many weakness in ARP measures were exposed and many organisational changes were made in ARP at all levels. In early October 1940 Anderson was replaced as Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security by Herbert Morrison - an ideal choice to deal with the air raid problems and, in particular, with the recalcitrant left-wing London boroughs that had recently caused him problems as Secretary of the London Labour Party. Following changes in ARP organisation, the metropolis coped well with the continuing Luftwaffe onslaught. There were further major raids on the capital in the winter of 1940-41 which culminated in the raid of 10 May when, again, the ARP Services were pushed to, and sometimes beyond, their limits.

Further changes were made in the detailed provision and operation of ARP but the basic organisation of the Civil Defence (as ARP was officially known from late 1941) Services remained intact. Although the Luftwaffe had introduced new tactics, used heavier bombs and more effective incendiaries on London, there was a dramatic decrease in the attacks after 15 May 1941 until early 1944, by which time the manpower demands of industry and the armed forces had drastically reduced the manning levels of the CD Services. Nevertheless the arrival of the new German 'reprisal' weapons - the V1 flying bomb and the V2 long range rocket - in June and September 1944 respectively, were effectively dealt with and London survived. The offensives ceased in March 1945 and the CD Services were disbanded. With the national emphasis then on reconstruction, it appears that it was convenient to neglect both the many achievements and the few failures of ARP/CD during the war. Even when the official histories were published in the next decade, little interest was evoked.

In concluding this brief survey of ARP in the metropolis, it is relevant to remember that, in spite of the measures taken by the authorities and the citizens of London themselves, nearly
30,000 Londoners were killed and over 50,000 seriously injured by enemy action. Undoubtedly these numbers would have been much greater had not ARP measures and post-raid services been prepared by the London local authorities.

The Literature of ARP and Civil Defence

Having presented a brief overview of the making and implementation of ARP/CD policy, it is now appropriate to review the literature on the subject: firstly, that 'pre-war' literature generated for and by the making of ARP policy, secondly the works produced during the war and finally the commentaries and histories, both scholarly and 'popular', which have appeared since the war. These describe and assess just how and how well Londoners reacted to the threat and coped with aerial bombardment. The three distinct periods of pre-war, wartime and post-war literature constitute quite separate categories into which the literature of the subject is necessarily divided. The first two periods obviously produced very different types of literature from the reviews and assessments written after the war. Pre-war and wartime works were generally written with the intention of persuading and convincing the public that particular policies or actions were essential whereas the serious post-war literature seeks to set the Blitz and its results in their social context.

The Pre-War Literature

The extensive and varied pre-war literature attempted to inform the public and persuade them to take (or not take) measures against the effects of air attack. There was a general fear of aerial bombardment and most newspaper readers were aware of both the casualties caused by the German raids on London 1915-18 and of the use of high explosive bombs in China and Spain, and of gas in Abyssinia. As the ARP debate developed, the population was divided into those who rejected any preparations as warmongering, those who realised that adequate precautions should be put in hand to protect the public and those who demanded more

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12 O'Brien Civil Defence p. 677 Appendix II 'Civilians Killed and Injured in Great Britain by Enemy Action 1939-45'
effective protection. The general public mood of the early and mid-1930s was that of disarmament and avoiding war. Both H.G. Wells and Bertrand Russell wrote graphic and grossly pessimistic forecasts of the horrors of death and panic that would befall any civilian population subject to bombing from the air. Wells produced a dismal forecast in his *The Shape of Things to Come* in 1933 (filmed in 1935) when he perceptively forecast a major war starting in 1940 involving the bombardment of cities with gas, high explosives and incendiaries by stating:

... the air raids seem to have been altogether horrible ... more dreadful than the air raids of the World War ... swarms of frantic people running too and fro, all pride and dignity gone, seeking the nearest shelter ... they ended for most of their victims in an extremity of physical suffering ...

In his 1936 *Which Way to Peace?* Bertrand Russell promoted his extreme pacifist views, to some extent later regretted as he subsequently, and uniquely for Russell, refused to have this book reprinted. Russell reproduced the more pessimistic quotations predicting the effects of future aerial bombardment from L.E.O. Charlton (see below) and the claimed gas experts and included Fuller's prediction of 'an avalanche of terror ... London will be one vast raving bedlam, the hospitals will be stormed, traffic will cease, the homeless will shriek for help, the city will be a pandemonium.'

Mention of the prospect (and the public's natural fear) of bombing in pre-war fiction was led by George Orwell's novel *Coming Up for Air* (1939) in which his suburban hero experienced aerial bombardment, not from the *Luftwaffe* but as a result of an inadvertent bomb release from a locally based RAF aircraft. Orwell, who had fought in the Spanish Civil War, powerfully described the terror and casualties produced by this bombing. But the novel hardly reports the British public mood following the Munich crisis as Orwell left this country before the crisis and wrote the book whilst recuperating in Marrakesh, not returning until 30

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13 H.G. Wells *The Shape of Things To Come - The Ultimate Revolution* Hutchinson & Co (1933) p. 214
15 George Orwell *Coming Up for Air* Gollancz (1939) pp. 232-239
March 1939 'just after the final disintegration of the Czechoslovak federation.' Perhaps the most remembered bombing related quotation of the pre-war period was John Betjeman's poem criticising late 1930s town planning which had led to the growth of the Slough industrial estate. His 'Come friendly bombs and fall on Slough, It isn't fit for humans now' was written by February 1937 and before Guernica so it was presumably generated by press reports of the November 1936 bombardment of Madrid by the German 'Condor Legion.' Betjeman's poem was obviously well known in 1939 when the New Statesman reviewer of Orwell's Coming Up for Air suggested that the novel:

is a statement of present discontents made with all the unpleasantness for which Mr Orwell is renowned; It would be easy for him to take the "come friendly bombs and fall on Slough" line ... but Mr Orwell has learned something in Spain ... it is not great literature but it is skilful propaganda ... and an entertaining story' 17

Having followed press and newsreel reports of German expansion in central Europe, by mid-1939 the British public were expecting an imminent German attack. Although doubtless amused by Betjeman and entertained by Orwell, their reading was more likely to be books advising on how best to protect themselves from the expected bombardment.

Moving away from works of fiction, public memories of the First World War bombing attacks had been refreshed by the publication, in 1935, of the relevant volume of the official history The War in the Air.18 The statistics of death and destruction caused by just a few aircraft of the earlier generation were frequently quoted by several authors of the time, in particular Frank Morison who, in 1937, predicted in a future war:

The probable destruction of substantial parts of Westminster ... repeated attempts to shake the morale of London by starting unmanageable fires, especially in the docks ... and ... an attempt

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17 Anthony West New Statesman & Nation 17 June 1939 p.347
to 'blot out' an entire district by the combined and intensive use of explosive, incendiary and

gas bombs. 19

Meanwhile, the new methods of warfare threw up a range of both authoritative, and often self
styled 'experts,' who were able to command audiences and a following. The author, journalist and retired Air Commodore L.E.O. Charlton published several books 20 warning the public of the dangers of air attack. Also, many who had visited Spain to observe the use of air attack in the Civil War generally gave a very pessimistic view of survival should England, particularly London, be attacked - comments which often disregarded the differing circumstances of London which, unlike the virtually undefended Spanish towns, would be heavily defended in wartime. The leading critics of the government's published ARP measures were those published by Victor Gollancz, particularly the 'Group of Cambridge Scientists' whose The Protection of the Public From Aerial Attack was sub-titled A Critical Examination of the Recommendations Put Forward by the Air Raid Precautions Department of the Home Office.21 Wg. Cdr. Hodson recalled meeting the Group at a Cambridge summer fete when they admitted the overtly political, rather than scientific, motivation for their book. They were critical of the government's gas mask design and of the recommended form of gas-proof room and they published results of trials they had carried out to prove that the gas mask would not even stop the passage of cigarette smoke. Another Gollancz author was J.B.S. Haldane, a leading communist sympathiser and Professor of Biometry at University College, London. In 1924, Haldane wrote Callinicus - A Defence of Chemical Warfare which was well received by many including Basil Liddell Hart.22 Haldane led the grandly named 'ARP Co-ordinating Committee' and his influential 1938 book A.R.P. questioned many of the

19 Frank Morison War on Great Cities - A Study of the Facts Faber & Faber (1937) pp 120-132 and
p.204
20 L.E.O. Charlton, a former C-in-C Iraq and close friend of E.M. Forster, kept up a steady flow of books on the air threat including that quoted by Bertrand Russell being the prophetic War From the Air (1935), War Over England (1936) and The Menace of the Clouds (1937).
21 The Cambridge Scientists' Anti-War Group The Protection of the Public from Aerial Attack - A Critical Examination of the Recommendations put Forward by the Air Raid Precautions Department of the Home Office Victor Gollancz (1937)
22 'Gas may well prove the salvation of civilisation for the otherwise inevitable collapse in case of another world war.' B.H. Liddell Hart Paris - The Future of War (1925) p.51
Home Office measures. He urged programmes to ensure complete protection for the population - mainly by providing deep shelters for all. Haldane had extensive Great War gas experience and claimed:

I honestly think that I am a great deal more [qualified] so than the gentleman when they drew up some of the official documents on ARP ... It is as ridiculous to expect everyone in London to make his own shelter ... once we have got down to 60 feet the cost of the extra shelter is quite small ... London will need about 1,000 miles of 7 foot tunnels ...

Haldane criticised the official emphasis on poison gas to the exclusion of adequate shelters to protect against high explosive bombs. Other books stressed the horrors of gas attack from the air but others explained that the gas threat could be prepared for and successfully dealt with.

Once the demand for adequate air raid shelters for the civilian population was a subject of public and political discussion, some architects and civil engineers published their plans for concrete underground bomb-proof shelters as opposed to merely blast and splinter proof surface shelters proposed by the government. H.M. Hyde and G.R.F. Nuttall's *Air Defence and the Civilian Population* supported the government’s measures and offered practical advice on appropriate ways for householders to prepare their houses and families for a war that was seen to be inevitable. Many publishers eventually produced books giving general or specific advice on aspects of ARP but the first published advice available to the public had appeared in 1937 in the form of sets of Churchman’s cigarette cards published at the requer of the Home Office ARP Department. *The Next War* series, edited by Liddell Hart, was authoritative and the ‘Gas’ volume has been mentioned. J.M. Spaight’s *Air Power in the Next War* had the assistance of the Air Staff (Wg Cdr John Slessor) in its preparation but the

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23 J.B.S. Haldane *A.R.P.* Victor Gollancz (1938) p 204 and pp 212-221
24 Notably James Kendall *Breathe Freely! The Truth About Poison Gas* Bell (1938) and Maj. Gen. Henry F Thuillier *Gas in the Next War* Geoffrey Bles (1939)
26 J.M. Spaights *Air Power in the Next War* Geoffrey Bles (1938)
planned volume on *Civil Defence in the Next War* never appeared. Both Haldane's *A.R.P.* published by the Gollancz Left Book Club and the Penguin Special *The Air Defence of Britain* were published at the time of Munich and proved to be popular with an information-hungry public. The latter was written by three well informed experts including L.E.O. Charlton who wrote on the air threat, and G.T. Garrett who wrote on ARP, having himself reported from Abyssinia and Spain where he had seen the results of bombing civilians.

The pre-war literature of ARP was thus extensive and, for the most part, authoritative. Many of the books, newspaper and periodical articles were referred to in ARP debates with Haldane being the most frequently quoted. The official view and much practical advice was well presented by the Home Office ARP Department in handbooks on ARP subjects which became pocket-sized 'best sellers' at the same price as the early Penguin books. Predictably the demand for information and advice increased with the demonstration of unpreparedness of the Munich crisis. Thereafter the public demand for information and ARP equipment was substantial and well supplied so that the war opened in September 1939 with a reasonably well informed public.

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27 Liddell Hart had problems finding an author after Professors J.B.S. Haldane and J.D. Bernal both refused. The new author, Jonathan Griffin, failed to produce the manuscript before war broke out, claiming he had been so depressed having been in Prague at the time of Munich. (Bles Papers in Liddell Hart Archive)


29 See p.210 below for Garratt's perceptive view on the likely need for adequate post-raid services for those made homeless.

30 ARP Handbooks included: *Personal Protection Against Gas, First Aid and Nursing for Gas Casualties, Medical Treatment for Gas Casualties, Decontamination of Materials, Structural Precautions Against Bombs and Gas, Duties of Air Raid Wardens, Incendiary Bombs and Fire Precautions*. etc.
Wartime Literature

The non-arrival of the expected and predicted Blitzkrieg or knock out blow on 3 September 1939 was for some, including the Winston Churchills, something of an anticlimax. In the early months of the war the Mass Observation organisation surveyed public opinion, including their views on ARP, and the results were published as War Begins at Home as the population of London awaited the expected bombing. Once the Luftwaffe had started its bombing attacks on British civilians, the war took a more serious turn. The perceived needs of security and the national interest, as determined by the Ministry of Information, meant that little firm information was published on the extent and severity of the bombing. The main thrust of wartime literature after the start of the blitz was the maintenance of public morale by using positive, but not false, propaganda to put the best possible light on Britain (and London) ‘taking it’ and surviving the German onslaught. The leading exceptions were the left wing Daily Herald and New Statesman whose roving correspondent was (later Lord) Ritchie Calder, supported by his editor Kingsley Martin. They produced some immediate and very critical reporting on the poor performance and administrative failures of some central government preparations and certain local authorities in the East End of London. The stance of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), virtually split by the attitude of the Soviet Union to the war, can hardly be regarded as constructive but they revived demands for deep shelters for the whole population while their newspaper, the Daily Worker, was banned by Home Secretary Herbert Morrison in 1941. A major contribution to the information available on the effects of the bombing was the publication, for the Ministry of Home Security, of the

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31 "The Prime Minister had scarcely ceased speaking when [the siren] broke upon our ear. ... we made our way to the shelter assigned to us, armed with a bottle of brandy and other appropriate medical comforts." W.S. Churchill The Second World War Vol. 1 pp.315-316
32 Mass Observation (Ed. Tom Harrison & Charles Madge) War Begins at Home Chatto & Windus (1940)
extensively illustrated and well written booklet *Front Line 1940-41.* These excellent H.M.S.O. booklets have been admired by Sir John Keegan as:

... the model of objectivity. While putting the best face on things, they tell no lies and admit a good deal of the truth.  

The well illustrated 160 page *Front Line* gives a balanced view of the blitz although, for security reasons, the extent of damage and fatalities were given in very general terms, and damaged areas were not identified in detail. As will be explained in later chapters, the emphasis on the success of Poplar (called 'the Borough' in the booklet) was in part due to the leadership given by its local Labour Party Leader Councillor Charles Key, whose leadership contrasted sharply with the poor performance of his counterpart in neighbouring Stepney, Councillor Morry Davis.

The shortcomings in air raid precautions and the government provision of post-raid services were acknowledged and the extent of changes made were reported. By 1943, with the air raids having eased off dramatically, there had appeared a few books boosting morale by explaining just how well the British citizens had coped with the German bombing which had so damaged London e.g. John Strachey's *Post D* was his experience as an Air Raid Warden in Chelsea. 

Perhaps the best written 'diaries' of the London blitz experience was Barbara Dixon's *Raiders Overhead* (1943). She was a full-time ARP Warden in Finsbury whose diary includes a range of criticisms of the way her local authority organised and managed their Wardens' Service. Her main criticism being the appalling communications between the Town Hall HQ and its ARP Posts. Ritchie Calder's two 1941 books *The Lesson of London* and *Carry on London* (both on his experiences in the Blitzed East End) were based on his influential *New

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33 Anon (in fact C.R. Leslie Chief PRO, Ministry of Home Security) *Front Line 1940-41 The Official Story of the Civil Defence of Great Britain* HMSO (1942)  
35 John Strachey *Post D - Some Experiences of an Air Raid Warden* Victor Gollancz (1941)  
36 Ritchie Calder *The Lesson of London* (London Secker & Warburg 1941) and *Carry on London* E.U.P. (1941)
Statesman articles. Reginald Bell's *The Bull's Eye* was an original account of his work as the Group ARP Controller covering the City and the East End, including the boroughs of Poplar, Stepney and West Ham. Bell was also a frequent lecturer and contributor to the *Journal* of the Institute of Civil Defence. A more critical study of a local authority was Dorothy Idle's 1944 Fabian booklet *War Over West Ham*, which pulled few punches on the administrative failures of the older Labour politicians who ran that County Borough. A more questionable publication was Frank Lewey's story of Stepney under fire *Cockney Campaign* (1944). Lewey was Mayor of Stepney in 1940 and he, supported by local MP and Deputy Prime Minister Clement Attlee's Foreword, claimed that the citizens and the leaders in the Borough had performed well during the blitz, maintaining morale and keeping things going under fire. But Lewey made no mention at all of the complete failure his local authority and the removal of its ARP responsibilities by the Ministry of Home Security.

**Post War Literature**

There was thus no shortage of books on the splendid wartime performance of the civilian population in general, and the ARP Services in particular, and those books naturally concentrate on the many, often photogenic, examples of individual heroism and the privations suffered by the much-bombed citizens of the major cities. The extent of inter-war public fear of air attack has been comprehensively recorded by Uri Bialer in his *The Shadow of the Bomber* but he does not mention the impact of these public fears on ARP policy nor does he mention the passive defence measures taken. More generally, while no specific history of the administration and organisation of the Civil Defence Services in London has been published, much useful information became available with the publication of the official history ten years after the end of the war. Many local newspapers published well illustrated local editions

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37 Reginald Bell *The Bull's Eye - A Tale of the London Target* Cassell & Co (1943)
38 Dorothy Idle *War Over West Ham* Fabian Society (1944)
39 F.R. Lewey *Cockney Campaign* Stanley Paul (1944)
recording local wartime incidents and some local authorities sponsored booklets commemorating the work of their ARP Services. The Hampstead Borough Council’s booklet *Hampstead at War* (1946)\(^1\) was typical of local contributions to the metropolitan record but the list is headed by Croydon’s 581 page *Croydon and the Second World War*\(^2\) (1949). However, its final 224 pages are a detailed Roll of Honour for Croydon. Perhaps the best written book in the immediate post-war period was William Sansom’s *Westminster in War*\(^3\) originally published in 1947 with a forward by Stephen Spender. Both Spender and Sansom had served as London Firemen during the blitz. This and many similar essentially local histories, even if the local area was the City of Westminster itself, naturally concentrated on local damage, casualties and local personalities and only occasionally set the Westminster scene into the metropolitan civil defence context from the administrative and organisational viewpoint.

There were few published memoirs ‘from the inside’ of wartime local government but one chapter of journalist Mrs Charlotte Haldane’s autobiography\(^4\) detailed her adoption as a (Labour Party) St Pancras Councillor because she was the wife of J.B.S. Haldane. Not disclosing her ‘secret membership’ of the Communist Party she was elected to the St Pancras ARP Committee and her sensible attitude to ARP and Council matters is reported in her useful chapter. Another member of the St Pancras ARP Committee was the then Miss Barbara Betts (Baroness Castle of Blackburn) who recorded some of her memories of the period in her autobiography \(^5\) and she amplified these in an interview with the author. At central government level the memoirs of senior politicians occasionally provide, or put into context, points on the progress of the fight on the home front however the autobiographies of

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\(^{1}\) Anon. *Hampstead at War* Hampstead Borough Council c1946 reprinted by CHS 1977, 79, and 95


\(^{3}\) William Sansom *The Blitz: Westminster at War* Faber & Faber 1947 and OUP 1990

\(^{4}\) Charlotte Haldane *Truth Will Out* The Right Book Club (1949)

\(^{5}\) Baroness Castle *Fighting All the Way* Macmillan (1993) Particularly Chapter 5
both Clement Attlee and Herbert Morrison are surprisingly brief and unhelpful on this vital period in their political careers. Morrison’s official biographers are more informative and describe the complex situation in which Morrison found himself vis-à-vis Attlee regarding the future leadership of the Labour Party and this, perhaps, explains Morrison’s reluctance to remind members of his party of their occasional shortcomings during the war. One useful and relevant autobiography is that by Admiral Lord Mountevans (‘Evans of the Broke’ and Captain Scott’s Deputy on his final Antarctic expedition) who had been one of the London Regional Commissioners, concentrating on boosting public morale by nightly visits to shelters. Another invaluable source is Sir Harold Scott’s memoirs in which he devotes a chapter to his work as Principal Officer at the London Regional HQ.

Major contributions to any study of ARP/Civil Defence are the two relevant and detailed volumes of the Official History of the Second World War (Civil Series). The first published was Problems of Social Policy (1950) by Professor R.M. Titmuss who described the problems of evacuation, the homeless and the hospitals. He opened with a useful survey of the attack expected and the preparations made, while Civil Defence (1955) by T.H. O’Brien detailed the range and minutiae of the core subjects of ARP. Both authors ensured that their topics were tackled with a national perspective and, whilst London and its problems is given several chapters in both volumes, the workings of metropolitan ARP is not covered in detail. O’Brien’s task of covering ‘civil defence’ was enormous and he can perhaps be forgiven for not highlighting some of the more controversial aspects of events in wartime London as such items might be considered almost trivial when addressing the survival of the civilian population of the whole nation.

47 Bernard Donoughue and G.W. Jones Herbert Morrison - Portrait of a Politician Weidenfeld and Nicolson (1973)
48 Lord Mountevans Adventurous Life Hutchinson & Co. (1946)
49 Harold Scott Your Obedient Servant Andre Deutsch (1959)
51 T.H. O’Brien Civil Defence History of Second World War (Civil Series) HMSO (1955)
Titmuss correctly introduces the complexity of pre-war social welfare provision based on the Poor Law and he thus sets in context the problems of imposing *ad hoc* additions to central and local government provisions during the crises that prevailed once the bombing had started. For some reason, Titmuss appears reluctant to explain some of the local authority shortcomings. Thus in describing the national problems of repairing the housing stock he mentions that:

Some boroughs had to be given a lot of help by central departments. One was Stepney, which was deprived - for reasons other than its housing repair record - of certain of its powers by the Ministers of Health and Home Security in December 1940. .... The problems of Stepney and other weak and harassed authorities were, however, slowly but surely overcome." [footnote] ... On 4 December 1940 the town clerk of Islington was appointed ARP Controller of Stepney under regulation 29A of the Defence (General) Regulations. 52

Titmuss does not explain the regulation or why it was applied to the Stepney Council. He was a little more specific in his reference to the failures in West Ham, referring to the severe damage suffered by the County Borough in the 7 September raid:

Under these battle stresses, local leadership in West Ham faltered.... What West Ham and other disrupted boroughs needed in these critical days was leadership and a clear statement of the practical issues. ...

No further mention is made of the specific leadership problem in West Ham but other books (including Dorothy Idle’s Fabian booklet and the *New Statesman* articles of the time) had pointed the finger at the elderly Council leaders who were so unsuitable to lead the population of a borough at war. The other relevant reference made by Titmuss to these matters was in his discussion of the relative performance of local authorities

In the provinces, as well as in London, there were, in fact, immense difficulties in the way individual authorities fulfilled their responsibilities to homeless people .... During the winter of 1940-41 the Civil Defence Committee of the War Cabinet devoted a good deal of attention to this problem of local government. It first arose over the administrative defects shown in West Ham and Stepney .... 54

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52 Titmuss p.295  
53 Ibid. p.259  
54 Ibid. p.316
Surprisingly, O'Brien's 1955 *Civil Defence* makes no reference at all to the administrative problems of Stepney or West Ham although both boroughs warrant several references concerning the intensity of their air raids. Both Titmuss and O'Brien had access to the necessary official papers, a facility not extended to Constantine FitzGibbon for *The Blitz* (1957)\(^{55}\) or Richard Collier for *The City That Wouldn't Die* (1959)\(^{56}\) who both relied heavily on interviews with people who had worked in the ARP Services.

The standard post-war book work on the 'Home Front' is surely Angus Calder's *The People's War* \(^{57}\) (1969 and still in print) which is a history of the effect of the war on civilian life in Britain and includes an excellent bibliography. Calder had the advantage of his father Lord Ritchie-Calder having criticised the chapters on the blitz so it is surprising that Angus Calder, even in a 1992 edition, maintains in a bibliographic note:

> Other worthwhile local accounts are F.R. Lewey's overwritten but vivid *Cockney Campaign* (1944) which is surprisingly honest about Stepney and Doreen Idle's *War Over West Ham*'(1943) an objective but absorbing sociological study. \(^{58}\)

Yet the 'surprisingly honest' Lewey makes no mention of the ARP failures in Stepney in 1940 and no post-war authors seem to have commented on this significant incident in the wartime administration of local government.

A major omission from the post-war literature is any critical analysis of the evolution of central government ARP policy. Most works on the inter-war period discuss the development of the rearmament programme and the expansion of the armed services but ARP matters are merely mentioned in passing, almost as an embarrassment for central government. Basil

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\(^{55}\) Constantine FitzGibbon *The Blitz* Macdonald (1957)
\(^{56}\) Richard Collier *The City That Wouldn't Die - London, May 10-11 1941* Collins (1959)
\(^{57}\) Angus Calder *The People's War - Britain 1939-1945* Jonathan Cape (1969)
\(^{58}\) Ibid. p. 629
Collier's 1957 official history *The Defence of the United Kingdom* makes several references to pre-war assessments of the air threat and of the civil defence efforts during the Munich crisis and throughout the war. His was a volume in the Military Series, published only two years after O'Brien's *Civil Defence*, which had covered most of these civil matters in detail. Perhaps it was inevitable that potentially embarrassing elements of the pre-war and wartime record received less attention than others, but the omission of occasional shortcomings and of the rare failures is perhaps explained by the general requirement for emphasis on recovery, reconstruction and survival in the immediate post-war decade.

More recent books include Angus Calder again taking up the study of the years 1940 and 1941 in *The Myth of the Blitz* (1991) where he examined not untruths but such concepts as 'standing alone' and 'finest hours' - encouraged for propaganda purposes - which achieved the status of myths. People came to see these myths as role models and citizens continued to act up to those models. Refreshingly, Calder looked again at matters that most people accepted as elements of their cultural heritage and more recently Philip Ziegler, in his *London At War* (1995), admires Calder's *The Myth of the Blitz* but warns:

".... revisionist historians have interpreted Calder's title as the green light for seeking out every instance of greed, panic, cowardice, snobbishness, prejudice, and to deduce from them that the authorities were callous and inefficient, the people shiftless and uncertain. .... Much dirt was indeed brushed under the carpet by propagandists intent on producing a sanitised and heart-warming picture of London's travail .... however the quantity of dirt was relatively inconsiderable .... few Londoners behaved badly, many more conspicuously well."  

**Lacunae In The Literature**

Without risking overstating the case, and thus joining the ranks of Ziegler's revisionist historians, it is apparent from the points made above that the primary gaps to be filled are

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59 Basil Collier *The Defence of the United Kingdom History of the Second World War, Military Series* HMSO (1957)
60 Angus Calder *The Myth of the Blitz* Jonathan Cape (1991)
those of a lack of a balanced account of the evolution of ARP policy, of its implementation in London and of the resulting wartime performance of the ARP Services across the metropolis.

There are a number of subjects, or aspects of subjects, that are notably absent in the literature currently available on the subject of pre-war and wartime civil defence. There is no critical examination of policy formation before 1935, particularly the background to and results of the CID experiment with an Air Raids Commandant for London, and of the arguments which ended with ARP responsibility being placed on local authorities. Once the responsibility was given to the local bodies, there was no assessment of the extent and depth of bureaucratic politics involved in encouraging, then requiring, those local authorities to implement the policies which themselves changed and further devolved during the implementation process. Furthermore, no assessment has been made of the depth of unpreparedness demonstrated by central and London local authorities at the time of Munich in September 1938. Additionally and importantly, no assessment has been made of the comparative performance of London local authorities once the blitz had started nor has any explanation been offered as to why performance appeared to differ across the boroughs in the London Civil Defence Region. Also missing from the literature are details of the major changes made in ARP/CD organisation made as a result of the Blitz and subsequently through to the end of the war. Further, questions of leadership on the ARP front and the experiment with Regional Government are neglected in the literature. Certainly there exists no reasoned assessment of the impact of the regional system of government on London local authorities between 1938-45 other than occasional passing mentions in Journals and a few books, mostly on Town Planning. Prior to an article 62 in late 2000, Journals generally dismissed the layer of regional administration as necessary, but temporary, wartime aberrations of local democracy.

With the above lacunae identified in the literature, it is the aim of this thesis to contribute to the useful knowledge available on this important aspect of British society and its

administration in the London Region under stress then at war 1939-1945. The task is attempted by considering relevant published and unpublished information in archives and other material and by making assessments of the policies made and implemented. The task is formidable as the subject is vast but, by limiting the field of investigation and by using previously neglected wartime records and reviewing others, a fresh look at the organisation and administration of ARP at all levels of government should fill some of the gaps in the historical record. The next section summarises just how this is be achieved.

The Approach, Sources and Methodology

In view of the vast range of authorities and duties involved in the discharge of ARP responsibilities, the field of this dissertation will be limited by not considering in any detail such major components of ARP as the evacuation problem which has been adequately dealt with by others. Similarly, other components including the Fire and Police Services have their own historians so will be excluded here. Further, no reference will be made to Industrial and Commercial ARP or measures undertaken by the public utilities as they are mentioned, if not detailed, in O'Brien while he also adequately addressed the Warning and the Blackout Systems. These omissions have been made to enable emphasis to be concentrated on the organisation, administration and operation of ARP/CD in the London Civil Defence Region.

To research this atypical and almost forgotten era of public administration, both central government and local authority official papers have been searched to identify relevant information.

As suggested above, a number of books provide useful information but some, when compared with the available records, also expose gaps in the published record. Once the end of the war was in sight, several public bodies and involved officials started to prepare histories of the events being experienced. Some were published and the official histories lead the field in

63 Particularly Richard Samways We Think You Ought To Go (Corporation of London, u/d circa 1995).
presenting the national picture but other drafts never saw the light of day. The LCC employed the author L.A.G. Strong to compile a history of that ‘Council at War’ so he assembled contributions from the various departments but the history was never completed. Several Councillors and Officers in the Metropolitan Boroughs recorded their views on the way they and others had tackled their ARP duties but publishers appear to have lost interest in the immediate post-war period; however several unpublished memoirs are in local archives in London. More significantly, the papers of Wing Commander Sir John Hodsoll include two fascinating personal histories of civil defence from the time he joined the CID in 1929 through to the end of the war, but even he failed to find a publisher. The Churchill Archive holds several other relevant Hodsoll papers which sometimes give an alternative view of certain events and controversies. Whilst not of the same calibre, a range of manuscript memoirs of local officials’ wartime ARP activities is held by the Imperial War Museum. Although drafted by fairly junior officials and ARP workers, these papers sometimes contain useful information. The role of the various pressure groups was significant and special mention will be made of their formation and activities. They include the Air Raid Defence League, the Air Raid Protection Institute Company’ (later the Institute of Civil Defence) and the various ARP Committees formed in Parliament and by some political parties. Whilst researching the pressure groups, the author unearthed (the papers being stored in an underground bunker) the archives of the Institute of Civil Defence, once described as ‘the best ARP library then available.’ The Institute’s Journal, first published in 1938, contributed a better understanding of ARP problems and the way they were successfully tackled. Finally,  

64 L.A.G. Strong. *The Council at War - With Contributions from the LCC Departments* (unpublished) Now lost at London Metropolitan Archive, previously archived as GLRO No 508/55 but now missing following new LMA renumbered filing system. Previous references to this unpublished history are in Reference 73 for which some pages were photocopied.

65 The memoirs of W Eric Adams, Town Clerk and ARP Controller in Islington (later in Stepney but not included in this memoir) are held in Islington while the Camden Archive holds the memoirs of Councillor C Allen Newbery, Chief Warden of St Pancras.

66 Hodsoll papers 6/1 and 6/2 (unpublished) in the Churchill Archive.

67 In particular the review of ARP Wardens’ work in Poplar by E.H. Smith GM, the Chief Warden, has been most useful. 

68 The Institute of Civil Defence and Air Raid Protection 1938 to 1955. Privately published by the Institute. (2 January 1956)

69 The author is currently Associate Editor of this Journal.
numerous minor references to the wartime CD organisation and its operation appear in the published memoirs, biographies and autobiographies of the leading participants although caution needs to be exercised as autobiographies are written with a purpose and, sometimes, the fact that certain matters are avoided may itself be relevant.

Unsurprisingly, there are no senior survivors of the pre-war or wartime administrations or CD organisation. However, the author benefited from interviewing six survivors of the period. The most useful survivor of the Munich crisis ARP scene was Lord (Bill) Deedes who, having witnessed the use of poison gas in Abyssinia in 1935, was the ARP correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* from October 1937 to the outbreak of war. He discussed at length both ARP during the period and his memories of the public mood before, through and after the Munich crisis. He also allowed the author sight of his voluminous scrap books of his frequent ARP articles and reports. Deedes' autobiography usefully summarised the Munich environment while his August 1939 handbook *ARP - A Complete Guide to Civil Defence Measures* is correctly described by its title.

Baroness Castle of Blackburn discussed her memories of ARP in London for, as Councillor Miss Betts of St Pancras 1936-45, she was a member of the Borough ARP Committee, an ARP Warden in Bloomsbury and a junior, but combative, member of the London Labour Party and well known to Herbert Morrison. Lord (Philip) Allen of Abbeydale, Sir John Anderson's Private Secretary in 1940, discussed his memories of ARP policies and of the style and personality of 'Jehovah, the great administrator.' Mr Arthur Edwards, a member of West Ham Council for 29 years from 1946, recalled his memories of the leading West Ham personalities mentioned in this thesis. Mr Cyril Demarne OBE kindly discussed at length

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70 William F Deedes *Dear Bill* Macmillan (1997) pp. 48-54
72 See subsequent references to Cyril Demarne and his *The London Blitz - A Fireman's Tale* (London: 1991). He served in the West Ham Brigade 1926-41 then was a Regional Fire Inspector then a Column Officer in Stepney at the end of the war. He was Chief Fire Officer in West Ham 1950-55.
his fire fighting experiences in East London during the Blitz, later as a Regional Fire Officer then in the East End during the V weapon offensives.

Finally, in 1988, whilst researching ARP measures in the Metropolitan Borough of St Pancras, the author identified and interviewed Mr K.A.L. Parker CB, who was in the Home Secretary’s private office at the time of Munich, then Deputy Chief Administrative Officer at the London Region Civil Defence HQ 1939-45. He discussed ARP in London, describing his experiences and produced papers he had retained. Mr Parker died in 1996 but the London Region HQ papers (hereafter ‘The Parker Papers’) have been loaned to the author en route to the Churchill Archive. Some have been copied by the PRO to supplement their holdings.

Without admitting the need to ‘lighten’ the tone of the serious events detailed in this thesis, the opportunity will be taken to include a small number of relevant cartoons of the period from the pages of *Punch* magazine. The classic full-page cartoons (by such artists as E.H. Shepard) depict leading politicians confronting national problems and illustrate the perceived range of national opinions and attitudes. *Punch* reflected certain public moods and reactions to developments on the Home Front discussed in this thesis, so the inclusion of a few relevant cartoons is warranted.

A predominantly chronological approach to the events will be adopted. However there are several topics within the ARP story that recur almost from the inception of the policy through to the end of the war and these will be tackled thematically. These key issues meriting more detailed consideration are led by the question of the deep shelter policy which was a continuing technical and political demand of some observers with experience of the Spanish Civil War. Their demands through the late 1930s were rejected as too expensive but later accepted to a limited degree in 1940. The operational control of local ARP Services was

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another key issue as local politicians attempted to retain their control over the work of their employees and of local volunteers involved in ARP work. The ever-present question of finance will inevitably recur as such an important matter needed early resolution to encourage full co-operation between local authorities and central departments.

Reverting to the exposition of this thesis, Chapter 2 first briefly explains how policy implementation will be assessed in this thesis and goes on to describe the slow evolution of the politically sensitive ARP policy in the inter-war years. The continuing but unpublicised role of the CID will be emphasised and mention will be made of certain discreet activities carried out at the request of the CID by trusted contacts within local authorities in London - particularly the help provided by the Town Clerk of Hackney. The CID decision on the best form of ARP organisation will be detailed as will the reservations held by government on the likely disadvantages of allocating ARP duties to local authorities. Once the policy of dispersal and protection was announced, public opinion divided on what constituted effective ARP measures. The measures taken during the Munich crisis of late September 1938 and the unpreparedness of the country which the crisis demonstrated will be detailed.

Chapter 3 traces the acceleration of ARP measures, co-ordinated by Sir John Anderson, from the inquest on the Munich crisis, through the outbreak of war to the end of the 'Phoney War' in August 1940, when the ARP organisation stood ready to be tested by the expected blitz. Chapter 4 examines in more detail the four key issues of finance, air raid shelter policy, the control of ARP Services and, finally, of the imposition of a regional system of government. First, the 2½ year period from the First Circular to the passing of the ARP Act (1937) will be examined to detail the protracted series of negotiations on just who was to pay for ARP. The Act formalised the allocation of financial responsibility between local and central government but the question of what constituted an adequate air raid shelter and how the government decided to protect the public are examined. Some London local authorities saw the local control of ARP Services as a matter for local politicians but the Government strongly advised
that the task of ARP Controller should be allocated to an executive officer such as the Town Clerk. This was generally accepted but a few Boroughs nominated a local politician for the Controller's post. More controversial was the suggestion that local ARP Wardens be handed over to police control and, following a threatened rebellion by some Boroughs, a compromise on the control of the Warden's Service was reached. Finally, in spite of reservations about the threat to local autonomy posed by the imposition of a regional system of government, the local authorities accepted the regional system which, by negotiation and the skilful co-option of local authority staff, greatly assisted the acceleration of ARP preparations and the subsequent CD operations of the London local authorities.

The nature of the attack and the varied performance of London local authorities and the London Civil Defence Region are examined in some detail and assessed in a necessarily lengthy Chapter 5. Ministry files and the records of some 15 selected Metropolitan and County Boroughs in the London Region will be examined, the authorities having been selected to represent the range of social and political profiles. London's ARP Services during the blitz, and the post-raid services deployed to care for the civilian population of London, will be examined with particular attention being paid to the critical press campaigns mounted by the *Daily Herald* and *New Statesman*. Ministers accepted responsibility for the shortcomings in the provision of post-raid services. Changes in organisation and provision were quickly and effectively made - so rapidly that improvements were already in hand by the time Anderson was replaced as Home Secretary by Morrison. At the local level, the effective and generally smooth workings of post-raid services in most London boroughs and the extent of and effectiveness of local leadership, contrasted with the failures exposed in Stepney and West Ham.

Generally, the authorities dealt well with most of those matters for which they were prepared but failed in some respects in dealing with aspects of aerial bombardment that were not
correctly predicted. Chapter 6 examines in more detail the Government’s handling of the of
the local authority shortcomings in Stepney and West Ham then central government
shortcomings will be discussed. These issues were the provision made for the care of the
homeless, the renewed demands for deep shelter and the problems posed by the need for
adequate fire prevention resources (Fire Watchers and Street Fire Parties) in London.

The further development and performance of the ARP/Civil Defence organisation and
Services through from the end of the Blitz to the end of the war are discussed in Chapter 7.
The lull in the attack from June 1941 to January 1944 was accompanied by significant cuts in
CD manpower. Cross training and more flexible use of the smaller CD Services allowed them
to cope with the new weapons which emerged in 1944-45. These V1 and V2 weapons
produced more physical damage per incident but relatively few casualties, however the
London Services were again stretched and reinforced - but London again survived.

Finally, Chapter 8 draws conclusions on the formation and implementation of ARP policy.
The main thrust of the chapter centres on an assessment of the achievements and
shortcomings of central, regional and local authorities whilst ‘under fire’ in London while the
effectiveness of the ARP/CD policies will be discussed. The legacies for London and the
lesson learned from the ARP experience are suggested, as are areas which might usefully
profit from further research.

\[74\] This thesis cannot attempt to assess the questionable utility of the Air Staff threat assessments as this
would be a dissertation subject in its own right.
Chapter Two
The Evolution of ARP Policy and Preparations to October 1938

Introduction

This chapter considers the evolution and implementation of ARP policy from the end of the Great War through the Munich crisis to October 1938. Although no formal government policy to protect the civilian population was announced until 1935, and then only in very general terms, the question of ARP had been under active consideration by government officials since the early 1920s. For 17 years following the Great War the public anti-war feeling was reflected in the policies of successive governments who sought disarmament and collective security through the League of Nations. British governments banned their officials from discussing ARP outside Whitehall lest the sincerity of successive governments' searches for disarmament be questioned as some people maintained that the mere discussion of defence constituted 'war-mongering.' Studies of both the threats posed to the population by aerial bombardment and of suitable measures to protect the public were undertaken by officials but governments refused to allow consultation with outside bodies until the mid 1930s. In 1935 responsibility for ARP was allocated to local authorities whose political leaders, generally, were as ignorant as the public on ARP matters. Consequently, the implementation of the evolving ARP policy was slow, not least because legislation compelling them to take adequate ARP was not introduced for another 2½ years. The resulting gross unpreparedness for war was demonstrated during the Munich crisis in September 1938 but, while the evolution of policy can be traced in government and private papers, some sensible means of assessing the implementation of policy is required. The method of assessment used in this thesis is described before the development of ARP is detailed.

Assessment of Policy Implementation

Assessing the success or failure of the implementation of ARP policies is not easy, not least because the subject was complex and unprecedented while many regional, local and
commercial organisations were involved in implementation. A similar, but far from identical, problem in assessing policy implementation was faced by Joanna Spear in her study of the US administration's attempt to restrain arms transfers by US defence industries. In her study *Carter and Arms Sales* Spear identified seven conditions which aided successful policy implementation, namely that:

a. The object of the policy should be clearly identified and advice should be given on implementation.

b. The solution must be related to the problem, that all contingencies should be considered and the policy be well thought out.

c. Compliance was enhanced if policies were legally structured.

d. The support of interest groups greatly aided implementation.

e. Officials throughout the organisations needed to be committed and skilful.

f. A steady state social and political environment aided implementation.

g. The more dependent (or vulnerable) a target of implementation is, then the greater the chance of successful implementation.

It has been useful to draw on insights from a quite different field for use in approaching the diffuse and wide-ranging ARP policies in the archives and in conducting interviews. The 'considerations' were there used as a tool or sensitising device, aiding understanding of the evolution of policy and the process of implementation. Spear also usefully warned of the necessity to differentiate between implementation failures (where policy is not fully implemented) and structural policy failures (where the wrong policy is adopted to tackle a problem). These matters will be discussed in the final chapter - but first the evolution of ARP policy to October 1938 is considered.

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1 There were, eventually, some 230 'scheme making authorities' across the country and some 1,600 fire brigades. In addition thousands of commercial firms were required to make ARP schemes for their workforces.

2 Joanna Spear *Carter and Arms Sales* Macmillan (1995) Chapters 1 and 10
German Bombing During Great War

With only 300 tons of bombs dropped, the German airship and aircraft attack on the United Kingdom during the Great War was relatively small in scale but its impact on the government and the civilian population was, quite apart from the casualties and destruction inflicted, very significant. In an attempt to provide an effective anti-aircraft (AA) defence for the metropolis, the government allocated many fighter aircraft and large numbers of AA guns and searchlights. But these defences had only limited direct success but they did boost public morale. Of particular significance were the two daylight raids on the East End of London in June and July 1917. In the 13 June raid 14 Gotha aircraft bombed the City of London, Poplar and Finsbury killing 145 people and injuring 382.3 Fires were started and the fatalities included 2 teachers and 16 children in an LCC school in Poplar, 16 people at Liverpool Street station and 13 in a roadway in Finsbury. The 7 July raid was carried out by 21 Gothas when 7 fires were started, 53 people were killed and 182 injured, mostly in Stoke Newington, Stepney and Finsbury. The death toll of these two raids by rather primitive aircraft impressed itself on both the public and the official minds but it is significant to recall that, at that stage of the war, civilians were virtually unprotected and unorganised so many sought refuge in basements and large communal buildings. As the Permanent Under Secretary to the Home Office stated:

... they had to resort to improvisation, the Home Office did a great deal and the Police had arranged improvised shelters and issued advice ... 4

The German air raids continued until the night of 19 May 1918 by which time a total of 7 airship and 18 aeroplane raids had been mounted on London and resulted in the deaths of 604 civilians while 1,756 were injured. The Official Histories of the Great War and of Civil Defence in the Second World War 5 both reviewed the Great War experience but differed slightly in the statistics quoted, probably due to such details as the exact areas described as

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4 Sir John Anderson - Public Record Office. CAB 46/6 ARP(P) 1st Meeting p.13 17 July 1929
5 H.A. Jones, (1935) and TH O’Brien *Civil Defence* (1955)
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Raids</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonnage dropped</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>35.46</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killed</td>
<td>1413</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injured</td>
<td>3407</td>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1708</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>382</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Casualties</td>
<td>4820</td>
<td>2630</td>
<td>2302</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>588</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casualties Per ton of bombs</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>136.6</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>204.2</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>87.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatalities Per ton of bombs</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>8.93</td>
<td>16.75</td>
<td>35.48</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>19.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Casualties Fatal</td>
<td>29.33</td>
<td>25.48</td>
<td>25.80</td>
<td>25.98</td>
<td>25.96</td>
<td>27.55</td>
<td>27.51</td>
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Table 1 - Results of German Bombing Raids in World War I

‘London’ and such matters as the inclusion of casualties caused by falling of AA shells. In an attempt to clarify the statistics, casualty figures are detailed in Table 1. It can be seen that, although the national results of the German bombing in terms of fatalities and physical damage were relatively small, the raids on densely populated London were very effective in terms of casualties caused. Table 1 cannot reflect the psychological effects described as ‘a degree of public nervousness out of all proportion to the total material damage inflicted.’ The German raids on London in 1917 certainly ensured that aerial bombardment could not be dismissed when any future conflict was considered.

The CID ARP Sub-Committees

It was this experience of aerial bombardment that informed post-war British governments when they reviewed the defences of this country whose capital city, and one third of whose...
industrial base, were within range of the aircraft flying from continental Europe. In 1921 the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) sought the views of the Service departments on the problem of the possible future air attack on the UK. The resulting report in 1922 accepted the Air Staff threat assessment, which assumed France as the hypothetical enemy who, using only 50% of its aircraft, could deliver on London about 150 tons of bombs in the first 24 hours, 110 tons in the second then 75 tons daily ad infinitum. It was agreed that the effect on public morale of such an air attack would be proportionately much greater than the material damage. The effectiveness of air power was increasing year by year and, in 1923, a further committee, under Lord Salisbury, reported that the situation had slightly deteriorated as the enemy, unless adequately opposed, could, in theory, now drop on London 168 tons of bombs in the first 24 hours, 126 tons in the next thereafter 84 tons daily. When it was recalled that the two 1917 daylight raids produced 121 London casualties per ton, of which approaching one third were fatal, the magnitude of the task facing the planners was considerable.

In 1924 the CID established an ARP sub-committee of the CID ‘to examine the whole question of the protection of the civilian population against air attack.’ They concentrated on the seven main concerns namely warning, prevention and repair of damage, maintenance of vital services, movement of the seat of government, legislative powers required and departmental responsibility for the actions recommended. The further topic of educating the public was added a year later. The ARP Committee was composed of officials of the departments concerned and was chaired by Sir John Anderson, the Permanent Under Secretary at the Home Office. Meeting at about six monthly intervals the committee was most active in its first year when it reported on the suggested topics and accepted a new assessment of the likely casualties from the Air Staff. This assumed a figure of 50 casualties per ton of bombs being a compromise between the overall UK figure of 16 casualties per ton and the pessimistic 121 suffered during the two daylight raids on London. The Secretary of the CID, Sir Maurice Hankey, had been told by Sir Hugh Trenchard, Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), that the assessment Air Staff Notes on Enemy Air Attack on Defended Zones in Britain was ‘pure
guesswork.' Consequently Anderson, who had been appalled at the early threat assessments, met Trenchard who told him that the estimates were very conservative, had erred on the optimistic side and that the emphasis should be on the offensive. Trenchard explained that 'If, in a football game, every endeavour was directed at defending one's own goal, there was no chance of winning the match.'

Also in 1925 the CID authorised its ARP Committee to undertake confidential consultations with discreet persons outside Government and some discussions took place with the railway companies. In 1927 the Committee, advised by Military Anti-Gas experts, considered the problem of decontamination from the effects of poison gas. They decided that this should be a local neighbourhood function, best operated by local authorities. Further, the CID had no experience of the practicalities of local authority work so some outside discussion was essential. Senior officials on the ARP Committee were not impressed by the capabilities of London local authorities and Anderson warned that:

London was somewhat different from the Provinces. In London the system did not lend itself to this class of work ... the LCC employed large numbers of clerical staff but had no outdoor personnel and the Metropolitan Boroughs were quite independent and in some cases jealous of the powers of the LCC ... the activities of the various Boroughs were not co-ordinated in any way - the line of demarcation was complicated and quite unknown to the general public. Owing to the large numbers of local authorities involved, differing in their political complexities [it was] almost impossible to secure a high degree of efficiency. Further, confidential information would, in many cases, be difficult to give to all the local councils. The police were independent yet accustomed to taking action, were always 'mobilised' and could be expanded easily in an emergency ... the ARP Committee thought that the police were best suited to meet the needs of the case.

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7 CAB 46/1 ARP Committee 2nd Meeting Appendix p.4 - 5 June 1925
8 CAB 46/24 Hackney Decontamination Scheme, December 1932 - June 1934
9 CAB 46/1 19th Meeting p.4/5 - 11 May 1925
The Hackney Decontamination Scheme

At the close of 1927 the ARP Committee’s Gas sub-committee had reported that local authorities should be made responsible for gas decontamination and suggested the kind of organisation that would be required. They were then requested to prepare a ‘code of instructions in regard to decontamination in which they should assume the existence of a central organisation for control and co-ordination.’ Towards the end of 1932, the sub-committee sent in a further report embodying a complete scheme for the Metropolitan Borough of Hackney. Just why Hackney was selected is probably explained by the fact that decontamination was essentially a matter of public cleansing, laundering, refuse disposal and street washing and the Town Clerk of Hackney, Dr Richard Tee, was a leading cleansing specialist in local authority circles. Perhaps more significantly, Herbert Morrison was the MP for, and a former Mayor of, Hackney whose biographers record that he was a great friend of Tee who described Morrison as ‘the best boss I ever worked for.’ Crucially Morrison, as Minister of Transport 1929-31, was a member of the Ministerial ARP Committee (see below) so was privy to the problems of ARP. It therefore seems probable that Morrison was fully aware of the discreet work being carried out by Hackney officials. Sir John Hodsoll, the former Secretary of the CID ARP Committees, later wrote:

Dr Tee helped us a great deal - he worked out the decontamination sections in the borough ... just how he camouflaged his activities we left to him - nor did we enquire as to how much his Council did or did not know ... he delivered the goods and his help was invaluable.

The relevant PRO CID papers state that no separate file on the Hackney scheme and its origins could be traced and Hackney Borough papers contain no reference to Dr Tee’s

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10 CAB46/24 contains papers on the CID’s work with Dr Tee, the Hackney Town Clerk.
11 See Robin Woolven ‘First in the Country - Dr Richard Tee and ARP’ Hackney History No 6 (2006)
Tee later became Chairman of the Cleansing Committees of the Metropolitan Boroughs Joint Standing Committee and of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. He was President of the Town Clerks’ Association 1936-39
13 Hodsoll Papers 6/1 Chapter 7
14 CAB 46/24
confidential work for the CID but they do record the Council’s congratulations, in 1934, on his award of the OBE for his ‘services to the Empire.’¹⁵

The Ministerial (Policy) Committee

Reverting to the activities of the CID ARP Committee, general progress was difficult and slow and, in 1929, it was decided that it was essential that Ministers should be made aware of the many sensitive and potentially expensive implications of protecting the public from aerial bombardment. Accordingly an ARP (Policy) Sub-Committee (ARP(P)) was established in the summer of 1929 with Home Secretary, J.R. Clynes, in the chair and with the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of Transport (Herbert Morrison) as members. Other Ministers sometimes attended with officials attending as appropriate but the Air Staff was always represented. The original ARP Committee of officials (now known as the ARP(O)) continued to meet to discuss the organisational aspects and encourage ARP(P) to authorise both the education of the public on the dangers of aerial bombardment and the preparation of suitable protective measures. The initial meeting of the Ministerial group, on 17 July 1929 was addressed by Sir John Anderson who described the work his committee since 1924, warning that:

It was quite clear that the advent of the air arm had altered profoundly the whole aspect of war in the future especially with regard to the civilian population ... [who] could no longer hope to remain secure behind the firing line as it were, but be the object of direct and special attack. ⁴

Anderson then explained the essential problems of ‘anti-aircraft defence’ to protect civilians against the assessed threat which could deliver the weight of bombs dropped during the Great War in the first 36 hours of any future war. He explained that these entirely new problems should be met with entirely new agencies as ‘the hands of the fighting services would be so full that it would be unreasonable to expect them to shoulder any further responsibilities.’⁴ Various Departments had been authorised to consult the local authorities which would be

¹⁵ Hackney Council Minutes dated 24 January 1934
required to assist in the execution of various protection schemes. Gas was a very special problem as, although underground dugouts could be built for protection against high explosive bombs, gas protection required shelters high above the ground - so the solutions were incompatible. One optimistic point was that the ratification of the 1925 Geneva Gas Protocol had allowed the CID to authorise the relegation of 'the gas problem' to a secondary position. Herbert Morrison perceptively asked how it was proposed to fund the schemes and was told that 'expenditure would not be large and would be included in departmental votes.'

A year later, on 15 July 1930, the second meeting of ARP(P) discussed the ARP(O) view that a volunteer force could not be relied upon to man 'the Anti-Aircraft Emergency Services'. Furthermore, there was no possibility of setting up any new kind of disciplined force which did not belong to the Fighting Services or the Police. Clynes stated that no civil organisation would take on this responsibility and the War Office felt Army recruiting would suffer if the Emergency Services were used for 'non-military duties.' Anderson and Morrison agreed that there was no alternative to a military organisation for these duties but no decision was reached.

One major constraint imposed by ARP(P) was that the authorisation to consult outside bodies was revoked so no outside discussion was allowed. As the government was committed to disarmament and a system of collective security through the League of Nations, no public discussion of ARP was possible. Although, two generations on from the events of the period, it would be easy to dismiss the political and public concerns about the dangers of preparing for another war, it would be wrong to underestimate the public fear of a further war. Discussing the public mood of the early 1930s Lord Deedes, a Fleet Street political and ARP correspondent of the period, explained that:

... in the 1930s we were still too close to the horrors of the Great War ... the trenches and the gas attacks ... although it is easy to criticise the National Government, Baldwin and the

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16 CAB 46/6 ARP(P) 2nd Meeting 15 July 1930
'Guilty Men of Munich', the general abhorrence of the British people for any further war was real and should not be underestimated. 17

When the Ministerial ARP(P) next met, Anderson again sought authorisation for consultation and co-operation with outside bodies pointing out that:

.. other countries who had ratified the Gas Protocol were making active preparations against gas yet we had deliberately slowed our anti-gas preparations and, as a result, the country was falling behind. The ARP(O) committee had suggested that there was little or no risk of misrepresentation if we took some action. The embargo on consultations applied to gas but it affected other matters as all ARP schemes, at one point or another, had to take account of gas. 18

Clynes agreed it was essential to protect working men and women from the horrors of war so discreet and circumspect consultations should take place and the CID would again be approached on the embargo. Secondly, the full Cabinet had, on 10 December 1930, referred back the matter of seeking War Office help in organising the necessary 'Anti-Aircraft Emergency Services' as 'it was a civilian job for the Home Office.' Further, the Prime Minister had suggested that the Emergency Services should be recruited and organised along the lines of the fire brigades. Anderson dismissed fire brigades as 'hardly suitable for the body of men they had in mind as they were not bound by any military sanctions.'(18) The policy of 'no outside consultation' was continued when the National Government came to power in August 1931 and Sir Herbert Samuel was the Home Secretary when the ARP(P) next met in December. Nothing of significance was decided until the next meeting in October 1932, by which time the embargo on outside consultation had been slightly relaxed.

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17 Interview with Lord Deedes, 12 August 1998. Deedes repeated these comments when he reported our conversation in his column in The Daily Telegraph, 17 August 1998 p 18 'Keep in mind, I told him [i.e. the author] how much the nation's attitude at that time was influenced by the agony of that First World War - then only 20 years behind us.'
18 CAB 46/6 ARP(P) 3rd Meeting 24 February 1931
Anderson had left the Home Office to take up his new post as Governor of Bengal and his place as Permanent Secretary at the Home Office and Chairman of the ARP(O) was taken by Sir Russell Scott. At the ARP(O) meeting in April 1932, evidence of the UK ‘falling behind’ was demonstrated by the committee having before them a copy of an ARP Handbook recently produced by the French government. Sir Maurice Hankey (CID) urged the committee both to produce a similar handbook for the UK and to decide on who should be responsible for ‘running London’ in a war. He had doubts about the ARP(O) itself taking on that task and he mentioned that ‘our late Chairman assumed that he (Anderson) would become Chief Executive Officer,’ whereupon the new Chairman (Scott) said that ‘there ought to be something between central government and the boroughs to cover the whole of London.’

When it was pointed out that the LCC had no local machinery, Scott said there ought to be ‘someone to represent government and keep in touch with the boroughs.’ The meeting concluded that Scott ‘and anyone else he desired,’ with Hodsoll as Secretary, should draw up a scheme for London. When the ARP(O) next met, Scott announced that ‘London in a future war would be a battlefield, not administered by a committee but by a Commandant.’

The new Home Secretary, Sir John Gilmour, chaired ARP(P) in October 1932 when Scott raised the necessity of having a trained ARP executive in place with an Air Raid Commandant (ARC) in charge. Scott further suggested that a retired military officer, such as the Governor of the Tower or of Chelsea Hospital, should be made ARC (designate) but Sir Maurice Hankey (CID) urged that no appointment should be made until the War Office had advised on a suitable officer. Scott then proposed that Hodsoll (Secretary of both ARP Committees) be made Chief of Staff until an ARC was appointed. Hankey stated that no cost of any significance was required at the moment - it was more a matter of organisation, particularly the organisation of outside authorities. Scott confirmed that ‘the railways and the

19 CAB 46/9 ARP(O) 32nd Meeting 11 April 1932
20 CAB 46/9 ARP(O) 36th Meeting 12 December 1932
21 CAB 46/6 ARP(P) 5th Meeting 17 October 1932
gas, water and electricity authorities had been taken into confidential consultation and they should now provide their own ARP schemes.' He also mentioned that a detailed decontamination scheme had been worked out in Hackney. When this Hackney scheme was considered by the ARP (O) in December 1932, Scott admitted he was:

... perfectly appalled at the magnitude of this problem alone expressed in manpower and materials ... the [national] task assumed colossal proportions. With the revised Hackney scheme as a model, the Clerk of the City and of each Metropolitan Borough must be seen, [for him] to discuss with his principal officials. He must then endeavour to produce a scheme for his own area and consult the sub-committee whenever he encounters difficulties. [At] this advanced stage, substantial expenditure will have to be incurred. It is certain that the Metropolitan Authorities will not willingly incur much on their own ... (20)

This limited progress justified Stanley Baldwin's 11 November 1932 statement to Parliament that he 'would not pretend we are not taking any precautions in this country' qualifying his statement that 'the bomber will always get through.' 22 But further progress with ARP would continue to be difficult as disarmament was the policy of both main parties and the Fulham East by election of November 1933 was won by the pacifist Labour candidate - in fact all 25 by-elections between 1931 and the outbreak of war were won by Labour, including the 10 in London. ARP was a sensitive political matter and publicity was not welcomed by any government until the international situation had deteriorated by 1935 to make some publicity essential. The prime example of the impact on politicians of the public mood was Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's 1936 admission 23 to Parliament:

you will remember the election at Fulham in the autumn of 1933 when a seat held by the National Government was lost by about 7,000 votes on no issue but the pacifist ...Supposing that I had gone to the country and said that Germany was rearming, and that we must rearm, does anyone think that this pacific democracy would have rallied to that cry at that moment? I cannot think of anything that would have made the loss of the election from my point more certain. 24

22 See p.4
23 This was summarised by Churchill as 'Baldwin ... confesses putting party before country' - quoted in W.F. Deedes Dear Bill p.57
There is however doubt regarding Baldwin’s assumption that pacifism was the sole issue in that by-election as local issues, including public housing, were then equally important in Fulham.25

The London Government Environment and the Legacy of the General Strike

Before embarking on a description of just why and how local authorities were eventually allocated the responsibility for ARP, it may be helpful to consider aspects of the environment in which central / local government relations operated in the period. It was the Ministry of Health that was responsible for local government matters and the local authorities, established by legislation of the final decades of the nineteenth century, fiercely protected their local autonomy. The impressively successful Minister of Health in 1923 and 1924-29 had been Neville Chamberlain who was responsible for the 1929 Local Government Act which completely reformed the public assistance system by transferring welfare responsibilities from the lower authorities (such as West Ham where the Poor Law Guardians had set payment levels above the accepted level) up to the County level. Chamberlain had also dealt with the aftermath of protests in Poplar - in 1921 the Councillors (led by George Lansbury MP) served time in Brixton Prison rather than pay Poplar’s precepts to such bodies as the Metropolitan Police, the Asylums Board and the Metropolitan Water Board. The aim of such ‘Poplarism’ was an attempt to level up the burden on the boroughs by the wealthier West End subsidising the poorer East End authorities.26 The politics and finances of London government thus were complex and controversial for both central and local politicians and their officials. Generally there was a good working relationship between the elected members (Councillors and Aldermen) and the local officers who headed the various departments such as the Medical

CITY OF LONDON
AND
METROPOLITAN BOROUGHS.

Source: London Statistics 1936-38 (LCC 1939)

Map 1 – The City and 28 Metropolitan Boroughs of the Administrative County
Source: London Statistics 1936-38 (LCC 1939)

Map 2 – The Administrative County and Surrounding Boroughs
Officer of Health and the normally legally qualified Town Clerk. Councillors annually elected the Mayor and the members of the various committees through which most Council business was conducted. Committees reported monthly to the full Council who themselves generally met monthly - except through the long summer recess. The main sources of income, other than such trading activities as utility undertakings, were the local rates and a range of central government grants. Councillors had a natural reluctance to spend ratepayers' money on anything not seen as absolutely necessary although the emergence of socialist led Councils sometimes saw a greater emphasis on welfare spending in the poorer areas. London Boroughs had to pay, from their rates, 'precepts' to the various Metropolitan (LCC run) bodies for such things as fire, police and asylums and this charge appeared unfair to the poorer boroughs. Some indication of the inequality in the wealth of the Boroughs can be seen in Table 2 where the 'product of a penny rate' figures for Westminster and St Marylebone can be compared with those of the East End Boroughs.

The powerful and relatively efficient and effective LCC was responsible for education, some housing, bridges and many public parks and open spaces and had, since the Local Government Act (1929), major public health and public assistance responsibilities. Political control of the LCC was won by the London Labour Party (LLP) for the first time in 1934 when they took control from the group of Conservative parties then dominated by the Municipal Reform Party. The LCC was led from 1934-39 by the Secretary of the LLP, Herbert Morrison MP.

In English local government, London was also unique in that it was two-tiered as, below the LCC level, there were the fiercely independent 28 Metropolitan Boroughs and the small but very powerful City of London. The Metropolitan Boroughs varied in size (from the large City of Westminster to the small Finsbury), wealth and political complexion - all shown in Table 2.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Metropolitan or County Borough</th>
<th>1937 Labour Seats</th>
<th>1937 Elections</th>
<th>1937 % seats held by Labour</th>
<th>Population 1937 (1000s)</th>
<th>Population 1944 (1000s)</th>
<th>Rateable Value 1936 £Millions</th>
<th>Rateable Value 1944 £Millions</th>
<th>Product of 1d rate £1000s</th>
<th>R/V per Head (1936)</th>
<th>CD Region Group</th>
<th>% Grant Under 1937 Act</th>
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</tbody>
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* + 1 Communist Councillor (Phil Piritian)


Table 2 - Profiles of 15 Selected Boroughs in the London Civil Defence Region
If a Council was dominated by one political party, and thus had no effective opposition, then there were dangers for democracy and efficient administration. In West Ham, for example, the years of single party rule had produced, in the view of a Fabian author:

a Labour Council low in vitality and [which] practically lacks opposition ... no outstanding leader has arisen and the political life of the borough becomes more and more emasculated. 27

Examples of outright corruption in local government are difficult to find but the archives of the LLP include a series of papers on an investigation into Stepney Council restricting casual labouring jobs solely to members of the Labour Party. A full LLP investigation was blocked by the Stepney party but, on the investigations they had been able carry out, the LLP found that:

the conduct of certain of the affairs of the Stepney Borough Council gives rise to the gravest suspicion of indefensible and irregular practices. We feel bound to place on record our strong conviction that both the public interest and the interest of the Labour Party require that such practices should cease forthwith. 28

But such overt cases of 'irregular practices' were not typical although the general public retained a cautious attitude to local politicians - not least because the boundaries of the Boroughs tended to follow those of the old vestries, some of which were renowned for certain unacceptable practices. 29 The City and 28 Metropolitan Boroughs of the Administrative County of London are shown in Map 1 while Map 2 shows those boroughs and the neighbouring boroughs including the County Boroughs Croydon and West Ham. Table 2 gives details of the political make up, size and relative wealth of the 15 Boroughs which will frequently be referred to in this thesis. One final organisation which must be mentioned is the Metropolitan Boroughs Standing Joint Committee (MBSJC). ‘One of the most important local government bodies in the metropolis’, 30 its role was to represent the Metropolitan Boroughs

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27 Dorothy Idle War Over West Ham Fabian Society (1944) pp 30-32
28 London Labour Party Papers - report 5 May 1937 in LMA Ref No ACC 2417/A/22
29 The old vestries were abolished in 1900 when the Metropolitan Boroughs were established by the London Government Act (1899)
to balance the growing power of the LCC. Each Borough sent joint (i.e. elected members and officials) representatives to the regular meetings of the MBSJC and its specialist sub-committees.

Another point of context in considering central/local government relations in the 1930s was a legacy of the General Strike of 3-12 May 1926 and the Government’s handling of that dispute. Fearing industrial unrest in 1925, the Government encouraged a number of mostly retired public figures in their formation of the unofficial Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS) which set up local committees in 25 of the 28 Metropolitan Boroughs encouraging volunteers for duties in a crisis including special constables. 31 Official preparations were supervised by Anderson at the Home Office who divided England and Wales into ten divisions, each under a civil commissioner, to ensure the continuity of food and fuel supplies. In the event of a breakdown of supplies the commissioners were to ‘maintain law and order’ and recruit special constables. Parliamentary reaction to these preparations was confined to questioning why Town Clerks were receiving ‘Secret’ letters but the preparations were complete by 1926 and stocks were built up awaiting industrial action. When the General Strike came, the commissioners (generally junior ministers) had only a minor role but the precedent of the Emergency Strike Organisation had been set and remained in place until 1939. Any suggestion of a regional organisation between central and local government thus inevitably caused concern to many local authorities.

The armed forces had a limited and low key role during the General Strike - the Army escorted some of the dock convoys but was generally kept in the background. Naval ratings operated power stations and docks and the Royal Air Force provided a shuttle service for urgent documents. 32 Any violent incidents were handled by the police and the thousands of special constables that had been recruited. Thus the ‘folk memory’ of some citizens centred

32 Symons p.115
on the role of the police and their 'specials.' Governments of whatever political complexion in the 1930s would therefore have major reservations about extending the responsibilities of the Police or the armed forces or of proposing the formation and use of any special organisation to deal with national emergencies. The nature and politics of London local government and the experience of the General Strike were thus relevant when the planning of ARP was considered.

The Air Raid Commandant (Designate) and the Establishment of the ARP Department

At the February 1933 meeting of ARP(P) Sir Russell Scott summarised the options open to Ministers as:

.. there were three ways of organising Air Raid Services and they were the Police, the Emergency (Strike) Organisation and Local Government - in the end it would be better to use Local Authorities.... The advantage was that they could be called upon in peacetime.... The Committee was already [discussing] the important question of whether the taxpayer or the ratepayer was to be called upon to foot the bill. 33

This third option was chosen and responsibility for taking ARP was given to the local authorities with an Air Raid Commandant to represent the government. Sir Arthur Robinson, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health, stated that it would be fatal to raise the matter of financial responsibility. In spite of the barriers to progress erected by government severely limiting the outside consultation and declining to tackle the finance question, 34 progress was being made. The Hackney Decontamination Scheme had been prepared and, on 23 April 1933, an Air Raid Commandant was appointed. As Hodsoll recalled:

Maj. Gen H.L. Pritchard, R.E.(retd), was appointed Air Raid Commandant designate for London with a staff officer. My feelings ... were mixed ... their purpose was to stimulate local authorities who, at this stage, had no plans or instructions from government, while the financial implications of our plans had not even been discussed. I was afraid they would be bombinating [sic] in a vacuum. These appointments were premature and I do not recall any visits to local

33 CAB 46/6 ARP(P) 6th Meeting 24 February 1933
34 See pp.112.-117
authorities or any outside visits. My job was to try and keep these officers busy. I told them to draw up plans for the defence of London.\(^{35}\)

Lacking authorisation to consult outside bodies, Pritchard was in an unenviable position but he rapidly produced a 114 page *Memorandum on the Preparation of a Scheme for the Passive Defence Plan of London Against Aerial Bombardment* in which he pointed out that, of the £20,000 spent annually on passive defence, the majority went to the Chemical Defence Research Department of the War Office.\(^{36}\) Hodsoll later wrote that Pritchard 'had designs for a large tunnel shelter under the Horse Guards but the cost of the project shocked the sub-committee and the unfortunate General fell into disfavour.' (\(^{35}\))

Meanwhile, the ARP(P) meetings continued with Duff Cooper, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, attending - a sure sign that significant expenditure was to be discussed. ARP(O) was progressing as the urgency developed and the international situation further declined. Plans were in hand for the production of respirators (gas masks) for the population at risk, which originally were the people in the south east of the country i.e. within the then range of bombers from the continent. In 1934 Hodsoll compiled a 359 page 'ARP Handbook' for government use and which included the somewhat disingenuous reassurance ('to preclude unfortunate reactions' Hodsoll later wrote):

> the issue of this handbook is wholly unconnected with the international situation and ... did not imply breakdown of machinery for the preservation of peace ... precautions for a contingency that is fortunately remote are to be part of the defences of the country. (\(^{35}\))

This remote contingency was becoming alarmingly closer with the rise of the fascist powers so the Government, who faced an election in 1935, now chose to tackle ARP measures. However, as aircraft performance improved and bomber ranges extended, then more of the country became vulnerable to bombing and the ARP(P) were told that Pritchard's role as Air

\(^{35}\) Hodsoll Papers 6/1 Chapter 4

\(^{36}\) CAB 46/9 ARP(O) 43rd Meeting 30 October 1933
Raid Commandant for London was unsuitable and 'would not fit' an organisation for the whole country. On the previous day, Sir Russell Scott had explained Pritchard's retirement and the revised organisation:

.. there was an intention of setting up regional areas with Air Raid Commandants. Subsequent experience has indicated the need for constituting a central administrative organisation for the country as a whole which will act in a general executive capacity on behalf of this ARP Committee and various government departments. E.J. Hodson has been selected to take charge. It is obvious that the original idea was for a Commandant for London and the provinces [but] the title was inappropriate and misleading for, whatever a Commandant might do in peace or war, he would certainly not be in a position of command .... 37

The Home Office ARP Department

The establishment, on 1 April 1935, of a separate ARP Department of the Home Office represented a major advance as the public was now conscious that a bombing threat existed and that the Government was taking precautions to protect them. Having served the CID ARP Committees for some six years, Hodson retired from the RAF becoming the Department's Assistant Under Secretary but, in his DNB entry for Hodson, O'Brien wrote that the appointment 'inevitably caused friction [with the professional civil servants] but, with a hide like a rhinoceros, he lectured on the need for co-operation.' 38 The display of the ARP Department's brass plate outside the office in Storey's Gate was generally welcomed. The Listener commented:

... the sense of urgency has now crossed the channel ... it was no doubt right for our own authorities to avoid on the one hand anything which might savour of panic and on the other not to leave the people in total ignorance of a lot they might have to do in an emergency ... 39

Hodson's job of preparing the country for passive defence was not simply a matter of organisation and supply of gas masks as he:

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37 CAB 46/6 ARP(P) 13th Meeting ARP(P) 39 14 March 1935
38 Dictionary of National Biography entry for Sir (Eric) John Hodson (1894-1971) by O'Brien
39 The Listener 22 May 1935 p 865

53
... met the Foreign Secretary [Simon] in the corridor going to the CID. He recognised me and asked ‘what are you doing here?’ When I told him he replied ‘Well, for goodness sake don’t forget you are handling political dynamite.'

The irony of this comment was that Simon became Home Secretary a few weeks later until May 1937 when Sir Samuel Hoare was appointed. Hodsoll’s task in 1935 was formidable as, with a staff of only 4 officers and 8 others, he had ‘to get the ball rolling’ with local authorities. Hodsoll’s overture on 9 July 1935 was issuing to all local authorities a seven page First Circular which warned of the possibility of indiscriminate bombing of UK civilians, including the use of poison gas, in any future war. The Circular then stated that, although government would give advice where appropriate, would fund stocks of respirators and run a warning system, it was local authorities that would be responsible for first aid schemes, rescue parties, decontamination, emergency repairs, augmenting the police and fire services and for recruiting and training personnel to run these services. No mention was made of finance although some extra hospital funding would be available and the government would fund gas protection including respirators, stores and the establishment of a Civilian Anti-Gas School (CAGS). Householders' responsibilities were to ‘learn means of protecting themselves and their houses from the effects of bombs and gas, learning rules of conduct during air raids and volunteering for ARP services in their own districts.’ Thus ARP policy was at last announced but people were left to protect themselves as the Circular specifically stated:

.. the construction on any extensive scale of shelters which would be proof against direct hits by bombs is impracticable ... the Government cannot undertake to provide money towards the construction of public bomb-proof shelters .. on the other hand effective protection against blast and splinters from bombs can be obtained at comparatively small cost, and it will be for occupiers of premises to provide this for themselves ..

The issuing of the Circular was timely as Germany had continued to cause concern by

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40 Hodsoll Papers 6/1
41 'Air Raid Precautions' General Home Office Circular Ref: 700,216/14 dated 9 July 1935
42 First Circular p.3 para. 8
repudiating the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty in March 1935 and Italy invaded Abyssinia in October. Baldwin succeeded MacDonald as Prime Minister in June, called the General Election in November and was returned with a reduced majority of 245. In the ARP Department, Hodsoll's task in late 1935 was to enlist the co-operation of local authorities and he started by addressing 21 conferences of local government representatives across the country later recalling:

After the Circular was issued I was assured of the full co-operation of the City of London so it was the LCC next. There Herbert Morrison had issued guidance to the Metropolitan Boroughs that 'Labour local authorities will give no vestige of support to the disastrous foreign policy and militaristic tendencies of the present government' .... The LCC would however co-operate if the government paid the full costs.' ... but the meeting went off better than I had expected. Local authorities started to draft schemes which enabled me to draw up model schemes.  

Hodsoll had also prepared the way with the LCC leader who took the conference chair in County Hall when Hodsoll:

... was careful not to mention at all that we had already had unofficial consultations with certain of the permanent officials of the LCC... Morrison himself has promised me that he will do his best to get co-operation in the LCC but also as far as he can in the Metropolitan Boroughs. He fully realises the need for these precautions. I am quite clear however that we have got to go very gently ... with some of these local authorities. Once we can get a start, however small, it will not be so difficult gradually to increase co-operation. (44)

Hodsoll was more cautious when he addressed the Metropolitan Boroughs. Although two (Battersea and Bermondsey) refused to attend and some declined to co-operate, most boroughs were co-operative. The ARP activities of 15 boroughs in the London area (see Table 2) have been selected for study and these range from the 100% Conservative councils like Westminster, through councils with more balanced political representation, to the 100% Labour councils Poplar and Stepney - the latter also had a communist councillor. Hodsoll found:

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(43) Unpublished First Annual Report of the ARP Department dated July 1937. Galley proofs of report are in the 'Parker Papers'
(44) Hodsoll Papers 6/1
Some refused to do anything and it is worth remembering that many of the non co-operative organisations had, in the end, some of the best organisations in the country. (44)

The reactions of the Boroughs to the *First Circular* demonstrated the range of attitudes to the subject of ARP. Thus while Westminster set up an ARP Committee within a fortnight of receiving the Circular, most Councils merely noted its contents and nominated representatives for Hodsoll's conferences. Some East End boroughs reacted negatively for, on receiving the *First Circular*, the Poplar Council confirmed their ideological stance against war preparations:

we are not prepared to recommend the Council to undertake other functions than those for which they are responsible, we fear that any suggestion to do so will only assist the National Government in creating a war atmosphere in order that they may persuade the people of this country more easily to consent to wasteful expenditure upon preparations for warfare.45

Stepney Council was more openly critical:

... we have received [the Circular] with a measure of abhorrence altogether impossible to express in words ... whilst local authorities should co-operate in those services for which they were brought into being ... inhabitants must look to HMG for that measure of protection which it is, in our view, the duty of HMG alone to provide. 46

Both of these Labour controlled dockside boroughs had a long history of socialist activities and both were led by experienced local Labour Party politicians, Poplar by Councillor Charles Key MP who remained active on the Council for many years later coming to metropolitan then national prominence in ARP matters. He was also the chairman of the MBSJC where his deputy was Councillor M.H. (Morry) Davis, the leading Labour Party activist in neighbouring Stepney. While Key, a local headmaster, was old-style Labour man, Davis was a radical and somewhat dubious operator 47 whose power base was the Stepney Irish and Jewish communities. During the late 1930s, Davis was involved in disputes with Morrison and the

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45 Poplar Borough Council Minutes Meeting 25 July 1935
46 Stepney Borough Council Minutes Meeting 31 July 1935 Item 13
LLP 48 over such practices as operating a closed shop by employing as council workers only Labour Party members.

As the government had committed itself to funding anti-gas equipment and its use, planning for the provision of respirators and relevant training facilities was able to proceed without delay. Thus in July 1935, a site had been found at Falfield, Gloucestershire for the first Civilian Anti-Gas School which, staffed by former Military Anti-Gas Instructors, was opened on 15 April 1936 to train instructors from police and local authorities on two week courses. Students who achieved a first class pass were then qualified to teach anti-gas classes in their home districts. A second CAGS was opened at Easingwold, Yorkshire, in December 1937 by which time about 100,000 volunteers had been trained at the nearly 40 local authority anti-gas schools. Progress on the manufacture of gas respirators was impressive as a mill in Lancashire was purchased and converted for use as a respirator factory. It was opened in the full glare of press publicity in January 1937 and had manufactured 40 million masks by the summer of 1938. As yet there had been no direct approach to the public other than the handbooks on sale but the Department began drafting a booklet *Advice to Householders* in June 1936.

Hodsoll continued his attempts to publicise ARP by addressing organisations such as the Royal United Service Institution 49 and various professional groups across the country. His first popular impact on the general public were cigarette cards (pages 59-60):

> with the assistance of the Imperial Tobacco Company 50 we produced a set of Churchman's cigarette cards which constituted the first advice householders had had - an unlikely sideline on the Government's general soft pedal attitude. ...

48 See above p.49. The LLP papers are held at the LMA Ref. 2417/A/22 - dated 5 May 1937-14 July 1938
49 The Defence of the Population Against Air Attack delivered 23 October 1935, *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution* 1935 pp. 701-713
50 The 48 card Churchman's set was followed by a 50 card set from WD & HO Wills (another Imperial Company). The new set had the same illustrations and text as the Churchman’s set but with two additional cards included.
51 Hodsoll Papers 6/1 Chapter 11 - The Great Awakening
The main achievements of the ARP Department were, however, the advice and general staff work provided to local authorities in the preparation of their ARP schemes which had to be to be approved by the Department. It also drafted a series of pocket-sized handbooks for the guidance of ARP staffs and the individuals who had volunteered to join the various local authority ARP Services. Hodsoll's department grew in 1936 to having eight officers and eleven inspectors. A Departmental Intelligence Officer was established to study the preparations being made in other countries and a Research Branch was added to advise on the technical aspects of the ARP measures being progressed. The most significant development was the announcement in Parliament on 4 March 1937 (and broadcast to the public later that day) by Sir John Simon that an Air Raid Wardens' Service was to be established. Wardens were to act as the link between the public and the local authorities, to report the fall of bombs and to assist the police and other ARP Services at bomb incidents. The requirement was later set at one warden for every 500 inhabitants so yet more volunteers would be required. The Home Office Memorandum stated:

The general idea of an air raid warden is that he should be a responsible member of the public chosen to be the leader and adviser of his neighbours in a small area, a street or a group of streets, in which he is known and respected.  

As the ARP Department's responsibilities and budgets grew, its Officers liaising with all of the 230 'scheme-making' local authorities became viewed with some suspicion by other ministries. The central organisation of ARP was growing so that, in October a separate Fire Brigades Department of the Home Office was established. The need for more effective fire fighting capacity was accepted as there were then some 1,600 separate brigades across the country although the large and efficient London Fire Brigade was the national exemplar. The lack of a decision on financial responsibility for ARP was coming to a head and, eventually, other departments became concerned at the ever growing power of Hodsoll's Department. He later recalled:

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52 ARP Memorandum No 4 Air Raid Wardens
AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS BADGE

The Air Raid Precautions Badge is made of silver and consists of the Royal Crown with the letters "A.R.P." underneath. All members of the following A.R.P. Services are eligible for the badge, provided they are serving on a voluntary basis in peace-time, have served for at least one month and are efficient members of the organization to which they belong:
- First Aid and Medical Services
- Rescue and Demolition Services
- Decontamination Services
- Air Raid Wardens
- Gas Detection Units, when organized.

Women volunteers are posted with a branch carrying the badge.

AIR RAID WARDENS AND CIVILIAN VOLUNTEER DESPATCH-RIDER

Air raid wardens are volunteers named by the local authority. They are specially trained to advise their fellow citizens on Air Raid Precautions and to act as reporting agents of bomb damage. In the event of an air raid, they would be stationed at "warden's posts," perhaps a quarter of a mile apart, or less.

The picture shows wardens handing reports to a volunteer dispatch-rider. All wore steel helmets and Civilian Duty Respirators (illustrated and described on Card No. 26). The wardens are also wearing armbands. Note the shading device on the lamp of the motor cycle.

DECONTAMINATION WORKERS IN TRAINING

Decontamination Squad, each consisting of six men, would be used to neutralize or remove the liquid contamination caused by mustard gas or other similar gases on streets or buildings and so on. The picture shows some men in training for decontamination work. They are wearing Service Respirators (illustrated and described on Card No. 29), gum boots, and full protective clothing, with hood, because their work would take them into the thick of the gas.

They are applying a pad of bleaching powder to a splashed wall. Another is holding a hose, since part of the work will be to wash contamination from streets.

A.R.P. Cards Issued by Churchman's Cigarettes (1)
CHOOSING YOUR REFUGE ROOM

The picture shows the reasons which should
be chosen in typical houses to air raid-refuges
as soon. A cellar or basement is best of all,
provided that it is not subject to flooding,
and has alternative means of exit. In a small
house where there is no cellar or
the ground floor will be used, because
room must always be provided on account
of the risk from small incendiary bombs. The
lower window in a first floor wall in a refuge
room, the letter; and a room of which the
window is blinded by a building or strong
wall is more advantageous than one having
a completely exposed window. If possible,
the room chosen should be on the side of the
house which is protected from the prevailing
wind.

THE STIRRUP HAND PUMP

The stirrup hand pump is a very useful and inexpensive
device for dealing with fires in their early
stages. As described on Card No. 12, it is
recommended to purchase any five which the
bomb may have started. The pump is easy
to handle, and can be worked from any
available household water-supply, e.g., a bath
or a bucket. The length of hose enables the
person directing the stream of water to
approach close to the seat of the fire. This
hand pump requires practically no attention
when not in use, and is useful for other
household purposes such as washing down a
car, cleaning windows or watering the garden.

THE CIVILIAN RESPIRATOR

This respirator consists of a face-piece, to
which is attached by means of a rubber band
a metal box containing filters which will
absorb all known war gases. The face-piece
is held in position by means of web straps
fitting round the head. When the respirator
is properly fitted and the straps adjusted, it
completely protects the eyes, nose, mouth
and lungs. The strap should be planned at
the right tension, so that the respirator can
be slipped on in an instant. This respirator
will be issued free to the public. The orga-
nization necessary for this distribution is
described on Card No. 35.
... we were making real progress in all directions and this brought us into collision with the Minister of Health, Sir Kingsley Wood, and the Treasury ... I included in my budget for 1937 the sum of £2,315,000 for emergency hospital equipment. Sir Kingsley, who had refused to touch ARP, took great exception to the estimate and proposed that there should be an enquiry into my department. As a result a Sub-Committee of the CID was set up with Warren Fisher in the chair ... On reflection we were bound to reach this climax sooner or later though I had not expected it to take the form of a violent attack on my Department. 53

The Warren Fisher Committee

What Hodsoll saw as a violent attack proved beneficial as Sir Warren Fisher's report 54 was generally supportive, agreeing that total defence was not possible but a reasonable degree of protection could be achieved. The assessed scale of attack had now increased from 150 to 600 tons of bombs daily. Furthermore, a possible 'knock out blow' of some 3,500 tons might be delivered over the first 24 hours of war. Using the accepted casualty rate (50 per ton), some 200,000 casualties per week should be expected of which 66,000 would be fatal. Warren Fisher concluded that morale could best be maintained by a frank and open explanation of the threat and the acceptance by the public of the need to participate in the emergency services which should provide a reasonable degree of protection. These services would require nearly 1,400,000 people of which some 50% would be part-time. The Committee re-affirmed the distribution of duties between central and local government outlined in the First Circular and the Government should demonstrate the need to get ARP measures done by paying for more than half of the cost. Finally, Warren Fisher stated that the Home Office should remain responsible for the central organisation of ARP and that the ARP Department should be substantially strengthened. The organisation should be spread to 13 administrative areas across the UK - the beginnings of the regional system thought essential for wartime operation. The report was presented to the Cabinet in July 1937 but it was a new Cabinet as Baldwin had retired and Neville Chamberlain now led the Government with Sir Samuel Hoare as Home Secretary. The report was accepted together with the recommendation that negotiations with

53 Hodsoll Papers 6/2 Chapter 7 ‘Developing the Organisation 1936-37 ‘.
54 O’Brien pp 95-99
local authorities on the financial question be opened as soon as possible. Accordingly, a full
two years after the issue of the *First Circular*, Hoare opened talks with the local authority associations, led by Herbert Morrison, on 14 July 1937.

Meanwhile the ARP Department was expanded with Hoare bringing in the Secretary of the Unemployment Board, Wilfrid Eady, to replace Hodsoll who, on 1 January 1938, was made Inspector General of ARP - a post which exploited his *forte* of talking to, encouraging, chasing and advising local authorities. 55 Hoare recalled:

Before [Eady's] arrival, there had been the barest skeleton of any ARP organisation in the Department, The emphasis had been almost exclusively on the danger from gas attacks, and the programme restricted to little more than the provision of gas masks. 56

Hodsoll's rather different view was that Eady:

... over-centralised and insisted that all local authority schemes be submitted to the ARP Department for approval. ... local authorities became restive. The procedure was modified and new authority given to my [travelling] Inspectors who, while being quite *au fait* with the subject, had the advantage of being on the spot. 57

Local Authority Activity 1935-38

One matter to which perhaps Hodsoll should have given more attention was his assurance that a model ARP scheme for local authorities would be published. But the model scheme was not circulated until early in 1938 and, in May of that year, Hodsoll reported to the CID:

The Hackney ARP Scheme was the only one lodged with the Department but those for another 21 Metropolitan Boroughs were in active preparation. Nothing was known of the plans of six other Boroughs while [in the absence of legislation] Battersea did not propose to co-operate. 58

The main barriers to progress with local authority schemes and their organisation were the

55 Mr K. A. L. Parker remembered (1988 Interview) Hodsoll's 'promotion' to IG of ARP as necessary as Hodsoll was 'a poor administrator and a boozer, but one who got on well with people.'
56 Samuel Hoare (Viscount Templewood) *Nine Troubled Years* Collins (1954) p 236
57 Hodsoll Papers 6/2 Chap 9 Reorganisation -1937
58 Hodsoll Papers - Report to CID May 1936 (SECRET)
finance question and the lack of public willingness to volunteer for the ARP Services. Once an individual had volunteered, then the local organisation had to train him or her, so local training organisations were essential but, without local leadership and support, little could be achieved. By June 1938, whereas London needed 100,000 volunteers, only 40,000 had come forward and, of those, only 26,000 were either trained or in training. Even in Conservative controlled Westminster, only 700 members of the public and 100 council staff had volunteered by November 1936. An Air Raid Precautions Officer (ARPO) had been appointed in January 1937 but, by April 1938 only 600 Wardens had been trained although arrangements were in hand for training another 1500. By May, 3600 Wardens had been recruited but most still had to be trained. In Labour controlled Poplar, the situation was ‘far from satisfactory’ as only 160 volunteers had been enrolled by May 1938 and, even with the mounting international crises through that summer, only 296 by 7 July.

Hammersmith appointed an unpaid ARPO in October 1936 who prepared a draft ARP scheme a year later - but only 471 citizens had volunteered by June 1938. Training results in Hammersmith were disappointing as, of the 135 volunteers in July 1938, only 31 completed the course. Early in 1937 St Pancras had appointed their Borough Engineer to prepare their ARP scheme and an ARPO (Maj MacRoberts) in March 1937. The plan 'The Battle for London' was presented to the ARP Department in February 1938 but negotiations with the Home Office over the number of full-time staff (funded by the Home Office) resulted in an increased requirement for volunteers in St Pancras.

The slow speed of voluntary preparation by most local authorities would have been accelerated if the financial question was settled. Accordingly, Hoare’s negotiations with representatives of the local authority associations were under way in July 1937 and the

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59 See pp112-117.
60 O’Brien p.128
61 Westminster Borough Archives. Unpublished typescript draft ‘History of ARP’ dated 1944
62 Poplar Borough Council Minutes 26 May 1938 para 9
63 Hammersmith Borough Council Minutes 26 October 1938 Item 20
64 St Pancras Borough ARP Committee Minutes 16 April and 11 May 1938
authorities were well aware that legislation was imminent and would make ARP measures compulsory. These negotiations are detailed in Chapter 4 but, in essence, talks on the funding of ARP resumed after the summer break on 26 October, the Associations being led by Morrison. After much Cabinet discussion, the government proposed funding between 60% and 75% of local authority ARP expenditure, the amount depending on the accepted (since 1929) 'block grant' formula. Morrison wanted larger grants and negotiations centred on more support for the poorer areas. A compromise was eventually reached under which, if the expenditure on ARP exceeded 1d rate, then the government would meet 75% of this excess.

The Bill was presented to the House by Hoare on 4 November and, in the Second Reading debate, Morrison led for the Opposition by stating that the local authority demand for 100% of the costs of ARP still stood and he blamed the government for the 2½ year funding delay. Morrison dominated the debate and his speech was described by Duncan Sandys as 'probably one of the ablest speeches we have listened to in this House.' Morrison explained why the Opposition attacked the Bill:

... the Circular made no reference to finance ... a totally unreal approach to the problem ... poor old London always gets the worst of it on State grants ... we are not sure whether the Government even now quite know what they are doing about this business, ... and whether they are going to do the job efficiently or not. Frankly we are very doubtful about it and, from my own experience, I am bound to say I am not convinced. ... This is a regretted but necessary Bill.  

Hoare threatened a closure motion and the Bill was passed by 324 to 135 votes and the ARP Act (1937) came into force on 1 January 1938, imposing on local authorities the duty to submit to the Home Office a detailed ARP scheme for their areas. In Hoare's words, the second reading debate was:

... a new chapter in which the Government and the local authorities and citizens will all cooperate to make a much more comprehensive plan for ARP than anything we have contemplated during the last few years ....  

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65 See pp.112-117  
66 H of C Debs Vol 329 Cols 55-71 15 November 1937  
67 Ibid. Col 43
From the ARP Act Through to Munich

Hoare’s ‘new chapter’ was heralded by a number of efficiency measures as the Bill approached. The Metropolitan Boroughs Standing Joint Committee (MBSJC) set up a separate ARP Sub-Committee to concentrate the work of the Metropolitan Boroughs, most of whom set up separate ARP Committees and tried to boost recruiting. The Metropolitan Boroughs became ‘scheme making authorities’ responsible for raising and training Air Raid Wardens, gas detection and decontamination, first aid, and rescue parties. Additionally, the March 1938 ARP (London) (Allocation of Duties) Order formalised the distribution of duties in the metropolis. Boroughs had to provide casualty clearing stations and ambulance stations to the LCC while that body itself took on ambulance duties and the repair of streets.

Well ahead of the field, Hackney, had strong views on what the Government was failing to provide and the Town Clerk Dr Tee, now President of the Town Clerks Association, copied to all London authorities his April 1938 memorandum to the Home Office complaining that:

a. The present system is too slow and is going to take two years to get into full working operation.

b. The Home Office are ... taking too long to give sanction to proposed expenditure. Hackney’s estimates for the ensuing year went to the Home Office in January 1938 and to date (20 April) nothing has been received.

c. The present schemes deal almost entirely with protection against gas - at present no adequate provision for the protection of the population against the effects of incendiary and HE bombs.

d. Frequent visits should be paid by Home Office staff to local authority ARP HQs to give advice on practical points that constantly crop up and upon which correspondence ... takes too long to get replies.

e. There should be set up a separate Minister responsible to Parliament with adequate civil servants and staff. 68

The situation in London continued to cause concern and, in February 1938, Eady wrote to Sir George Gater admitting that:

68 Dr Tee (Hackney) to LCC 22 April 1938 - LCC File CL/CD/1/2- in London Metropolitan Archive.
London was a particularly difficult place to organise... it was difficult to stimulate the mass of citizens .. with its multiplicity of authorities .. London is at present behind many parts of the country in almost every aspect of its preparations.  

Nothing came of Eady's suggestion to the LCC for a London Chiefs of Staff Committee and a similar fate awaited Hoddsoll's suggestion that:

Morrison be appointed Chairman of an ARP Committee for Greater London ... Morrison seemed agreeable, if he could have a free hand and if his LCC officials could be taken into the confidence of the ARP Department. However, Morrison pointed out that there would be political difficulties to open participation in government policy.

Hoare and Morrison co-operated in trying to boost the recruitment of volunteers by each making broadcast appeals on the BBC. Hoare's broadcast, just three days after the German take over of Austria, appealed for one million volunteers pointing out that 'the great need is for every man and woman to be told what to do in an air raid ... local councils need large numbers of volunteers.'

A week later Morrison broadcast on 'London's Part in ARP.' He:

bitterly deplored the fact of the possibility of an air attack on Britain, and on London in particular, cannot be disregarded ... London needs .. 55,000 Air Raid Wardens (including 10,000 women), 12,000 for First Aid Posts and 30,000 for the Auxiliary Fire Service ... the rest is in your hands fellow Londoners, that is the case for Civil Defence - I ask you not to underestimate its importance.

Aware of their shortcomings, especially when the ARP Department increased the ARP Service establishment numbers by including up to 50% of personnel as 'reserves', the Metropolitan Boroughs expedited their ARP schemes. They stepped up their recruiting activities by employing recruiting officers, holding ARP exhibitions, running campaigns sponsored by Mayors and appealing by printing posters, through local papers and on cinema

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69 Eady to Gater dated 7 February 1938 - LCC File CL/CD/1/2
70 Hoddsoll Papers 4/39 quoted in Donoughue & Jones f/n 36 p.610
71 The Listener 14 March 1938
72 The Listener 21 March 1938
screens. Some boroughs were still causing concern at the ARP Department who told Gater that, in Stepney:

The chief difficulty appears to be that of a Mr [Morry] Davis who is also a member of the LCC is virtually a dictator in the borough. The Town Clerk does exactly what he is told by the gentleman. who is absolutely against ARP. Training is at a standstill ...

Gater, who “acted as Morrison’s chief adviser, performing the same kind of functions as Dr Tee at Hackney” 74 passed the letter to Morrison who annotated it “I will keep this in mind but it’s all a bit difficult.” Subsequently Stepney ‘submitted a revised scheme on sound lines but there is much detailed work to be done.’ 75

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Source: Compiled from The Daily Telegraph extracts in W.F. Deedes’ scrapbook.

Table 3 - ARP Service Volunteers By Borough Pre and Post Munich

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73 Home Office to Gater (CONFIDENTIAL) dated 27 July 1938 LCC File CL/CD/1/2
74 Donoughue & Jones p 195
75 Gater to Morrison dated 30 August 1938 LCC File CL/CD/1/2
The authorities were also concerned about the effect on the public of the attitude of such boroughs as Stepney for, as Gater reported on 19 September:

Mr Morrison will wish to know that Mr Samuel Lee rang up this morning to complain that, although he had volunteered for ARP duties ten days ago, he received no acknowledgement from the (Stepney) Borough Council and on applying in person he gathered a rather strong impression that officials knew little or nothing of what they were supposed to be doing. 76

Across London the boroughs had by now submitted their schemes but citizens were still failing to come forward in sufficient numbers to man the Services. ARP training continued as boroughs unsuccessfully sought to recruit volunteers to meet the establishment figures for the ARP Services recommended by the Home Office. The shortfall of volunteers through the spring and summer are in the selected Boroughs is shown in Table 3.

The Munich Crisis and London's Reaction

The summer of 1938 witnessed the Italian use of gas in, and the occupation of, Abyssinia and the fascist powers' support for Franco's forces in the Spanish Civil War. Both events involved aerial bombardment of civilians and further increased the decline of confidence in peace and security. 77 The government was caused to review its defence plans when Germany threatened to expand into Sudetenland in May 1938 and the resulting Czech crisis brought the prospect of a European war much closer. Accordingly 'Civil Defence Emergency Scheme Y' was drafted by mid-August adopting the May 1938 recommendations of Warren Fisher and Sir Maurice Hankey (the 'Fisher-Hankey' proposals) that, in time of war, a Ministry of Home Security be established together with some form of regional system of administration. Plans were made and Regional Commissioners identified; however few outside central government were given details of Scheme Y. Security was tight but Harold Scott, of the Home Office

76 Gater to Morrison dated 19 September 1938 LCC File CL/CD/1/2
77 The Czech crisis developed through the summer of 1938 meanwhile the press carried many reports of the effects of the bombing of civilians in Spain.
Prisons Department, had been told by Eady that his name was on a list of those earmarked for special work in case of war. Scott was called to the office of Sir John Anderson, now an MP and recently returned from Bengal, and told:

I have been appointed as Regional Commissioner for London and you are my Principal Officer ... our area covers the City and the Metropolitan Police District and parts of Essex, Kent, Surrey and Hertfordshire. Sir George Gater is our Chief ARP Officer and Sir Philip Game [Commissioner, Metropolitan Police] has allocated us some rooms in Scotland Yard ... we walked across and found a staff of four who were eager to know what it was all about ... The Regional Commissioners were in no position to take over control for, as their existence had been kept secret, they were not in proper contact with the local authorities and there was a great deal of confusion in their relationships with various Ministries and dark suspicions were created. ... our staff would have been hopelessly inadequate to deal with problems that did in fact confront us in all too short a time. 78

Writing of those hectic days of the Czech crisis the Home Secretary recalled:

War seemed inevitable ... I had set up the complicated machinery that dealt with gas masks, decontamination, shelters, fire fighting, gas attacks, blast destruction and evacuation. It was now necessary to bring into action the untried plans on which I had been working for more than a year ... on 28 September a State of Emergency gave the Government the appropriate powers 79

But Hoare's attitude at the time appeared rather different when Morrison and Gater visited him in the Home Office on 13 September to discuss evacuation, shelters and other emergency schemes. Gater noted that:

There seemed to be an attitude of dilatoriness, indecision and complacency ... [Hoare] assuming that the international situation would develop slowly ... [on evacuation] Morrison offered LCC co-operation and was prepared to lend experienced personnel ... but Sir Samuel said that an official section was working under the direction of a retired Indian Civil Servant who "had experience of large removals of population" ... [on shelters] Hoare said he was working under the impression that Borough Councils in London were proceeding with success and that no further government action was required. 80

On being appointed Chief ARP Officer for London in the first week of September, Gater:

78 Sir Harold Scott Your Obedient Servant (London: Deutsch 1959) pp. 105-107
79 Hoare p 316
80 Minutes taken by Gater 13 Aug 1938 in LCC CL/CD/2/1
decided to act at once ... The time honoured method of not planning ahead but picking the right man to undertake the work at the last moment was ... strained to the utmost.... there was absolutely nothing to build on. In the realm of higher control the cupboard was bare... Group officers were appointed to take charge of sectors of London ... and sent down to their areas with carte blanche instructions to requisition the finest buildings they could get and prepare it for an operational centre.  

In the next week, as international tension heightened, the local authorities began to anticipate what might be required of them. To Westminster Council:

... it appeared desirable that every step possible should be taken to expedite the preparation of the Council's ARP Scheme. Every member of staff on leave was recalled and all departments concentrated on ARP, working to 11 p.m. and midnight seven days a week. ...... whilst substantial progress had been made, the position at the beginning of September was that the scheme was far from complete...  

At the LCC the main activity during the crisis included bringing to readiness the Fire and Ambulance Services but effectiveness was limited by the lack of vehicles and the manpower to operate them. The London Ambulance Service was supplemented by the use of private cars and the requisitioning of 'Greenline' London buses. Morrison and his staff remained in County Hall as:

... decisions of great responsibility were required daily ... [Morrison] hourly held himself constantly available - nor did he hesitate when occasion required, to make personal representations to Ministers of the Crown...  

Meanwhile the ARP organisations of the Metropolitan Boroughs ground slowly into operation but all found they were grossly unprepared for war as they too had neither the trained personnel in their ARP Services nor sufficient equipment for them. Some boroughs were better prepared, more innovative and more effective than others. Reports quoted below from Council Minute Books of four Boroughs (with other references) give an indication of the timing and extent of activities in the run up to and during the crisis.

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81 Reginald Bell The Bull's Eye - A Tale of the London' Target Cassell (1943) pp 9-10
82 Westminster Council Minutes - Meeting 13 October 1938
83 Notes by Gater for Morrison's speech of thanks to staff dated 5 October 1938 in LCC CL/CD/1/2
In July 1938 Westminster collected its allocation of 120,000 gas masks from the Regional Stores and stored them within the City. An experimental ‘fitting station’ (masks came in three sizes and needed to fit the face tightly) was opened that month when 3,000 citizens were measured and fitted - but the masks could not be assembled until Home Office authorisation to issue was received. On 16 September Westminster decided to 'press on' with fitting and on 22 September some 1,900 volunteers (Air Raid Wardens and the staff of 35 City firms) were brought together to be instructed in mask fitting. Next day 14 fitting centres were opened in Westminster Polling Stations where citizens were given a card detailing their measurements which they would eventually exchange for a mask. 84

On 16 September the Home Office sent telegrams to all boroughs requesting details of open spaces where trenches might be excavated to provide shelter for 10% of the population 'caught in the open.' Borough Engineers carried out surveys as to where these 7 ft. deep and 5ft. wide trenches might be dug and the Home Office allocated Public Works Contractors to each borough. 85 In Poplar on Friday 23 September the Town Clerk called a meeting of all volunteer wardens and they were instructed in the fitting of gas masks. 86 The LCC Education Department was asked to draft, by noon 23 September, a London Evacuation Plan. They complied but the subsequent call for the plan to be activated was cancelled by Hoare on the urgent advice of his officials who feared the obvious shortcomings would embarrass the Government. 87 Returning from his meeting with Hitler the Prime Minister, on Saturday 24 September, issued instructions that the Home Security Organisation be activated and, just before noon, the Home Office started telephoning the boroughs to initiate the fitting (not issue) of gas masks and the excavation of public trenches. All masks were to be collected from the Regional Stores so London's emergency measures were fully under way.

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84 Westminster Council Minutes 13 October 1938 - report dated 7 October
85 St Pancras Minutes dated 12 October when the report dated 10 October was presented
86 Poplar Minutes Report - Council Meeting 27 October 1938
87 Interview Mr K.A.L. Parker 19 January 1988 who was in Hoare's Private Office throughout the crisis.
Also on Saturday 24 September the Home Office posted to each Council their set of 'Secret Instructions' which included that to start assembling and issuing the masks to the public - but these instructions did not arrive until the first postal delivery on Monday 26 September. Complications with the assembly of the gas masks were encountered as the masks came in four pieces and the rubber face pieces were stored in air-tight steel cans so assembly took time. Most Councils set up teams of nimble fingered 'factory girls' to assemble the masks which were then issued to the population. Across London there were shortages of small sized masks and no masks at all (at that time) for babies and children under four. Collection of the mask parts by St Pancras had started on 22 September, and by Stepney two days later, but took several days to complete as the Government had commandeered most transport. The general issue of masks started in St. Pancras on Monday 26 September, on Wednesday in Westminster and Poplar and on Thursday in Stepney.

Trench digging was started in most Boroughs on Monday 26th using contractor's men and labourers from the Employment Exchange. At the peak, Westminster was using 3,500 men while St Pancras had 1,200 men and three mechanical excavators. Meanwhile Borough teams started surveying basements for use as shelters, to be strengthened where necessary. Hundreds of thousands of sandbags (at a scale of 3 per inhabitant) were drawn from stores and filled with sand. St Pancras drew 600,000 sandbags and filled them with 4,000 cubic yards of sand, mostly by Wardens and other volunteers and used to protect vital points like ARP Control Centres and Telephone Exchanges. The Munich Conference met on 29 September and accepted the German demand to occupy the Sudetenland. Consequently, on Friday 30 September, Gater instructed that no further trenches be started and those already dug be 'made good' i.e. covered with timber etc. The issue of gas masks continued until all citizens were supplied and some Boroughs purchased and issued cardboard cartons to protect the masks.
The week had brought home to the public, to politicians and officials the extent of the unpreparedness of the metropolis to meet aerial bombardment. The local authorities did reasonably well and all congratulated their staffs. Hackney was particularly pleased with its performance as their report claimed:

We have no hesitation in saying that, by 29 September, ARP Services in the Borough were ready and could have operated from the Control Room in the Town Hall. Hackney has reaped the benefit of being the first in the country to prepare a scheme... That there was hurry and improvisation in some respects at the last moment is due solely to the fact that, through failure of respective governments to sanction expenditure on works (public shelters and First Aid Posts) these could not be put in hand until the emergency was upon us ... other authorities were not so advanced as in this Borough ...

Major improvements were obviously essential. But, as Hodsoll later wrote:

.. for Civil Defence, Munich was a godsend. ... Our Regional Organisation was in embryo state ... no proper premises, war room or communications were in existence ... we were still short of volunteers and, of those that we had, many were only half trained and those that were trained lacked equipment.... In the middle of all this Sir George Crystal, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health, arrived and proposed that his minister take over responsibility for First Aid Posts ... Whether his motives were meant to be helpful or whether they appeared to be a good opportunity to take over part of the organisation which they considered rightfully to belong to his Ministry, I hesitate to say. ... A hectic scramble for a few days

Each Metropolitan Borough presented an internal report on its ARP activities through the national emergency and all were well aware of the need to improve their facilities, and the efficiency and level of manning of their ARP Services. Those involved during the crisis had worked hard and well, local firms and the public had rallied around to help assemble, fit and distribute millions of gas masks and thousands of volunteers had applied to join the Services over the few days of crisis. The issue of gas masks and the sight of miles of public trenches in the parks were reminders of what had gone on as the nation stood on the brink of a war. The ARP arrangements for London as demonstrated during the national emergency were poor and the government was held responsible. Typical of most of the Boroughs, Paddington

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88 Hackney Council ARP Committee Minutes 18 October 1938
89 Hodsoll papers 6/1 Chapter 12 'Munich and After'

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optimistically recorded that 'The experience gained in the Emergency will be invaluable as a basis for reviewing the whole organisation of ARP in the Borough' 90

The Political Parties and the ARP Interest Groups
The preceding pages have demonstrated that the protection of the public against air attack in the 1930s was not merely a scientific question as to what constituted adequate protection measures but was a political question of what was possible and who should pay for it. Having summarised the progress of ARP to the end of the Munich crisis, it is now appropriate to summarise both the attitudes to ARP of the three main political parties and to mention the development of ARP interest/pressure groups which now emerged and proved reasonably successful.

Firstly, the Conservative Party who generally supported rearmament and whose 1935 manifesto had stated:

> collective security by collective action can alone save us from the old system which resulted in the Great War ... [but] ... We must in the next few years do what is necessary to repair the gaps in our defences which have accumulated over the last decade 91

Following the shock of Munich, the party redoubled its support for ARP. Secondly, the Liberal Party, in 1935 about to go into sharp electoral decline, felt that Baldwin had not been genuine about the League although they supported rearmament. Thirdly the Labour Party was not opposed to defence as such but claimed their support for rearmament was only possible in connection with what Attlee called 'a genuine League policy.' 92 The party had traditionally always voted against the annual Defence Estimates but in July 1937 Attlee and Morrison lost the vote held at a private party meeting when they attempted to again oppose rearmament. Morrison's biographers described his significant role on the defence issue at the 1937 party Annual Conference:

90 Paddington Council Minutes Report dated 13 December 1938
92 Booth p 182-3
Dalton and Bevin had mobilised the vote in favour of rearmament. Morrison was silent. Without Morrison it is likely that the Labour Party might have split, following a sharp confrontation between the rearmers and the unilateral disarmers. He maintained party unity. The government failed to rearm quickly enough, and used the excuse that Labour was opposed. A major battle won by Morrison in the late 1930s was to co-operate with the government over civil defence. He faced stiff opposition from many within the party who felt that measures to protect the civilian population would induce a 'war mentality' since people would feel protected against the enemy. As leader of the LCC and Chairman of its committee for civil defence, he was responsible for the defence of the area most vulnerable to air attacks.

The Party had established an ARP Committee, whose members included Morrison, Charles Key and the journalist Ritchie Calder. All three were aware of the ARP needs of the country and who later come to notice playing significant roles.

The small but active Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) must also be mentioned as they were often influential at ward level. Seeing ARP as an opportunity to be exploited to forward the interests of the working class suffering at the hands of 'fascist' policies of the government, the CPGB saw the Labour Party as its main opponent. The party was represented in many London Boroughs and the prospect of poison gas and high explosive bomb attacks called forth a number of CPGB pamphlets demanding deep shelter protection for the whole population, several party members having experienced bombing in Spain. The CPGB may have been influential in trades union and certain intellectual circles but they were electorally weak in the Borough Councils, having only one candidate elected in the 1937 local elections in London - that success being Stepney Councillor Phil Piratin. Some 'intellectuals,' such as Prof. J.B.S. Haldane, were communist sympathisers and Haldane’s major contribution was his influential book A.R.P., published in late September 1938. This and the book by The Cambridge Scientists’ Anti-War Group were often quoted by opponents.

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93 Donoughue & Jones pp 263-265
94 Although this appears to have been an official Labour Party committee, no record of its proceedings or references to it were found in the archives of the Museum of Labour History in Manchester.
This Month's Book

A.R.P.

By Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, F.R.S.

Price to public, 7/6; to ordinary members, 2/6; to "B" members, 3/-; to "C" members, 3/6

Haldane proves

(a) that bomb-proof shelter for all is the only thing that can save us in the event of war,
(b) that the Government shows no sign of making any effort to provide such shelter,
(c) that a scheme for complete protection is practicable—it is merely a question of money.

Haldane's scheme

will cost

millions of pounds

but it will save (in the event of war)

millions of lives

including your wife's, your children's, your own

On the basis

of the facts and arguments in this book, set going such an agitation as will compel the Government to adopt Haldane's scheme.

John Strachey writes:

"The Left Book Club has published many kinds of books. It would be rash to say of any one of them that it was the most important which the Club has ever issued. But I venture to say, after reading every word of it twice, that Professor Haldane's A.R.P. is the most practical book that the Club has ever issued.

"The word 'practical' is used in a very specific sense. This is a book which explains very clearly the nature of a danger under which we are all living, and urges that we take certain steps to guard against it. After reading and measuring its contents, I feel the words the mass assurance urge for action. I have left vagueness behind, and suppose now of my members that we and our families were in danger of some day being attacked from the air, and that something ought to be done about it. After reading this book, I know how very much greater that danger is than I had realized; but I also know precisely how that danger can be averted; moreover, I know that that danger must be averted and that it will only be averted by the result of the more serious activity, agitation and pressure on our part and on the part of the other private citizens of Great Britain. I cannot doubt that the reading and study of this book will have the same effect on the 50,000 odd members of the Left Book Club; on the unknown hundreds of thousands of persons to whom members will send or give this book, and through them, on the entire British public.

"I am inclined to think that upon the use which we, the 50,000 L.B.C. members, make of this book may well depend our future lives. Unless I am mistaken, this book is destined to be the foundation of an ever-growing campaign which will not end until we have obtained 'full protection.' Left Book Club members often want something practical to do. Can one do anything more useful than to usefully urge for ourselves and one's fellow citizens full protection against the horror of aerial bombardment? Professor Haldane has shown us that we can have full protection, though only by a scheme on a great scale such as it is idle to suppose that the Government will undertake unless an enormous pressure is brought to bear. For my part, I can only say that full protection is what I demand for my wife, my two children, and myself, and that nothing less will do. Now that I know how it can be got, I will not rest until it is done."

[turn over]
of government ARP policy but their adherents did not constitute an interest group as such although Haldane led his self-styled 'ARP Co-ordinating Committee.'

There were no identifiable related pressure or interest groups until the subject of ARP became more visible to the general public in August 1937 when the scientist G.R.F. Nuttall and H.M. Hyde produced their comprehensive book *Air Defence and the Civilian Population*. They acknowledged their debt to Hodsoll and the ARP Department and to Oliver Simmonds MP who had constructed an air raid shelter at his factory on the Great West Road. Soon several professions (in particular architects) and other organisations established ARP Committees, the most significant of which was the Parliamentary ARP Committee set up by MPs Oliver Simmonds and Duncan Sandys in March 1937. These two MPs visited Spain to see the effects of air raids early in 1938 then they, and other MPs, joined with Nuttall to set up the Air Raid Protection Institute (ARPI) in April 1938. This brought together 'outstanding specialists from all sources, especially Town, County and District Clerks, architects, engineers, chemists etc.' The founding members included Dr Tee, Town Clerk of Hackney, Sir Malcolm Campbell and Col. Routh then 'the only ARP Officer on the ARPI Council.'

More substantial publicity was provided by the founding in late 1938 of the Air Raid Defence League 'founded to bring together all those interested in civil defence and to provide reliable and independent information and advice on the subject.' The League, which had strong links with the ARPI had Lord Hailey as its Chairman and published a series of booklets on specific aspects of ARP such as Evacuation, Shelter Policy, Nature of Air Attack etc. It was only after the Munich crisis that the League and the ARPI came to prominence when both public and politicians thereafter demanded adequate ARP measures.

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96 See p.174
98 This informal grouping established various sub-committees specialising on topics such as evacuation, structural precautions etc. but no papers are held by the House of Lords Record Office.
99 G.M. Routh *The Institute of Civil Defence and Air Raid Protection 1938-55* dated 1956 - paper in Library of The Institute of Civil Defence and Disaster Studies (and the British Library)
100 Col Routh was the ARPO for Middlesex and the author of the History of the ARP Institute. Wardens were not given their own Institute status until the middle of the war.
Post-Munich Developments

This chapter has described the main elements of ARP policy formation and implementation to the Munich crisis but an interim assessment will not be made until events leading up to the opening of the main bombing campaign in September 1940 have been described. This is necessary as no formal policy was announced until July 1935. Thereafter little action was apparent until the ARP Act came into force in January 1938, just 9 months before the crisis. Chapter 3 describes events from the inquest on the crisis through to the opening of the Blitz while Chapter 4 discusses four issues in greater depth and concludes by making an interim assessment of policy formation and implementation so setting the context in which the ARP Services were put to the test.
Chapter Three

From Munich to the Blitz

This chapter continues the account of the development and implementation of ARP from the Munich crisis, through the outbreak of war and the 'phoney war' to September 1940 when the London ARP organisation was tested by bombing. It was during this post-Munich period that the term 'ARP', denoting immediate precautionary measures and services, was replaced by 'Civil Defence' (CD) which encompassed the wider range of measures to protect industry, public utilities and emergency hospitals. Although civil defence in London is the subject of this thesis, it is necessary to continue tracing ARP/CD developments at central government level as the protection of London remained a major consideration of all levels throughout the period.

The Inspector General of ARP (Hodsoll) maintained both that 'Munich, from a civil defence point of view, was a godsend ... [also] ... the capital was generally lagging behind the rest of the country' and the metropolis received special attention. Whereas the regional organisations outside London were initially operated only on a shadow basis, the London Regional organisation set up during the crisis remained in being to expedite metropolitan ARP by encouraging and co-ordinating local authority measures. People now realised that war was increasingly a probability rather than a possibility and there was almost universal agreement that ARP measures were essential. Yet there remained controversy on how best to achieve, and what constituted, adequate ARP - particularly the level of shelter protection to be provided. Shelter policy became an increasing concern in the run-up to war while the imposition of regional government and the control of local ARP Services remained controversial.

1 Hodsoll Papers 6/2 Chapter 12 'Munich and After' (unpublished) - Churchill Archive
There was thus unanimous support for the acceleration of ARP measures from Munich through to the outbreak of war on 3 September 1939, but the feared 'knock out blow' accompanying the declaration of war did not happen. Once it was seen that 1.5 million members of the ARP Services were not in action, the public started to question ARP expenditure. Establishments were cut but the reduction in the ARP Services coincided with the advance of the German forces towards the Channel coast. There then followed a series of military disasters followed by the opening, in August 1940, of German bombing of the UK. This chapter thus covers a period of intense preparation followed by one of relative inactivity during which the ARP Services were able to further prepare for the expected attack.

The Post Munich Inquest and Actions
The transfer of the Sudetenland to Germany at the quadripartite Munich conference avoided (or at least delayed) war and the crisis subsided. The UK had received a severe shock as it had found itself unprepared in most military fields and certainly grossly unprepared to protect London from aerial attack. Regardless of the acrimony produced by the terms of the Munich settlement, there was now a general consensus that war was a probability and that adequate ARP measures needed to be taken and taken quickly. It was for this reason that to Hodson, Hoare and most others 'Munich as a Godsend' and a catalyst for ARP measures. When Parliament met on Monday 3 October, Chamberlain made a long statement on his discussions in Germany and Sir Samuel Hoare assured the House:

We are determined to fill up the gaps which have shown themselves in our defensive armour ... but let me say I am as conscious as anyone of the help I have received from the hon. Members opposite in the field of ARP... [Morrison] has been a tower of strength in the preparations of our defences of London. I think it will be found on the whole that the machine of ARP has worked well. It was a new an untried machine, and a machine dependent on the work, in many cases, of untrained volunteers ... [gas] masks were on the whole distributed without any hitch or delay, that within a few hours of the crisis becoming

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2 Ibid. and p.73.
acute trenches were dug on a methodical system in all our great cities ... we do not fear an investigation of the position as far as ARP are concerned. We shall welcome it. 

The full debate on the state of ARP was not held until the House reassembled three weeks later. Meanwhile, on 26 October, Wilfrid Eady, Head of the ARP Department, honoured the agreement he had made in the summer to address the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) where, unknown to him, the press had been admitted to what he had understood was a private meeting. Eady's talk described the ARP plans made by his Department as 'probably the sloppiest regulations that have ever been produced by any Government' and, appealing to his 'establishment' and retired military audience, explained:

... for nine months we were haunted in some places by the problem of recruiting. We were not getting the response from the types of people we wanted .. the people who are sometimes known as the 'governing classes' of this country have, broadly speaking, done little to help local authorities with ARP. ... most of the personnel are the industrial workpeople of the country, the NCOs, the Group Wardens ... are what used to be called artisans; but very few of the local residents ... who might have brought great personal help to overdriven authorities, who might have brought the gift of personal leadership, came forward until it was very late indeed.

The press reported Eady's lecture. The Times did not mention his 'sloppiest regulations' but under the headline UNPREPAREDNESS IN ARP, it quoted Eady's admission that 'the authorities have not been wise, successful or intelligent in their appeals regarding ARP and it is to be straightened out as one of the lessons of the crisis.' In Parliament, Eady's comments were quoted at length. Hoare later recalled 'Chamberlain and Warren Fisher took the affair very seriously. Chamberlain eventually accepted my defence and Eady remained as my adviser.'

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5 The Times 27 October 1938 p7
6 Hoare Nine Troubled Years p 237
When Chamberlain addressed the House on 1 November, he remarked that ARP for the future was of 'gigantic proportions and complex', further:

the burden is too great to be imposed upon the Home Office in addition to its ordinary duties. We want a separate Minister with special administrative and organisational experience, who could devote his whole attention to the subject. I have invited my hon. Friend the member for the Scottish Universities [Sir John Anderson] to undertake this task ... as Lord Privy Seal [and] Minister for Civilian Defence. In that capacity he will have direct charge of ARP... [and for] ... determining arrangements for national voluntary service. 7

The Prime Minister went on to announce that Anderson would co-ordinate the ARP work of the many government departments necessarily involved in civil defence and of the National Service organisation - the lead that many, including Punch,8 were seeking. Anderson had returned from India and, through the summer of 1938, had Chaired the Parliamentary Committee on Evacuation whose report had yet to be published.9 Anderson was the obvious choice as Minister for Civil Defence with his vast experience of administration10 and his eight year's work with the two CID ARP Committees. In the debate on the Munich ARP situation, the Government adopted a positive and combative stance, although Hoare recalled that CD:

... had started in very unfavourable conditions. Many people ... thought that it was necessary ... but no one liked it ... the local authorities objected to any charge on their rates, while the Treasury refused to undertake the full burden of the expense. ... I had to meet a vote of censure in the House of Commons on the deficiencies that the Munich crisis had disclosed. ... It did however seem incongruous that [the opposition attack] should have been led by Herbert Morrison, whose supporters on several London councils had made further progress impossible. 11

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7 HofC Debs Vol 340 Cols 83-4 1 November 1938
8 See p.83 for EH,Shepard's two full page cartoons in Punch in October 1938.
9 As announced by Hoare in the debate, the Evacuation report was published within days
10 Chairman Board of Inland Revenue 1919-22, Joint Under Secretary, Dublin 1920-22, Permanent Secretary Home Office 1922-32 and Governor of Bengal 1932-37
11 Hoare p.333
E.H. Shepard Cartoons welcoming Anderson – *Punch* 12 and 26 October 1938
In leading the opposition attack, Morrison used London examples and listed many deficiencies, claiming:

I have always taken the view that this ought not to be a party political question ... it is a matter of public administration, public organisation and of good government nationally and locally. . The number of [fire] appliances needed for London is about 3,000 ... it was the hon. Gentleman that was responsible for supplying them not the business of the Council to find them. We had 99 and most of those were delivered without the necessary equipment which had to be supplied out of the stores of the London Fire Brigade... in the crisis the fire brigade had no [additional] vehicles except the cars of volunteers."12

Morrison then detailed the Government's failure to provide sufficient hospitals, shelters, evacuation plans and warning sirens then criticised the manner in which instructions had been passed to the local authorities. The Home Office had bypassed the elected representatives in local authorities and addressed its ‘secret letters’ directly to Town Clerks or Chief Constables who were thereby appointed as controllers of the local ARP Services. Morrison claimed that ‘if there had not been this secrecy, if there had been consultation with local authorities, this could have been squared up without trouble...’ (12) But Hoare defended himself and the Government and took the offensive by proposing an amendment which:

... welcomes the decision of HMG to entrust the responsibility for the system to a Minister appointed for that purpose, and declares its full approval of the Government's determination to complete with the utmost speed the measures necessary to provide for the country’s needs. 13

He then cautioned the House of the implications of Morrison’s apparent command of the subject of ARP by warning that:

[Morrison] seemed to give the impression that all these questions were very easy of solution, that all that was necessary was the word of a great administrator like himself, and at once we should find that a panacea had been obtained. In the ARP Bill last year we did not get a great deal of help from many members of the right hon. Gentleman’s party. Indeed we had opposition from some Labour Councils. (13)

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12 HofC Debs Vol 340 Col 421 3 November 1938
13 Ibid. Cola 434-439
After two days in office, Anderson assured the House of the (unchanged) policy he would be implementing to overcome the unpreparedness of the nation in general and of London in particular. But, he warned:

There are organisational difficulties ...that arise from the system of collaboration between local authorities and central government ... there are also difficulties connected with the subject-matter itself. This is not one of those subjects which a body of experts can take away, wrap up in technical language, and get on with the job, knowing that all will be well if they are left to do it in their own way. It is the sort of thing that is everybody’s business. That makes it the more easy to criticise ... after the experience of the crisis a month ago, we realise far better than we could have done before the magnitude and the urgency of the problems with which we have to deal.  

He ended his first ministerial speech by pointing out that his responsibilities for National Voluntary Service matters involved ‘the solution of the problem of the effective utilisation of the man-power of the country for the purpose of national defence.’ Finally he confirmed that:

... relations between local authorities and the Government in this matter have to be adjusted, the Government and the country cannot possibly do without the interest, the goodwill, and the resources, in personnel and material, that the local authorities command. ...  

Winding up the debate, Leslie Hore-Belisha (War Office) reassured the House that he had:

... dealt frankly with the present state of our deficiencies ... Within two years public opinion on this matter has changed, a vast organisation has been built up, a great industry has been created and production has begun ... HMG are resolved to see that the legitimate fears at present entertained shall, so far as it is humanly possible, be averted, and in the shortest possible time.  

As the vote was won by 355 votes to 130. Chamberlain and Hoare survived the inquest into ARP during the crisis.

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14 ibid. Cols 476-482
15 ibid. Col 530
The Regional Organisation and London

The Regional Organisation set up during the crisis was established to be the chief agency of government in war should communications with Whitehall be broken. In peacetime the organisation was the means of co-ordinating local authority ARP activities as it was seen as the best means of rapidly completing ARP programmes. To help achieve this, the Regional Inspectorate of the ARP Department was expanded to provide more advisers to work with local authorities. Some financial decisions were eventually devolved to them so that the delay in obtaining authorisation was greatly reduced. The Regional Organisation in London, under Harold Scott, was not stood down when the crisis faded but continued in being. Scott later recalled his efforts organising and rationalising ARP across the Greater London area, now formally constituted as the No 5 (London) Civil Defence Region:

... I was now responsible for co-ordinating the ARP plans of some forty scheme-making authorities and the protection of nine million people, ... the services had been enormously increased by thousands of volunteers, but they were under control of some ninety-five different local authorities, and in general the capital's state of preparedness was, according to the ARP Department, 'deplorably behind hand'. Some Metropolitan Boroughs had made good progress, others seemed to be paralysed, and there had been no agreement about spheres of responsibility and the allocation of duties ... My job was the latest attempt to solve the problem of a central authority for London, which had exercised the minds of the [CID] ARP committee for some years. ... I was the heir of the 'Air Raids Commandant'.... My first action was to invite the committee of town clerks of the metropolitan boroughs to discuss with me the thorny agenda which had been tossed to and fro between them and the Home Office for four years. In that different atmosphere of post Munich England, I found that they were anxious to get on with the job and were only waiting for a lead. I promised them that I would do my best to give them quick decisions, and asked for their cooperation. One question cropped up at once: how was the London Region to be organised and what was to be the method of communication in time of war? I decided to act immediately. 16

Scott had a relatively free hand and his organisational arrangements for London met with the approval of Herbert Morrison and the LCC Clerk Sir George Gater:

16 Scott Your Obedient Servant pp. 109-112
Map 3 - The City and the Metropolitan Boroughs as Allocated to the Five CD Groups

Source: Drawn using London Regional Circular No 1 (1939) and Borough Maps in the LMA
No 4 (EASTERN) REGION

No 6 (SOUTHERN) REGION

No 12 (SOUTHERN) REGION

Source: Drawn using London Regional Circular No 1 (1939) and Borough Maps in LMA

Map 4 - No. 5 (London) Civil Defence Region
There were no precedents to go on, but I decided on my own responsibility to divide the County of London into five Groups and to make Middlesex and the metropolitan parts of Essex, Kent and Surrey into four more groups. Each group contained a number of local authorities ... with the idea of creating areas of approximately equal strength. ... It was also essential to create a chain of command for each of the ARP services, leading eventually to the regional headquarters. Mr Naldreath, head of the LCC Ambulance Service and Commander Firebrace, Chief Officer of the London Fire Brigade, were appointed Regional Chiefs for these services. For leadership in the new services I turned again to the LCC, as the biggest county authority, and with the agreement of the other authorities in the Region, I appointed Sir Pierson Frank, the LCC Chief Engineer, as chief of the repair service, and Major Bax of the LCC Surveyor's Department, as head of the Rescue Service. An officer of the Ministry of Health was picked to organise the region's stretcher parties. In this way we could ensure a uniform standard of training throughout the Region, and keep in touch with the needs of each service. ... At each group centre a corresponding set of officers was responsible for the several services. (16)

The local authorities were generally pleased that Scott's regional organisation was not only progressing preparations but he also set up the Town Clerks' and other Regional Committees and increased formal links with the Boroughs by deploying more Regional Inspectors. Also, citizens were volunteering for the ARP Services and at an increased rate. Some 150,000 volunteers had enrolled as a result of special appeals at the beginning of August 17 and another 250,000 enrolled during the crisis. Scott's allocation of the City and the 28 Metropolitan Boroughs to the five Inner London Groups is shown on Map 3, while Map 4 shows the nine Groups comprising the No 5 (London) Region.

**Progress, Problems and Further Legislation**

With Anderson as Minister for Civil Defence and with a Regional Organisation established, the way was set for the implementation of ARP policy at an accelerated rate. The Government concluded that its ARP policies were satisfactory but better implementation was to be achieved by having separate departments within the Home Office to deal with policy and with administration. Administration of ARP measures was to continue to be handled by

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17 HofC Debs. Vol. 340 14 August 1938
the ARP Department while a new Lord Privy Seal’s Office was set up to handle planning and co-ordination across government departments. Anderson brought in Sir Thomas Gardiner, the former Director General of the Post Office (who had recently overseen its regional re-organisation) as his ‘Civil Chief of Staff.’ Co-ordination was essential as it had been decided ‘to spread the burden’ of ARP and, rather than concentrating everything in the Home Office, Anderson assigned to other Departments of State those ARP responsibilities which seemed to fit in naturally with their normal peace-time functions e.g. all aspects of first aid and hospitals were to be dealt with by the Ministry of Health. Also Whitehall departments appointed their own representatives at Regional HQs.

At local level, the authorities increased their training courses but the numbers of trained personnel for the ARP Services still fell short of the new establishment levels. These had been raised by the Home Office who decided that an extra 25% to 50% of personnel would be required to be available as ‘reserves’. In an attempt to increase the number of qualified instructors and to speed up and improve specialist training, the Home Office opened a second Anti-Gas School (at Easingwold, 15 miles north of York) while a ‘Higher Civil Defence School’ was opened in Kensington to provide courses for Town Clerks, ARP Officers and other senior staff.

The question of the composition and control of the ARP Wardens’ Service caused much discussion and some dispute, particularly in London within the London Labour Party (LLP). At the 1938 LLP Annual Conference the St Marylebone Labour Party put down a motion that there was:

a threat to democracy inherent in a system of ARP directed and manned almost exclusively by persons of reactionary views and we urge (a) sufficient labour and trades union members
in their locality become Air Raid Wardens and (b) the democratic administration of local ARP machinery particularly the recruiting and control of the Wardens’ organisation.\textsuperscript{18}

Some democratic elements were achieved, notably in Poplar where the senior Wardens were elected by the Wardens themselves. Nationally, Wardens had been allocated to Chief Constables but, within the London Region, control was retained by the Boroughs. Most Boroughs wanted to hand over control of their Wardens to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner but four Boroughs objected so a compromise was reached,\textsuperscript{19} the London Wardens remaining under the Boroughs but the Commissioner appearing to have some control through the new post of Principal Warden with an office in Scotland Yard. The much more political question as to who, at Borough level, would control local ARP Services should have been resolved in March 1939 when the Government instructed that ARP Controllers should be officials, such as the Town Clerk, rather than a local politician. This caused several disputes once the bombing started,\textsuperscript{20} only partially resolved by the intervention of the Regional Commissioner then the Home Secretary himself.

The Shelter Question

One aspect of policy that was shown to have severe weaknesses at the time of Munich concerned the lack of public shelters. The Government’s policy of ‘dispersal and protection’ involved the evacuation of large numbers of ‘useless mouths’ but those remaining in the target areas were expected to provide their own protection. Those caught out of doors would use local authority public shelters - either in strengthened basements or trenches in public parks which were ‘blast and splinter-proof’ but not ‘bomb-proof.’ When the public read of the tunnel shelters dug in Barcelona, and boosted by the demands of the CPGB and such ‘experts’ as J.B.S. Haldane, the general demand grew for shelters providing protection against direct

\textsuperscript{18} London Metropolitan Archive - 2417/G/3 L.L.P. Annual Conference Papers
\textsuperscript{19} See p. 130-131.
\textsuperscript{20} See pp.197-202.
hits. The Communist Party had a group of experts submit plans for deep tunnels in St Pancras to the Council. But the plan was ignored by the Council which was concerned with preparations of a more conventional nature. Both the Labour Party (in its December 1938 Manifesto) and the Liberal Party supported the calls for ‘deep shelters’ and most Labour controlled Boroughs in London demanded some element of deep shelter protection for their citizens. Typical of such demands was the motion of Stepney Trades Council at the 1938 LLP Conference urging the ‘preparation of proposals for adequate bomb-proof shelters for the whole of the people (of London)’ [18] - but the most significant deep-shelter plans were those from Finsbury to Ove Arup’s designs.21

Demands for deep shelter provision increased once details of Finsbury’s deep-shelter proposals were published. They proposed a number of massive concrete underground shelters, each holding 7,000 people, but the Government rejected all plans for deep shelters, not only because of the high cost (around £14 per head), but also of the vast amount of materials and manpower that would be required for their construction. Further, and perhaps more significantly, the Government saw the national disadvantages of the public adopting a ‘shelter mentality’22 and refusing to emerge from the shelters to man industry and services so vital in wartime. As the whole question of shelter policy is examined in more detail in Chapter 4 below, it is sufficient here to mention only briefly the topic which took up much public debate in the press and in Parliament. Anderson was well aware of the need to have a sensible shelter policy and, as an administrator par excellence, he acted cautiously but rationally, by seeking the best possible professional advice on which to base policy.

Firstly, Anderson commissioned a report from three leading civil engineers with extensive experience in railway and road tunnelling ‘To consider certain aspects of the Problem of Air Raid Shelters’. In their December 1938 report these experts:

21 See pp.121-126
22 The Hailey Conference addressed concerns about ‘shelter mentality’ (Cmd 6006 para. 3)
ANDY:ARKEN TO MY PLEA! DEEPER DIG YOUR A.F.P. ROUGH-CAST HUTS ARE NO PROTECTION ONCE A BOMBER GETS DIRECTION.

PROMISE THIS AND I'LL BE THINE PUT FINSBURY ON MY VALENTINE

Daily Express Cartoon 13 February 1939
wholeheartedly agreed with the Lord Privy Seal that the provision of a shelter in or in close proximity to the home of every citizen in vulnerable areas is a sound policy and that such a shelter should provide reasonable protection against blast and splinters from a nearby explosion.

They then examined the use of the sectional steel shelter 4'6" x 6' in plan and 6' high popularly known as the 'Anderson.' Designed to be sunk two feet into the garden of the average two storey house, the Anderson was finally designed to hold six people. The technical experts further agreed that other forms of shelter were needed for people living in flats, tenements and other types of houses for which the steel shelter was inappropriate or impossible to install as they had no garden to use or basement to strengthen.

This report was gratefully accepted by the Government who planned the mass production and delivery of Andersons. But the public demand for some form of deep shelter continued to be voiced (see *Daily Express* cartoon on page 93). In February Anderson set up an eight-member expert 'Conference' chaired by the former colonial administrator Lord Hailey. His members were drawn from across the field of public life and included a trades union MP, an eminent lady surgeon, a leading scientist, a civil engineer and others public figures to examine the case for 'heavily protected' i.e. deep shelters. Hailey examined the range of deep-shelter options, including the much publicised Finsbury plans, and reported in April 1939. Hailey first discussed the nature of the air threat and the various means of protecting the public but reminded people that 'complete immunity from risk was impossible ...[further] the problem of shelters cannot be regarded in the light of a contest between a deep and a shallow shelter policy.' He then examined the Finsbury scheme and concluded that the seven minute warning

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23 *Air Raid Shelter Policy* Cmd 5932 p.2, December 1938
24 The great and the good sitting with Lord Hailey (Chairman Air Defence League 1937-38) were George Hicks MP (Labour East Woolwich), Sir Clement Hindley MInstCE (Railway Tunnelling Specialist), FJ (later Lord) Leathers (later Minister of State), Dame Louise McIlroy FRCP (Prof. of Obstetrics), Sir William McLintock (Chartered Accountant), FJ Marquis (later Lord Woolton, Minister of Food) and Prof. Sir Richard Southwell (Government Aeronautical Scientist).
time likely to be allowed in war would mean that people would have insufficient time to reach the few huge shelters and get safely below ground. Examining tunnel shelters, Hailey agreed the London Underground would offer valuable shelter but assumed that the 'tubes' would be required for transport in war and not be available for public shelter. He agreed that the Anderson shelter offered a high degree of protection at a reasonable cost in materials, labour and money. Hailey suggested that the degree and extent of protection offered by underground shelters to the people of Barcelona had been exaggerated and that Barcelona, with its abundance of wide streets and soil which permitted tunnelling by inexperienced hands, was a very different city to London. He did, however, criticise the Government for not having produced a clear shelter policy, but his report was fully accepted as the basis of future shelter policy.

It was therefore the provision of shelters, over and above the massive programme that was already well in hand, that was the main feature of the Bill that become the Civil Defence Act (1939). When he gave his ARP progress report in Parliament, Anderson was aware of the work yet to be done but was proud of the achievements of his first four months in office and his wide-ranging speech is worth quoting at length as he specifically addressed the problems of London ARP:

... Everything is being speeded up and plans are being telescoped ... we have to deal with a subject where there is no background, no tradition and no body of authority to which to appeal... On the question of regional organisation there has been some misgivings and misunderstanding in certain quarters ... [it is] nothing sinister ... plain common sense, simply an organisation to guard against a contingency which it would be utter folly to ignore ... it must be perfectly clear that elected local bodies, as they function in peacetime, may not constitute the most effective type of organisation that could be imagined for war conditions and we have communicated with representatives of scheme-making local authorities. ... London is a very special position as regards civil defence. ... We set up that special [regional] authority that would function for the whole area and to which the constituent local authorities might have direct access. We propose to set up for London a co-ordinating committee to consider and advise on the problem of co-ordination of different authorities and services throughout the region... on Shelter Policy I have nothing to apologise for. Policy is the widest possible scale, in the shortest period of time, of
protection against splinter and blast and the fall of debris. That policy is put to practical test in a variety of ways. The steel shelters have been subjected to a series of very searching tests and they have stood up to those tests. I state that as a matter of fact. ... Civil Defence service is not really a service to the Government: it is a service to one's community. In Civil Defence there is a part for all to play. 26

Leading for the Opposition, Morrison was generally supportive of the Government's efforts but called for Civil Defence to be accorded the status of 'the fourth arm of defence' and thus become a totally national charge. He was particularly pleased with the satisfactory, and non-confrontational, way in which the Regional Organisations were working with local authorities, although he later wrote that:

Local government did not take kindly at first to the conception at 'Regional Commissioners, seeing in them, under guise of war necessity, an insidious beginning of direct bureaucratic administration from the centre which might permanently endanger the ancient independence of local authorities in local affairs. 27

Morrison reminded the House that:

The state of ARP in this country was very worrying ... In my judgement, within my strictly metropolitan experience, the administration is better, the organisation is more rapidly growing and it is easier to get on with the State Departments than it was under the regime as it was before. I hope they will act, in relation to local authorities, not as a dictator, but as a big brother, as guide, philosopher and friend to help them on ... I attach great importance to this new regional organisation. It will develop with local authorities relationships of helpfulness, of co-operation, of constructive aid - they can be of the greatest possible assistance to the local authorities. We are anxious that the spirit of the administration regionally, shall be a democratic public spirit, and one of friendly co-operation between the State and the local authorities. 28

Following his party line, Morrison warned that '100% bomb-proof shelter is eminently desirable' while George Lansbury declared that such was the delay in getting any bombproof

26 HofC Debs Vol 344 Cols 1287 - 1 March 1939
28 HofC Debs Vol 344 Col 1344 - 1 March 1939
shelters 'we shall all be blown to pieces.' 29 Meanwhile the distribution of the sectional steel (Anderson) shelters was proceeding with vigour and, by April 1939, some 300,000 Andersons had been delivered, thus providing protection for 1½ million people. 30

In essence, the Civil Defence Bill was a composite one bringing together a range of matters requiring legislation from the legalising the powers of the Lord Privy Seal to extending the powers of central and local government. The Town Clerk of Islington later recalled 'we could take over suitable buildings, construct underground shelters, provide underground parking suitable for also as air raid shelters, provide public shelters on or adjacent to the highway, requisition vehicles and premises and obscure lights and carry out camouflage'. 31 Hitler's take over of Czechoslovakia brought home the urgency of the situation and the normal period of consultation with interested parties was shortened so that the Act received Royal Assent on 13 July 1939 and imposed considerable additional obligations on local authorities. These included the free provision and installation (to those eligible) of material for strutting basements for households who could not install Andersons. In May 1939, local authorities were obligated to build, free of charge, brick and concrete domestic surface shelters of the same dimensions (i.e. holding six people) as the Anderson.

Updated Threat Assessments

While the German forces extended their control of central Europe through the early part of 1939 the RAF Air Staff updated its threat assessments. The CID Document Record of Home Defence Measures opened with a reminder of the assessment made in 1937 (as used by the Warren Fisher Committee) 32 under which the UK might receive 3,500 tons of bombs in the

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29 HoFC Debs Vol 344 Col 1344 - 1 March 1939
30 O'Brien p. 191
31 W Eric Adams Civil Defence in Islington 1938-45 Unpublished Memoir in the Islington Archives
32 See p.61

97
first 24 hours of war thereafter 600 tons per day. In April 1939 the Air Staff revised this to 700 tons a day and forecast that, by April 1940, the total might reach 900 tons per day. It is here appropriate to mention the results of bombing seen in Barcelona in March 1938 when a total of 44 tons of bombs had been dropped causing 3,000 casualties; thus 68 casualties were caused by each ton of bombs in a congested area, a result approximating the British estimates of 50 casualties per ton. But Barcelona was not 'defended' however the bombers were Italian not German. One reassuring report came from Anderson's technical experts who had tested the protection afforded by the Anderson shelters. The press witnessed the effects of exploding 500lb bombs at various distances from Anderson shelters and it was demonstrated that, at a distance of 50 feet from the shelter, no damage was caused when the bomb was exploded. Further the shelters withstood the collapse of brick buildings onto them. From February 1939 Anderson shelters were supplied free of charge to those earning less than £250 p.a. Local authorities were responsible for erection of Andersons which were delivered in sections, to homes, directly by the railway companies.

The Pace Quickens - LOWIN and War

A number of other important organisational developments were achieved in parallel with the passage of the Civil Defence Bill including the issue to local authorities, in March 1939, of Local War Instructions (LOWIN). Anderson's doubts about the likely effectiveness of local authorities in wartime were given substance when, as a result of the Munich experiences, it was decided to insist that local control be exercised by an effective official such as the Town Clerk of similar officer. Additionally each authority was to nominate a small (ideally 3 person) Emergency Committee with whom (not to whom) the Controller would work. Also

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31 Air Staff Paper Possible German Courses of Action in the Event of an Air Attack and Possible Distribution of Attack dated 3 Apr 1939 in MOD Air Historical Branch
34 O'Brien p 172
35 'Sectional Steel Shelters - Report Upon Investigations of the Standard of Protection Afforded' Cmd 6055 (July 1939)
36 See p.37.
councils were to appoint an ARP Controller and a Deputy to control the local ARP Services in wartime. But the Controller's task was:

reporting to the Committee prior to the execution instructions which were not of such urgency as to require immediate action whilst those that required immediate action would be reported after such action had been taken.  

Instead of nominating their Town Clerk as ARP Controller, Stepney appointed the leader of the local Labour Party, Councillor M.H. Davis, and decided that they should have a five person ('a more reasonable number') Emergency Committee to take power in the Borough at a time to be decided by Central Government. (37) Finsbury also appointed the Chairman of their ARP Committee as their Controller – contrary to the ARP Department's instructions and grounds for future disputes with the Department.

In January 1939 Sir George Gater, Clerk of the LCC, had visited Sir Thomas Gardiner, now Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, to urge that the Commissioner for London 'be selected at once' to take charge of ARP measures. Gardiner's alternative proposal that a 'Chief of Staff' Committee be set up was accepted by Gater and it was agreed that the members would include the Regional Commissioner (when appointed), Gardiner, Gater representing the LCC, Mr Parker Morris (Town Clerk Westminster) and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. Gater stressed 'the importance of consultation with Mr Morrison by the Lord Privy Seal before any step is taken in developing the London Regional System'.  

Morrison's biographers record that:

Morrison had made such a reputation in civil defence that in 1939 the government asked him to be the Regional Commissioner for London ... [but he] refused the offer ... it was a protest against appeasement.  

Although no LCC papers were found on this point, Hodsoll recorded that he had suggested

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37 Stepney Council Minutes 11 May 1939  
38 LCC File CL/CD/1/3 - Memo by Gater of the meeting held 18 January 1939  
39 Donoughue & Jones p. 267  
99
Morrison be appointed Chairman of an ARP Committee for Greater London but Morrison told him that he (Morrison) would have political difficulties following his open participation in a government policy. 40

When a 'London Co-ordinating Committee' was set up a month later, its membership was extended to include the Town Clerk of East Ham (representing the three County Boroughs of East and West Ham and Croydon in the London Region) and the Clerk of Middlesex representing the County Councils of Middlesex, Kent, Essex and Surrey in the Region. Parker Morris of Westminster was replaced by the rising star of the Town Clerks, Mr W Eric Adams of Islington as the representative of the Metropolitan Boroughs. Additionally a larger Committee was also formed with a representative member from each of the local authorities in the Region.

In April 1939 Regional Commissioners were appointed for each Region but, in London, two Commissioners were named although the promised senior Commissioner was not appointed until May 1940. The two London Commissioners were quite unlike but both proved ideal for their roles. One was the experienced administrator Sir Ernest Gowers, late of the Inland Revenue and the Manpower Committee of the CID, while the other was the naval hero and Antarctic explorer Admiral Sir Edward Evans ('Evans of the Broke'). 41 The activities and contributions of these Commissioners, whose peacetime duties did not include enforcement of ARP legislation, will be discussed in subsequent chapters as their wartime duties were as representatives of central government.

On 10 May 1939 the ARP Department of the Home Office wrote to all London local

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40 Hodsoll Papers 4/39
41 Gowers' administrative skills were later applied to the 'indoor' tasks of the London Region whilst Admiral Evans' personality and charisma suited him to the task of 'outdoor Commissioner' where he later spent most nights, resplendent in Naval uniform with white gloves, inspecting ARP Services and visiting Londoners under fire in shelters and ARP teams at their posts.
authorities requesting that they 'so arrange their business that during the next three months priority is given civil defence matters over all other business before them, and to ensure that all responsible officers of the Authorities are instructed accordingly'. Also further intense efforts were urged for Councils to complete the wartime establishment of their ARP Services. In early 1939 the ARP Services were authorised to recruit full time (paid) personnel to boost the manpower of the local Services, an important facility in London as the ARP Services were still under the required levels. Herbert Morrison called a meeting of the LCC, in the House of Commons, at which major changes were made in the way the Council went about its business including 'for the further expedition of civil defence measures, the LCC competitive tendering system was suspended' and financial approval was not needed for routine LCC expenditure. The Ministry of Health continued to use the LCC Supplies Department as its purchasing authority for provisioning an additional 4,000 First Aid Posts across the country Anderson personally thanked the LCC for this facility.

ARP Control Centres (and their Reserve Centres), generally in or below Town Halls, were connected by telephone to their various Wardens' and other Service Posts. In Islington the local civil defence organisation had 131 dial and 33 direct telephone lines - including 22 and 19 respectively in the ARP Control Centre, all linked to 9 different exchanges, eight of which were automatic so that they would not have to abandoned in case of unexploded bombs. To handle the recruiting of full time staff in Islington, an employment exchange was set up in the Council's ARP HQ and the necessary manpower was quickly recruited. However, some Boroughs were still unable to recruit sufficient personnel for their Services as Table 4, giving the results of a house to house census in Stepney shows. Even with the ability to pay full-time ARP workers, Stepney could not recruit more than 53% of the wartime Air Raid Warden establishment. But it was fully trained personnel that were required although the availability figures generally included enrolled but untrained personnel.

42 Stepney Council Minutes 11 May 1939
43 LCC File CL/CD/1/3 Anderson to Morrison dated 13 July 1939
Early in August, all the London Control centres were linked by telephone with their Group and Regional HQs and, by the outbreak of war, 1½ million Anderson shelters had been distributed and erected. Yet this was still only two-thirds of the programme although 50,000 Andersons were being produced each week. Additional shelter accommodation had been provided by the lining and covering, and thus making permanent, some 75% of London’s trench shelters. The additional powers given to local authorities had permitted them to designate many ‘public shelters’ in vaults, cellars and basements of public and private buildings - particularly modern steel-framed buildings. Another new feature of London’s street architecture was the erection by local authorities of brick and reinforced concrete surface shelters designed to accommodate 50 persons each. These became increasingly necessary once the Government had confirmed that the London Underground system would be unavailable for use as shelters by the public.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEPNEY ARP SERVICE</th>
<th>Authorised War Establishment</th>
<th>Enrolled Pre - Canvas</th>
<th>Enrolled During Canvas</th>
<th>Total Enrolled</th>
<th>% of War Establishment Enrolled</th>
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<td>Wardens</td>
<td>3195</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>1705</td>
<td>53%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stretcher Parties</td>
<td>1035</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>873</td>
<td>84%</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Aid Posts</td>
<td>938</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>1868</td>
<td>2234</td>
<td>238%</td>
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<td>* Decontamination</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Rescue &amp; Demolition</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report Centres + Misc.</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>153%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
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<td>1878</td>
<td>3946</td>
<td>5824</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All employees of the Public Cleansing Department
# An LCC Responsibility

Source: Stepney Borough Council Minutes - Council Meeting 26th July 1939

Table 4 - ARP Recruiting Campaign in Stepney - Results to 15 July 1939

Scott p 115
The Outbreak of War

As the international situation continued to deteriorate through July and August 1939, local and central government made their final preparations for the war that now seemed inevitable.

On 22 August, Anderson was given discretion to mobilise civil defence and, on the next day, as Chamberlain warned Hitler that Britain would stand by Poland, the codeword LION was telegraphed to Regional HQs directing them 'to take up battle stations'. Parliament was recalled on 24 August and passed the Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill which gave 'very wide, very drastic and very comprehensive' powers to the Government. On that day the Home Office ordered that Group and Borough Control centres be manned. On 30 August, ARP Controllers were ordered to assume their duties and to action the government's Local War Orders, and the Royal Navy was mobilised. From 1 September local Emergency Committees assumed their responsibilities and the local ARP Services stood ready for the 'knock out blow.'

Within minutes of the 11 a.m. expiry of the British ultimatum on 3 September the air raid sirens sounded, the population took shelter and awaited the expected onslaught. But this was a false alarm and marked the start, not of war on the population of London, but of an eleven month period of further training and preparation by the ARP Services. What was brought into operation immediately was the plan to evacuate millions of children, some mothers and others from the vulnerable areas. Evacuation, the wholesale removal of sections of the population, was a major dispersal component of civil defence policy but is excluded from this thesis as it has been well covered by others. It is here sufficient to mention that, in August 1939, the LCC (whose Education Department had the responsibility for the evacuation of

45 The Chief Warden of St Pancras recalled the arrival of the codeword LEWIN (sic) which none of the ARP officers understood as the secret papers were locked in the Town Clerk's safe - so action in St Pancras was delayed. Cllr. C Allen Newbary St Pancras at War (Unpublished typescript c. 1945) - Camden Archives.
46 LCC File CL/CD/1/3 Anderson to Morrison dated 13 July 1939
47 HoFC Debs Vol 351 Cols 63-109 24 August 1939
48 Poplar Council Minutes - Reported at Meeting on 28 September 1939
49 See p. 25 and fn 63.
schoolchildren) announced that some 600,000 people had been evacuated from London. But most of them returned by Christmas as 'a constant problem was to check the drift back to London whenever there was a lull in the raids ... to be followed by another exodus when the raids started again.'

On the outbreak of war the whole central government organisation shifted into gear by Anderson being appointed as 'Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security' - Sir Samuel Hoare becoming Lord Privy Seal but Anderson retained his ARP oversight. Sir George Gater, with his recent experience at the LCC and as Chief ARP Officer of London, became Anderson's Joint Permanent Secretary at the Home Office and Ministry of Home Security and, some time later, Sir Thomas Gardiner returned to the Post Office. The higher direction of Civil Defence was overseen by the Cabinet Civil Defence Committee composed of the 16 ministers whose departmental responsibilities involved civil defence but Anderson formed himself a small and informal Sub-Committee which he chaired and met most days, attended by the six ministers most concerned with passive defence. Thus with the Ministry, the Regional HQs and the local authority organisations on a war footing, all reasonably manned and equipped, the Civil Defence organisation stood ready. But nothing happened for months so the ARP Services continued training while the general population questioned the costs of the ARP organisation which was apparently 'doing nothing'.

The 'Phoney War' - London to August 1940

It was an American newspaper that named the period of relative inactivity on the home front 'the phoney war.' Londoners were unhappy that many people had been evacuated from their homes, that the inconvenient 'blackout' meant that road traffic fatalities to pedestrians...
doubled and that the apparently underemployed ARP Services were ‘wasting’ millions of pounds. Central government was paying the whole cost of full-time (paid) ARP workers, then running at £3 million per month, but Anderson told Parliament that it was ‘impossible to undertake any wholesale demobilisation of Civil Defence workers.’ On 19 October he announced a review of the ARP Service establishment levels, a ban on the recruitment of any further paid ARP personnel and measures to reduce the number of full-time workers and an increase of volunteers at readiness. London had some 9,000 full-time paid ARP Wardens, 10,000 whole time stretcher parties and 12,000 full-timers in the Rescue Services. By January 1940 the review was half completed and some idea of the reductions imposed are shown by the establishment reductions in two Boroughs.

In Westminster, the Warden establishment was 400 paid and 1454 unpaid Wardens but, by the outbreak of war, they had only 334 and 999 Wardens respectively. As a result of the Review, the establishment was decreased to 266 paid but the unpaid Warden establishment increased to 1588. In Poplar, pending the review, the weekly working hours were reduced to 72 hours for men and 48 for women while Wardens’ Posts were to be fully manned only during air raids and full use was to be made of part-timers. The reductions caused much concern as ARP effectiveness suffered. The Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Home Security (William Mabane MP) was given the task of a deeper review of the ARP situation. He reported in mid-April 1940 and recommended a rationalisation of ARP manpower, in particular Rescue and Stretcher Parties. Numbers were cut but the Parliamentary ARP Committee’s call for a further reduction in six month’s time was overtaken by events.

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52 See Table 27 (p.284). In the final four months of 1939, twice the number of fatalities (2,657 pedestrians) occurred as in the same months of 1938. The Cabinet Civil Defence Committee frequently discussed this problem and the imposition of a 20 mph speed limit at night. (CD/73/1)
53 HofC Debs Vol 352 Cols 1026-33
55 Poplar Council Minutes dated 24 October 1939
Borough ARP Services continued to train for action and the construction of further public shelters was progressed. Almost all Borough Minutes contain occasional appeals by individual Councillors for support for a system of deep shelters as proposed by Finsbury Council. Even those Boroughs with significant Labour Party majorities managed not to accept such an appeal as most realised that deep shelters would not qualify for government aid and no other Councils wished to get involved in suspect financial manoeuvres used by Finsbury to build costly shelters at Borough expense - the Finsbury affair is examined in Chapter 4.56

The Communist Party maintained its anti-war stance and, at a meeting 57 of 104 ARP Wardens who were party members, speakers urged:

.. as the Army or the Police would soon take over all ARP work ... make the most of the present position [by] agitating against the war by stirring up anti-war feeling .... get to know local grievances [lack of shelter, evacuation hardships etc.] and organise the people to protest to the authorities ... 58

Meanwhile, across London, ARP training exercises and inter-borough competitions continued. Paddington Council, in January 1940, mentioned that its Wardens, Stretcher Party and First Aid Post strengths had been decreased by the now standard 20%. The Minutes devoted more space to the visit of a Regional Commissioner (Gowers) on 10 November 1939 when Paddington and three other Boroughs had demonstrated 'Night ARP to a group of foreign pressmen.'59 The situation in Islington and the value of this training were reflected in the ARP Controller's memoirs which covered the 'phoney war' with the brief reference:

... we carried on with training and combined exercises... [ARP] work was necessarily by 'trial and error.' ... When the actual bombing started the services were able to go into

56 See pp.121-126
57 The meeting, which claimed 500 party members were Wardens in London, was chaired by Councillor Phil Piratin of Stepney and had J.B.S. Haldane on the platform – Ref 58 below.
58 HO 186/2834 Metropolitan Police Special Branch Report on the meeting dated 16 November 1939
59 Paddington Council Minutes 25 January 1940
John Bull then Britannia are told ‘I want to make your flesh creep’
E.H. Shepard Cartoons from *Punch* November 1914 and July 1940
action like veterans as training situations corresponded closely with the actual results of the
attacks.\textsuperscript{60}

The Threat of Bombing Approaches

The summer months of 1940 saw the probability of a German bombing campaign come closer
as events on the continent were observed by the British public. On 31 July \textit{Punch} published a
full page cartoon by E.H. Shepard depicting an unconcerned Britannia ignoring the \textit{Luftwaffe}
threat. The cartoon updated one that had appeared in November 1914 (both are reproduced on
p. 107) when John Bull ignored the Zeppelin threat to the UK - but the UK population was
very concerned at the approach of the bombing threat once the German invasion of Norway
on 9 April marked the opening of the war in the West. The British failures in Norway led to
Neville Chamberlain's resignation and the appointment of Winston Churchill to lead a
coalition government. Churchill appointed Herbert Morrison as Minister of Supply with Sir
George Gater becoming his Permanent Secretary and Clem Leslie his public relations
adviser\textsuperscript{61} - Leslie having successfully handled Morrison's LLP publicity campaigns during the
LCC elections in 1934 and 1938.

On 14 May the \textit{Luftwaffe} bombed the city of Rotterdam killing 1,000 civilians - described by
Churchill as 'the peaceful city of Rotterdam, the scene of a massacre as hideous and as brutal
as anything in the Thirty Years War.'\textsuperscript{62} On 22 May, Parliament passed the Emergency
Powers (Defence) Act (1940) which gave the government greater powers to direct activities
of local authorities. The government's call for volunteers for the Local Defence Volunteers
(later the Home Guard) produced 1,000,000 men in eight weeks and the nation watched while
the British, French and Belgian troops were rescued from the beaches at Dunkirk. The

\textsuperscript{60} W Eric Adams \textit{Civil Defence in Islington 1938-45} Unpublished Memoir Islington Archives
\textsuperscript{61} Clem Leslie, who followed Morrison into the Ministry of Home Security in October 1940, had made
his name in the 1930s when he pioneered the "Mr Therm" publicity campaign for the gas companies.
He had also assisted Morrison in the LLP and at the LCC in the 1930s.
\textsuperscript{62} HofC Debs. Vol.364 Col.1163 20 August 1940
evacuation of the troops was completed by 4 June, the day after Paris had been bombed by the Luftwaffe. Britain 'stood alone' once France capitulated a fortnight later. With a significant threat of invasion, the (UK) Chief of Staffs Committee was unimpressed with 'the present quasi-peace time organisation of Civil Defence' in Britain and they requested that control of CD be transferred to the armed forces. This was rejected by the government who did not wish to make such a fundamental change, but they did draw up more draconian Defence Regulations. On 31 May they had issued Defence Regulation 29A which required local authorities to co-operate in preparing schemes for reinforcing other areas and, on 20 June, with the supply of labour at a premium for both the forces and industry, a 'freezing order' requiring certain Police and Civil Defence workers to remain in their employment until
authorised to leave. The government was reasonably satisfied with the state of Civil Defence manpower and equipment - they had issued 100,000 stirrup pumps although still more were needed to deal with expected attacks with incendiary bombs. To compound government problems the advance of the Germans to the Channel coast resulted in further phases of evacuation while evacuees on the coast had to be relocated. Meanwhile the Civil Defence Services in London were ready to face the test of war. The Group Officer for No 3 Group (covering the City and the six East End boroughs) summed up the situation in a booklet published in 1943. He was Reginald W Bell, a barrister, who was one of the many LCC Officers seconded to Regional and Group HQ duties and the obvious choice to write a morale boosting booklet as he had been the joint author, with Sir Gwilym Gibbon, of the 1939 text History of the London County Council 1889-1939 which marked the first 50 years of the LCC. Bell recalled:

By August 1940 the machine had been perfected in all but practical test. Imaginations have been allowed to range over almost every contingency till we can no longer think of any form of air raid damage that has not been foreseen. Confidence in trained ability has long replaced uncertainty in a new task. Practice still goes on - but now it is only for polishing and perfecting... all are ready to undertake the real task before them. How much more waiting?  

The Bombing Starts

In addition to the government changes of 10 May 1940 quoted above, the crash of a Luftwaffe mine-laying aircraft at Clacton that day killed 7 residents. The opportunity to view the effects of HE explosion was taken by a coach party of ARP officials from Croydon when the Town Clerk and his entire ARP Committee viewed the incident. As the summer progressed occasional, but increasingly frequent, bombing attacks were suffered across the country, and ARP teams travelled to view the effects of the damage. As the 'Battle of Britain' developed,
the Luftwaffe turned its attack onto RAF fighter airfields and aircraft factories. In the second week of July the Luftwaffe dropped over 1600 bombs on the UK and killed 234 civilians. On the evening of Thursday 15 August, German aircraft attacked Croydon Airfield and its neighbouring aircraft factories killing 62 civilians and injuring 137 in the first major bombing attack on the London Region. Much ARP experience was gained from this unfortunately successful enemy attack. Significantly, 4 children who had run into a brick surface shelter which was wrecked by the bombing were safe and, before crowd control was introduced at such incidents, hundreds of sightseers roamed the area. Sir John Anderson visited the scene at Croydon Airport and, next day, addressed the Croydon ARP Committee. The real war on the home front had thus begun and civilians were killed from Portsmouth to Aberdeen. The first daylight bombing attack on Central London was by one aircraft on 24 August, apparently attacking in error and against Luftwaffe orders. The RAF retaliated against Berlin on the next night, escalating the conflict, and the scene was set for deliberate reprisal raids on the population of London.

Chapter 4 considers in greater detail the key issues of finance, air raid shelters, the control of local services and of regional organisation which have recurred throughout the three opening chapters of this thesis. It then assesses policy formation and implementation to the opening of the Blitz. Chapter 5 resumes the chronological flow by discussing the general effectiveness of London's Civil Defence Services during the Blitz and the occasional organisational and administrative shortcomings demonstrated 'under fire'.
Chapter Four
Key Issues in ARP 1935-1940

This chapter interrupts the narrative of the implementation of Civil Defence measures at late August 1940, the point just prior to the opening of the Blitz on London, to consider more deeply four specific aspects of ARP/CD which repay closer examination by explaining certain complications of implementation in the London Region. These issues are finance, the question of deep-shelters, the local control of ARP Services and of the imposition of a regional system of government for London. As each issue will be considered in comparative isolation, each warrants its own section.

The Finance Question

The recurrent references in the preceding three chapters to the question of just who should pay for ARP measures have shown the delays in local preparations which resulted from the refusal by government to treat ARP as a national, not a local, responsibility. The fear that ARP funding would fall unfairly upon local ratepayers resulted in the reluctance of most local authorities to comply with requests to start preparing to protect their citizens. This virtual refusal to spend their ratepayers’ money on ARP should have been no surprise to government as the CID ARP Committees had been discussing the situation and this possibility for years.

In February 1933, Anderson’s successor at the Home Office, Sir Richard Scott, told Ministers that he had been in contact with the Ministry of Health ‘in regard to the important question of whether the taxpayer or the ratepayer was to be called on to foot the bill’ and he had been warned that ‘it would be fatal to raise the matter of financial responsibility as a point of principle.’\(^1\) A month later Scott was asked if ARP expenses were a fair charge on local authorities as his officials ‘had an uneasy feeling that, if it were left to the local authorities and they were expected to pay, then if they did not chose, they might do nothing at all.’\(^2\)

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\(^1\) CAB/46/6 6th Meeting ARP(P) - 24 February 1933
\(^2\) CAB/46/7 - 27 March 1933
Scott confirmed that he thought any expense incurred would be a perfectly proper charge on local authorities but discussions were being held with Sir Warren Fisher at the Treasury. It had been strongly put that it was hopeless at the present moment to expect local authorities to pay for any preparations of this kind. In November 1934, Hilton-Young, the Minister of Health, complained that he had a responsibility to local authorities but the government did not yet have a policy (or a decision) on funding for him to present. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury complicated matters when he reminded Ministers of the previous problems of the collection of ‘ship money’ for the maintenance of the navy when some inland taxpayers claimed that the navy was a local, not national matter. He implied that, since the bombing threat was then only to the South East of England, then perhaps ARP funding was a matter solely for that region. No ARP funding decision had been made when the ARP Department was established in April 1935 yet, only a fortnight earlier, Scott had told Ministers that there would be no progress until the funding had been agreed. Thus the First Circular was issued on 9 July 1935 with the only mention of finance being that the Government would ‘offer financial assistance towards the cost of the provision of additional hospital equipment and stores.’ Funding for the provision of bomb-proof shelters was ruled out.

All the Metropolitan Boroughs were concerned about the impact of ARP expenditure on ratepayers and the vociferous objections of the Stepney and Poplar Councils were quoted above. Most Boroughs recorded their objections and several requested the Metropolitan Boroughs Standing Joint Committee (MBSJC) to bring their concerns to the notice of Ministers. Fulham Council was typical, complaining that:

it is obvious that compliance with the suggestions of the ARP Department will necessitate considerable expenditure, the greater portion of which cannot be regarded as arising out of

3 ‘Ship Money’ funding the navy came to a head in a series of writs issued by Charles I after 1634. Godfrey Davies The Early Stuarts OUP (1959) pp.84-85.
4 CAB/46/6 9th Meeting ARP(P) - 27 November 1934
5 CAB/46/6 13th Meeting ARP(P) - 14 March 1935
6 Home Office First Circular para.7 - 9 July 1935
7 See p. 56
the statutory duties of local authorities - we urge the [MBSJC] to press upon the Home Office the necessity of [ARP] being borne by national funds.  

London was not unique as local authorities across the country shared its views. Herbert Morrison, the master of this subject with Ministerial and LCC experience of ARP, led the combined delegations of the various local authority associations in a 'united front' in negotiations with the government. The powerful Association of Municipal Corporations (AMC),9 represented the larger cities and the LCC while the MBSJC was represented by the Town Clerk of Westminster, Mr Parker Morris. The three other national bodies represented were the association of County Councils, the Urban District Councils and the Rural District Councils. Central government responsibility for local government was held by the Ministry of Health 10 but it was the Home Office which led on ARP measures. In the six years from 1934 Herbert Morrison, the successful 'poacher turned gamekeeper' saw both sides of the debate, moving from leading the LCC to being the responsible, and eventually Cabinet, minister. He recalled:

the authorities had to fight hard to get adequate provision for Government grant towards the cost of precautions ... we were so successful that later, when I became Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security, I found it hard to believe that we could have opened our mouths so wide.11

As the Government had not decided on ARP funding by 3 December 1936, the AMC requested that the Home Secretary receive a deputation to discuss ARP expenditure and thus enable local authorities to progress their ARP Schemes. On 17 December, Sir John Simon merely told the deputation that he would report their discussions to the Treasury and, on the same day, Poplar Council decided to:

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8 MBSJC Minutes - 2 November 1936 - held LMA
9 AMC papers are held in the Birmingham University Library and AMC Minutes were printed in the monthly _Municipal Review_.
10 See p.44
11 Herbert Morrison _How London is Governed_ Peoples' University Press (1949) p.111
adjourn consideration of the extension of the ARP Scheme until the MBSJC and the AMC have succeeded in obtaining a definite decision on [who should] bear the cost of ARP...  

When nothing was heard from the Home Office by 11 February 1937, the AMC wrote to the Home Office asking that the decision be expedited. Hodsell's reply assured the AMC that 'the question was being investigated and considerable data had to be collected and laid before the Government to enable them to reach their decision.' On 18 March the local authorities held a Joint Conference which resulted in a further letter to the Home Office pointing out that responsibility for the delays in preparing ARP Schemes did not rest with the local authorities and informed the Government that they were recommending that local authorities defer their ARP expenditure until a decision on funding was reached. Meanwhile, in February 1937, Wg Cdr Steele-Perkins of the ARP Department had visited Fulham and discussed the lack of local progress with Councillors and their officers. He 'expressed his opinion that the cost of training and administration would be very small' but the Fulham Council 'pending decision of the Government on expenditure were not prepared to recommend the preparation of any detailed ARP plans.' 

In May 1937, the Home Office assured Poplar that 'your Council will appreciate the magnitude of the questions involved, and while the whole matter is being pressed forward as quickly as possible, it may be a little time before a final decision can be taken. In the meantime it is hoped that you will make as much [progress] as possible with your ARP schemes.' Poplar resolved 'to adhere to its decision to take no further action or consider the amplification of the Council's Scheme until an indication is received ... as to whether expenditure on ARP is to be defrayed out of national or local funds.'

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12 Poplar Council Minutes - 17 December 1936  
13 Minutes of the AMC Special Meeting held 10 November 1937 - *The Municipal Review* December 1937 pp. 507-515  
14 *The Municipal Review* of December 1937 included a nine page report of the Special Meeting of the AMC held at Westminster Guildhall on 10 November 1937 at which negotiations between the Government and the local authority associations over the previous 2½ years was detailed.  
15 Fulham Council Minutes, ARP Investigation Committee, 8 February 1937  
16 Poplar Council Minutes - 20 May 1937
When the ‘united front’ met Sir Samuel Hoare on 19 July 1937 he, at last, announced the Government’s financial proposals. Hoare asked local authorities to finance half of the cost of their ARP measures as the Government was already financing the cost of bleaching powder (for anti-gas use), the funding of the Anti-Gas Schools, the cost of respirators for the entire population and the cost of central administration across the country. This expenditure would mean that the Government would be funding some 70% of the total cost of ARP. Predictably the local authority representatives told Hoare that they would not accept his offer of funding only 50% of their ARP costs but they were willing to co-operate as agents. The meeting was adjourned. (13)

When negotiations were resumed three months later, Hoare assured the local authorities that the Government ‘appreciated the difficulty felt by the authorities’ and he was anxious to do all that was possible to lighten their burden. His new proposals including purchasing much equipment centrally and ‘in accordance with the principles now well recognised in the administration of Government grants, assistance to local authorities should be graded so as to adjust the incidence of local expenditure to the financial needs and resources of the authorities.’ Hoare then detailed the scale of such ‘block grants’ to fund the wealthier authorities at a rate of 60% of their ARP expenditure while the poorest authorities would receive 75%, with intermediate rates of 65% and 70% to qualifying authorities. These rates allocated to boroughs are detailed in Table 2,17 with Westminster and the wealthier Boroughs in the 60% group and Stepney and Poplar in the 75% group. Hoare offered additional financial assistance to the extent of further grants of 75% of any expenditure in excess of the product of a 1d rate. Finally Hoare warned local authorities that he was intending to introduce an ARP Bill incorporating these grant levels ‘at an early date’. (13)

17 See p.48
The local authorities, meeting in and writing from County Hall, pressed the Government to increase the block grant percentages (i.e. raising 60% to 65% etc.) and to centrally fund more items. The associations set up a sub-committee to attempt to negotiate an improved government offer but the only modification accepted was the raising of the 75% of expenditure in excess of the 1d rate to 85% for the poorer Boroughs. Hoare commented that he was pleased with the friendly spirit in which negotiations had taken place and the ARP Bill was presented in Parliament.

The financial question had thus been resolved with a compromise on an acceptable block grant system but this was a full 2½ years after the First Circular had been issued and the final compromise was reached only once the ARP Bill was being debated. ARP measures had been grossly delayed by the lack of an acceptable Government decision - but these were difficult years as government was undertaking a massive rearmament programme. Although the compromise was accepted under considerable time pressure, the local authorities continued to demand that ARP should be a national expense. Some modifications were included in the Civil Defence Act (1939) when items such as public shelters, were funded centrally, but the responsibilities of local authorities were correspondingly extended to include public street shelters. In retrospect Herbert Morrison, and the local authority associations he led, succeeded in pressing the Government to accept most of the cost of ARP. Hodsoll later commented that 'if the Government had faced the (finance) problem earlier, it could have struck a better bargain as the local authorities had time to get together to form their united front'.

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18 Hodsoll Papers 6/2 Chapter 9

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The Shelter Question

The most divisive of the domestic issues in the ARP debate throughout the period 1935-45 was the question of air raid shelters - in particular what degree of protection constituted an adequate air raid shelter against the effects of high explosive (HE) bombs. During the Great War, many East End citizens had sought refuge in large buildings or under railway arches - in Stepney many resorted to the huge arches and depot buildings of the Tilbury Railway and, across London, thousands sought refuge in London Underground stations. The East End popular culture caused people to feel safer if they crowded, and suffered, together with their families and neighbours. But, two decades later, the destructive power of HE bombs was much greater and, with the prospect of massive air raids, the Government decided that the public would be safer if they sought shelter in their own, suitably strengthened, homes. This policy of dispersal rather than crowding together in large shelters where one direct hit had the potential to cause a disaster, was maintained as the Government saw householders providing their own refuges, supplemented by public shelters both for those 'caught in the streets' and those whose houses (or blocks of flats) were unsuitable for basement shelters. It was accepted that there could be no complete security from aerial bombardment, but the Government (supported by expert advisers) believed that sufficient protection could be achieved if the public were protected from the 'blast and splinter' effect of bombs - they did not propose to attempt to protect the public from the effects of direct hits. The Government also relied on workers continuing to work until the warning was sounded, then taking refuge in a small local shelter rather than disappearing into distant large shelters for long periods. Thus bomb-proof shelters were not envisioned and, in spite of repeated demands for such a level of protection, no moves were made to provide expensive 'deep shelters.'

Once again, the government should not have been surprised by the emergence of the shelter question as the CID ARP Committees had been discussing the problem for some years. As
early as October 1924, building on the experience of the air raids during the Great War, it was realised that some form of protection would be needed against the HE bombs and the Office of Works suggested that public shelters could be provided by excavating additional tunnels under the tube railway lines. Costed at £2,000,000 per new line, this was ruled out by Sir John Anderson who commented ‘the Government would require convincing proof before the authorities would be prepared to undertake considerable expenditure in anticipation of war’. By the time a token system of shadow tunnels under tube railways (started in 1940) was opened to the public, Anderson was the Chancellor of the Exchequer having spent two years as the responsible minister dealing with the shelter policy.

Through the 1920s and the 1930s, the government continued to explore the possibility of constructing large air raid shelters but, by the time the First Circular was issued, the dispersal policy had been adopted. Whilst most experts and many members of the public, accepted the Government view, other experts and many articulate local politicians demanded protection against direct hits. The Circular stated that such protection would require ‘concrete structures of great thickness or correspondingly costly works of equivalent strength (so) it will be for occupiers of premises to provide for themselves and their households’

With the ARP Act in force from 1 January 1938, the demand for better shelter provision continued and the local authority associations continued to meet the Home Secretary to discuss a range of ARP matters. In June 1938, Sir Samuel Hoare assured the representatives that he was doing all that was possible in peacetime on the shelter front and assured them that:

... the Government are following closely what had been happening in Spain and China. The Mayor of Barcelona had come to general conclusions regarding shelters and a great many things could be done in an emergency that are difficult in peacetime. In Barcelona citizens dug up streets to make shelters ... there large bodies of forced labour are available and London clay is not as easily worked as stone sub-strata. The expense alone to do it on an adequate scale would involve hundreds of millions - it was difficult to justify bringing to a

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19 CAB/46/1 7th Meeting of ARP Sub-Committee p.12 - 27 October 1924
20 First Circular 9 July 1935 para.8
standstill the whole civic life of a city. Even if the parks were turned up in peacetime there would be an outcry - in short the Government could not undertake a shelter policy in peacetime that could be undertaken in an emergency, but local authorities could survey the existing accommodation that could be adapted against blast and splinters... Until the survey is completed the Government would not know what further accommodation would be needed. 21

As the Czech crisis developed through the summer of 1938, the local authorities were tasked with surveying parks and open spaces and, in late September, a large number of shallow, 7 feet deep, trench shelters were excavated. Boroughs also surveyed buildings suitable for strengthening as public shelters. The Munich crisis ensured the recognition of the need for some better form of domestic shelter to supplement the trenches and 'strengthened domestic basements.' Additionally, proper shelter accommodation was needed for the public 'caught in the street' rather than them resorting to trenches. As Lord Privy Seal, Anderson authorised the 'making good' of most trench shelters i.e. lining and providing with wood and earth covering and, in some cases, lighting and sanitation. Significantly, Anderson tasked an old friend, mechanical engineer Mr (later Sir) William Patterson 22 and his associate Oscar Kerrison, with designing the sectional steel 'Anderson' shelter for erection in the gardens of suitable houses. Eventually some 3,000,000 'Andersons' were distributed and erected, free of charge, by local authorities.

The experience of aerial bombardment in Spain appeared to some to be that tunnels provided the only safe form of air raid shelter for members of the public. J.B.S. Haldane proposed the provision of large purpose built communal shelters. In his best selling 'A.R.P'. Haldane proposed that, over a two-year period, Londoners should be provided with some 1,400 miles of brick lined tunnels 60’ below the surface. Pending this provision, a better system of trench shelters should be dug and steel framed buildings should be taken over as public shelters. His

21 Fulham Council Minutes - ARP Committee, 20 June 1938, reported 29 June quoting the AMC Reference Conference between Sir Samuel Hoare and the local government associations
22 See DNB entry for Sir William Patterson by Oscar Kerrison
proposals, published in October 1938, were overtaken by the national emergency as, over the Munich week, many trenches had been dug and basement surveys carried out. But trenches were not the answer to the shelter problem. Haldane remained an influential critic of Government policy who was frequently quoted by those demanding larger and stronger shelters.

The Hailey Conference 23 brought together the best available technical advice on shelter construction and its recommendations, 24 which broadly supported Government policy, were accepted by the Government. They confirmed the 'dispersal and protection' policy which now included the provision of 3,000,000 Anderson shelters. In addition, public surface shelters, of brick and concrete construction, were to be erected in the streets for householders whose properties were unsuitable for 'Andersons' and for those 'caught in the streets.' The Civil Defence Act (1939) extended Borough powers and shelter responsibilities and, as war approached, they were empowered to take over certain buildings for strengthening as public shelters. While both central and local government were progressing the provision of shelters, the demand for 'deep shelters' for the whole population of vulnerable areas continued and was constantly fuelled by the admiration of many for the radical and massive deep-shelter plan being pioneered through the spring and summer of 1939 by the Borough of Finsbury.

The Finsbury Deep-Shelter Scheme

A unique scheme for providing bomb-proof protection for all 59,000 citizens of the Borough of Finsbury was proposed by the local Council just after the Munich crisis. Although the Scheme never received Government approval (and thus funding), it proved a difficult concept for Anderson and his experts to quash as the idea was simple but expensive. The idea was to provide a few huge concrete underground shelters, each accommodating 8,000 people, into which citizens would move on receiving the alert, only to emerge when the raiders had

23 See p.94.
24 Cmd. 6006 April 1939
passed. No other measures would be required in the Borough as all citizens would have been removed from danger. In late October 1938 the local press reported Councillor Harold Riley, Chairman of the Finsbury ARP Committee and main protagonist of the Scheme, claiming:

In Finsbury we have evolved a scheme which would give a lead to London; we have consulted architects and engineers with specialist experience in the protection of civilians - men who have seen the havoc in Spain caused by high explosive bombs ... in about three weeks we should have worked out the essential details 25

In January 1939, details were announced of ‘The Finsbury Deep Shelter Plan which claims that only four times the money spent on trenches, but twenty times the level of protection could be obtained if the shelters were big enough26 Headed by Councillor Riley, the Council had retained Bertold Lubetkin’s avant garde architectural firm of Tecton, recently acclaimed for its ‘Finsbury Health Centre.’ Lubetkin used the concrete specialist Dr Ove Arup (of London Zoo’s spiral concrete ‘Penguin Pool’ fame) as consulting engineer. Arup surveyed Finsbury’s ARP needs and proposed a series of 15 underground, descending spiral, bomb-proof shelters each holding up to 12,000 citizens The shelters (see p.123) were to be located to enable all citizens to reach their shelter in about seven minutes following the sounding of the air raid warning. This seemed to many to be the complete answer to air raid protection and demands for similar schemes were made in many Boroughs. But large bomb-proof shelters were at variance with the Government’s stated policy of dispersal into small blast-proof shelters. Many Councils, particularly St Pancras and Lambeth, were bombarded with similar proposals by groups with professionally sounding titles who were backed by the Communist Party or the local Trades Council. Boroughs invariably agreed to take no further action on such proposals pending the investigation of the Finsbury Scheme. Lord Hailey’s expert panel had stressed the high cost of deep shelters and the vast material and labour resources which would be needed if the system was to be widely adopted. Looking more widely at the concept, Hailey had reservations about the safety problems of thousands of people converging

25 Islington Gazette 28 October 1938
26 The Star 18 January 1939

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SECTIONAL VIEW OF A SHELTER FOR 7,600 PEOPLE.

on their shelter entrances in the few minutes specified and of the dangers of such crowds moving down the spiral ramps. Hailey’s observers attended local football matches to note the slow flow of people through the gates as he feared the vulnerability of the thousands of potential shelters as they waited for access to the deep shelter. Backed by the Hailey Conference, Anderson raised objections to details of the scheme and found Ove Arup and the Council prepared to modify their plans but, in June 1939, Finsbury were told that:

the engineers have considered the Finsbury Scheme amendments and, in view of the Lord Hailey’s Conference, which was accepted by the Government, the Lord Privy Seal regrets that he is not prepared to approve proposals for Finsbury to instruct its architects to amend the scheme’.  

Councillor Riley and his Town Clerk Mr E Arnold James eventually adopted a novel, and ultimately declared illegal, method to fund one of the original shelters. In February 1939 Riley had leased, at a rent of £50 p.a., a recently (slum) cleared plot in Busaco Street to a firm called ‘Shop Investments Ltd.’. The firm was to build one of Arup’s deep shelters which would then be rented to the Council at a 3/4d rate for the next 38 years. Excavation of the Busaco Street site started but work was halted on the outbreak of war on the operation of the ‘war clause’ in the contract. With only minimal progress made, the project was abandoned and the site later used as a dump by the Council. Finsbury thus found itself, according to the municipal press, ‘faced with the possibility of air raids at no far distant date, with practically no protection for the 150,000 (50,000 by night) for whom they were responsible.’

Finsbury’s problem was compounded by the fact that very few of its houses were suitable for the installation of Anderson shelters and there was a distinct lack of open spaces, so land had to be requisitioned to permit a number of larger (400 person) communal shelters. By 6 July, 1940 some 30 such communal shelters had been built accommodating 12,000 people but, as artificial ventilation could be fitted, the capacity could be increased by 60% although not all

27 Hailey anticipated the March 1943 ‘Bethnal Green Disaster’ when, in the absence of enemy action, 173 people died attempting to enter the (then) single entrance of their local Underground Station.
28 Finsbury Council Minutes, Special Meeting, 22 June 1939
29 Local Government Chronicle 6 July 1940 p.651
of the now 19,200 shelterers could be seated. The ever optimistic Councillor Riley told a reporter:

Finsbury would be the first Borough to complete its full ARP programme ... within five weeks shelter will have been created for the entire day and night population ... Accommodation has already been provided for 65,000 residents. [Riley] complained bitterly of the months of wasted arguments between the Council and the Home Office. Nine tenths of Finsbury’s ARP work was under way within four weeks of the outbreak of war. (29)

In keeping with Finsbury’s go-ahead image, the press then mentioned the newly constructed underground car parks 30 which served as shelters:

The most spectacular of Finsbury’s efforts - the Finsbury Square underground shelter for 2,000 people which has been designed for conversion into a mechanical car park ... the broad canal 30’ across has been cut through the entire centre of a large London square .. approached by 12’ wide ramps ... five bays branch off ... These are the ten air raid shelters, 66’ long and 15’ wide. ... the shelters are built of reinforced concrete ... the amount of protection is in accordance with Home Office ARP specifications ... the walls of each shelter are 6’ thick and are covered with a 12” roof. On top of this is a further foot of earth. Consulting engineer 31 is G.R. Falkiner Nuttall. (29)

The basis of Finsbury’s original, but rejected, deep-shelter plan was that few or no other ARP measures would have been needed in the Borough as the whole population would have moved underground for the duration of a raid. This was a superficially attractive scheme, arguments about which continued for the next five years as the creative accounting scheme thought up by Councillor Riley and the Town Clerk eventually resulted in the pair eventually being surcharged by the District Auditor so they were both debarred from future work in local government. The case was a significant in local government law as it ‘opened up a fundamental uncertainty about the scope of the Town Clerk’s responsibilities’ 32

30 Several Councils considered seeking grant aid to construct concrete shelters which could be used as car parks after the war.
31 G.R. Falkiner Nuttall had been the joint author, with H Montgomery Hyde (and with Hodsoll’s help) of the influential 1937 book Air Defence and the Civilian Population - see p. 14
The *obiter dicta* of the Lord Chief Justice, in what became known as the Hurle-Hobbes judgement or The Finsbury Case, centred on the legality of surcharges by the District Auditor on the Town Clerk and the Leader of the majority party on Finsbury Council. The appellants defended themselves against a charge of illegality for authorising a contract for the construction of air raid shelters without the sanction of the full Council resulting in the loss of over £10,000 of public money. The responsibility of the Council Leader for the expenditure was not in doubt, but not so the Town Clerk’s responsibility for going ahead with authorising payments on the instructions of the Leader, when the issue had not been approved by the full Council. The Lord Chief Justice rejected Mr James’ appeal stating that, as Town Clerk, he:

was there to assist by his advice and action the conduct of public affairs in the Borough, and if there was a disposition on the part of the Council, to ride roughshod over his opinion, the question must arise as to whether or not it is his duty forthwith to resign his office or, at any rate, to do what he thinks right and await the consequences.  

Mr James’ subsequent conduct as Town Clerk of Stepney can perhaps be explained by his ‘loyalty’ to Councillors as seen his Finsbury experience during the deep-shelter controversy.

It may be recalled that the Government’s shelter policy, first given in the *First Circular* of July 1935, was one of dispersal into small shelters. That and the subsequent rejection of deep-shelters were controversial. Conflicting interpretations of the results and lessons of air raids in Spain led to demands from some observers that subterranean shelters should be provided for all in vulnerable areas and the sad experience of trench shelters during the Munich crisis demonstrated that some better form of shelter was needed. The result was the development of the sectional steel (Anderson) shelter for householders but the unsuitability of much inner city housing for the erection of Anderson shelters meant that brick and concrete public shelters were needed in quantity. Demands for some form of bomb-proof shelter grew and the Finsbury deep-shelter scheme received much acclaim, however the Government refused grant

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33 Transcript from the Finsbury Case, Royal Courts of Justice, 20 December 1944 quoted in Alan Norton

34 See pp,198-201
aid for such expensive measures. This policy was maintained totally until the Blitz was experienced.

Control of Borough ARP Services

The Finsbury deep-shelter scheme was an example of an apparently well thought out but controversial local initiative, which was backed by strong local political support but which presented a challenge to central government. Local (‘Town Hall’) politics in the decades since the Great War were often conducted by local politicians whose ambitions were matched by their abilities and the results were often seen as a challenge to central government. Many national politicians had served on, and made their early reputations in, local government 35 which was sometimes seen as an apprenticeship for aspiring national leaders. With the events in the 1920s in West Ham and in Poplar, 36 local government in London was already a hotbed of dispute and it was onto this structure that the unprecedented responsibilities for ARP were grafted in 1935. Generally, local politicians seized the opportunity to continue to serve their electorates by taking ARP measures, but these were occasionally ideologically based and this proved sometimes to the advantage, and sometimes to the disadvantage, of local people. Many local councillors and senior officers had strong personalities and the determined pursuit of local initiatives sometimes resulted in clashes which came to Government and national notice. Some Boroughs attempted political control of the ARP Services (particularly of the Wardens) by local councillors and the operational control of those Services by the appointed ARP Controller and this sometimes caused problems.

The Control of the ARP Wardens' Services

The preceding chapters have shown that local government in London fiercely retained its hard-won autonomy and its form of local democracy. The prospect of raising a local

35 Major Clement Attlee had served as Mayor of Stepney before leading the (national) Labour Party and Herbert Morrison, before becoming Leader of the LCC and the London Labour Party, had been Mayor of Hackney.

36 See p.44

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eventually uniformed) body of men and women to serve the population in wartime by advising, monitoring and directing citizens, caused some local politicians to try to ensure that these bodies, particularly the Air Raid Wardens’ Service, were recruited, trained and controlled by local people. Occasional complaints were made by some Labour politicians that raising a Wardens’ Service was a reactionary and anti-democratic move, particularly as few working men would have time to volunteer for such duties. Further, many Councils had elected members who displayed their former military rank when standing for and serving on their Council.\(^{37}\) Borough experience showed that many ex-servicemen, many with Great War anti-gas experience, volunteered for ARP duties and for ARP Officer posts when such were advertised, although many were recalled to the colours once the war started. These appointments were treated with suspicion by some local politicians and, at an early stage, Herbert Morrison had considered such volunteering as ‘the thin end of conscription’\(^{38}\) The Wardens’ Service was not mentioned in the 1935 *First Circular* and subsequently, in London, control of the Wardens became a matter of controversy.

The background to the controversy was summarised by the Town Clerk of Islington and is worth quoting at length:

> The Home Office original scheme organised wardens under the Chief of Police or Chief Officer of the Council and, in some cases, a Chief Officer entirely independent of the police. The case in London was that, after tentative measures to introduce some measure of police control, these were dropped. In February 1939 the Lord Privy Seal decided on proposals put to him by the MBSJC that the Commissioner of Police be entrusted with the recruitment, training and organisation of the Wardens’ Service. But the change over, due to take place on 1 April 1939, was to be as smooth as possible and, in particular the Warden organisation in each local authority area should continue as far as possible. In his outline

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\(^{37}\) Croydon elected Admiral Harrison and Lt Col Gibson, St Marylebone Lt Col Henriques and Paddington Lt Col Sir George Handover - all prominent in both Council and ARP matters.

\(^{38}\) 'The idea of Air Raid Wardens of ours has met with nothing but encouragement from local people with the single exception of Mr Herbert Morrison who, in the summer, expressed some fears that the Wardens might be misunderstood in the Labour Boroughs of London partly as the thin edge of conscription and partly as an attempt to dragoon the people.' - Hodsoll Papers 4/4 *Note on Street Wardens*. 6 February 1936
plan, the Commissioner [Sir Philip Game] proposed that the recruiting and preliminary training should still be undertaken by the local authority but the police would assume operational control. The wardens would be entirely separate from the police and would continue to act as the intelligence service of the local authority. To secure unified control for training in peacetime and effective operation in war, the Commissioner would appoint a Principal Warden with an office in New Scotland Yard. He would not be a serving or a retired police officer. After preliminary training the Wardens would come under the control of the Principal Warden and be organised under the police Sub Divisional system. Neither the scheme suggested by Sir John Anderson nor that proposed by the Commissioner of Police received the general approval of the local authorities and the Wardens themselves were against any change. This led to a somewhat modified scheme whereby the Service remained under the control of the local authorities (in whose area they had been enrolled) for all purposes. The first and only Principal Warden was Hon. Arthur Howard who remained in that capacity until May 1942 when the post was discontinued and an Advisory Council of Chief Wardens was appointed.39

Mr Adams omitted mentioning the bureaucratic politics involved in what appeared to be a change of heart by both the Lord Privy Seal and the Commissioner. In fact the MBSJC (of which Mr Adams was a member) had sent a deputation to Sir John Anderson on 12 January 1939 with the aim of:

securing a great measure of co-ordination in the organisation of ARP Services in London ... in particular some of the Boroughs who were finding difficulties in organising the Wardens’ Service and the deputation urged that the responsibility for the recruiting, training and organisation of the Service be transferred to the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis ... The Lord Privy Seal was unable to accept the proposal as, such a change would, in the immediate future, inevitably cause some delay. Further, he was not certain that the change would be generally acceptable to the Wardens. 40

But Anderson changed his mind on the matter as, in a review of the allocation of duties between the various authorities, Wilfrid Eady (Head of the ARP Department) wrote to the MBSJC stating that ‘Sir John Anderson does not propose to alter the allocation of statutory duties except in the case of Air Raid Wardens and Rescue Parties.’ The MBSJC confirmed

40 Hammersmith Council Minutes, 25 January 1939
that they were in favour of the proposed changes, the reasons for which Eady had explained that Anderson:

... decided that the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police is to be entrusted with the responsibility now resting with the Metropolitan Borough Councils for recruiting, training and organisation of this Service. The Commissioner has agreed to undertake this duty ... he regards the changeover to be effective as soon as possible. The Lord Privy Seal is satisfied that the arrangements Sir Philip Game has in mind will produce a more closely linked administration organisation which will strengthen the Service ... the transfer of the Wardens' Service should be on 1 April 1939 but the cost of the Wardens' Service when transferred to the Metropolitan Police will remain with the Boroughs. (40)

Unfortunately for the MBJSC, some Boroughs objected to the virtual hand-over of 'their' Wardens to the police, a view with which Hodsoll agreed. He was appalled at Anderson's plan to remove the Wardens from their Borough affiliations but he was sent down to interview Alderman Key, Chairman of the MBSJC:

... without mentioning names I told him that information had reached me that some of the Metropolitan Boroughs were dissatisfied with the recommendation of the MBJSC to the Lord Privy Seal that the police should take over the Wardens' Service. Key said that five of the Boroughs had originally objected but he understood that all finally accepted the majority view. I further went on to say that many were contemplating holding a special meeting on Monday and breaking away and giving publicity to their action. He said that there were rebel boroughs - Finsbury and Hackney - and the latter had made representations. He said that he was not disposed to take it too seriously as the MBSJC had the strong backing of the LCC ... For both our sakes it was undesirable that a minority should behave in such an indisciplined [sic] way ... I said that there was a great deal of misunderstanding as to what was meant by placing the Wardens under police control and one or two of the Boroughs might use the threat of Warden resignation as a handle. Key said he would see what could be done to stop this. He said as far as Finsbury was concerned they were rightly or wrongly set upon a deep-shelter policy and if they achieved this then no ARP Services would be required. In regard to Hackney he said that the whole trouble was the jealousy of the Town Clerk [Dr Ted of the position of Parker Morris. [Westminster] I told him he had entirely confirmed my suspicions. 41

Alderman Key apparently prevailed over the rebel Boroughs as the compromise solution

41 Hodsoll papers 4/22 - 9 February 1939
allowed the Boroughs to retain the task of recruiting and training ‘their’ wardens but, in wartime, the Commissioner was to have operational control, not as a police task, but through a newly appointed ‘Principal Warden’ with an office in Scotland Yard. The man selected for the job was the Chief Warden of Westminster, Councillor the Hon. Arthur Howard - an appointment made to meet the requirements of the compromise as Howard was an experienced Chief Warden and local councillor. In practice once the blitz started, the operational control of the Wardens’ Service was exercised by their local ARP Controllers where they proved to be a most useful local resource.

Hodsoll’s mention of the jealousy existing between the two Town Clerks (Dr Tee of Hackney) and Mr (later Sir) Parker Morris (of Westminster) is a rare insight into the inevitable struggle between local officers co-operating under pressure. Dr Tee had been involved in ARP matters with the CID ARP Sub-Committees since 1927 and was an expert on cleansing and decontamination matters. He was also President of the Society of Town Clerks 1936-39, yet the younger Parker Morris rose to the fore in MBSJC matters as Hon. Clerk of that Committee and he had been involved with Hodsoll in 1935 when he advised on the detail and the wording of the First Circular. Parker Morris had also offered his, and the MBJSC’s, good offices when Hodsoll had been working to get the Boroughs involved in ARP. Town Clerks were powerful and generally effective local officials but the potential for friction between them was apparent. Others who reached public notice were Mr Dennis of Poplar and W Eric Adams of Islington who both received the OBE for their ARP Controller duties in the blitz while E Arnold James of Finsbury, then Stepney, received adverse publicity and a District Auditor’s surcharge.

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42 When an insider of the time, Mr K.A.L. Parker of the London Region 1938-45, was asked (by the author in a 1988 interview) why Howard was chosen, he replied ‘it helps if you are a member of the Baldwin family’.
The Choice of ARP Controller

One of the shortcomings of organisation exposed by the Munich crisis was the need to appoint a single officer in each area to take control of the ARP Services and to action the instructions flowing from central government. The solution at the time was included in the 'secret instructions' issued to local authorities on the morning of 24 September 1938 which generally appointed Chief Constables to that post but, in London, executive control was vested in the Town Clerks. Once Anderson had reviewed the situation, he wrote to the local authorities in March 1939 explaining that they were to appoint an officer to take executive control and that these:

ARP Controllers were to be selected on personal grounds as being likely to inspire confidence by powers of leadership under conditions of severe strain and capable of ensuring the harmonious co-operation of all persons connected to Civil Defence. 43

A few local authorities saw the appointment of this Controller as a post that should be best filled by a local politician rather than by a Council officer.

Anderson also required the authorities to prepare for a crisis by appointing a small Emergency Committee of not more than 3 members to act on behalf of the Council in wartime. The reaction across London authorities was generally compliant and co-operative, although several Boroughs felt that they ought to appoint larger Emergency Committees. The vast majority nominated their Town Clerk as ARP Controller although some, including St Pancras, appointed their Borough Engineer as this officer had been responsible for drafting and actioning the Borough ARP Scheme. The Controllers and the Emergency Committees were to be prepared to take over at a time to be decided by the Lord Privy Seal. The two Councils which opted to appoint local politicians as ARP Controller were Stepney and West Ham and both areas subsequently, once heavily bombed, were required to appoint their Town Clerk. In Stepney, the Council responded to Anderson's letter stating they had:

43 Letter from Home Office / LPS dated 21 March 1939 - Quoted in Fulham Council Minutes, 5 April 1939
appointed our Chairman [Councillor M.H. Davis] as the ARP Controller ... it is proposed that the Controller appointed should give any major decision which fell to be taken in the operation of the various ARP Services. 44

The same Council also appointed Councillor Davis as their representative on the London Regional Council and, in response to Anderson’s plea that Civil Defence work be afforded top priority, they recommended that Stepney accede to the request but only ‘in as far as it is practical and consistent with the due and proper exercise of the other statutory duties devolving upon them’.44 The appointment of Davis in Stepney merits attention as he was totally dominant in the exercise of power in the Borough. Davis had been one of the Borough’s two LCC Councillors since 1926 and led the Borough Labour Party since 1935, his power base being local Jewish and Irish communities. A prominent member of the (Jewish) Board of Deputies and President of the Federation of Synagogues, his position was reliably reported to be in decline by 1939:

In the mid 1930s Davis was at the height of his communal and political power ... By 1936 his careers both as a Jewish leader and a Labour politician had become controversial, and they were overshadowed by controversies of increasing severity and bitterness ... readers of the local press were becoming increasing used to allegations of inefficiency and corruption in the affairs of Stepney Council ... In 1938 there was a political storm at the Town Hall arising from charges of incompetence in relation to the provision of air raid shelters, for which Davis, as ARP Controller, was responsible. Davis had become an embarrassment on the LCC ... in the early years of the war the smell of bribery, corruption and intimidation had come to surround the activities of Davis was very strong indeed... Dr Stanley Chazen referred to him as 'a crook', to the late Mr Joseph Cymerman he was 'an absolute dictator' and it was the view of Jerry Long that Davis was, by the outbreak of the Second World War, under police investigation. ‘I think they were after him (Mr Long told me on 6 July 1989) because there was some fraud going on in the Borough Council’ ... His leadership of the Labour Party in Stepney repelled many non-Jews and Jews alike and was, in my view, partly responsible for the strength of Communist politics in East London just before, during and immediately after the war. 45

44 Stepney Council Minutes - 5 May 1939
45 Geoffrey Alderman 'M.H. Davis - the rise and fall of a communal upstart' Jewish Historical Studies
Vol XXXI 1988-90 pp 249-268

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Without anticipating the assessment of the performance of the various Boroughs under fire in 1940, or the imprisonment of Morry Davis in 1944, it is appropriate to mention that very few Councils reacted as Stepney did in defiantly appointing local politicians as ARP Controllers. In conclusion, the political control of local ARP Services was limited, not least because the Conservative controlled Boroughs naturally agreed with the way 'their' National Government was proceeding, while such strong 'Labour' Boroughs as Poplar succeeded totally in achieving all that was required of them with the Town Clerk as Controller and with Alderman Key MP as Chairman of the ARP Committee.

One opportunity for local politicians to lead ARP work was in the leadership of the local Wardens' Service. As Chief Warden, Councillors could continue their roles as elected representatives and participate in the running of the ARP Services. Typically, in Westminster:

Councillor the Hon. Arthur Howard was invited to become Acting Chief Warden, and took over that duty, assisted by three Acting Deputies, Councillors Edgson, Russell and Sparks.
Five other Councillors assumed charge of the work of Acting District Wardens ...

When Howard was later appointed Principal Warden of London, Councillor Sir John Whitty took over as Chief Warden of Westminster for the duration of the war. Similar appointments of Councillors were made in many Boroughs but these posts were unpaid as it would have been illegal for a Councillor to receive payment for ARP duties. It took several Parliamentary Questions and local press comment to highlight occasional irregularities.

The Regional System of Government and London

The innate conservatism of London local government bodies was strong and all were jealous of their autonomy. They were proud of their perceived success in serving their populations since their formation, the LCC in 1889 and the Metropolitan Boroughs a decade later. The

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46 Sir John Whitty Progress of the Wardens Organisation of the City of Westminster Unpublished typescript in Westminster Archive u/d c. 1945
City of London was a unique body, invulnerable to encroachment by the LCC or central government while all authorities were sensitive to any attempt to alter their boundaries which were totally irrelevant to the Luftwaffe when targeting the metropolis. London had grown dramatically since the LCC and Boroughs had been established and, by the 1930s, London’s boundaries had far outgrown the LCC area. A ‘Greater London’ was acknowledged and such areas as the Metropolitan Police District extended over the whole of Middlesex and into parts of Kent, Surrey, Essex and other counties. Many people considered that matters such as town planning, transport and the supply of public utilities should be dealt with on a ‘Greater London’ scale and their standard was carried by Dr W.A. Robson of the L.S.E., whose 1939 book The Government and Misgovernment of London was a rational analysis of the problem and a call for the wholesale reform of London government. In his first edition, published just months after the Munich crisis, Robson claimed that:

The international crisis clearly revealed the weaknesses and uneven working of the ARP arrangements in the metropolis. Some local authorities did reasonably well while the performance of others was deplorable. It was quite wrong to infer, however, that because the uncoordinated efforts of 200 or more local authorities produced unsatisfactory results as a whole, the proper remedy is to hand over the whole task to the Home Office for direct central administration. On the contrary, an intelligently planned regional system entrusted to a Greater London Council, with power to devolve a large part of the detailed administration on carefully supervised district authorities of substantial size, would be far more likely to yield good results.

The Government formally established the London Civil Defence Region under Harold Scott during the crisis. The organisation was essentially a form of devolved central government rather than an autonomous Greater London body but Scott’s co-option of many senior LCC officers to lead the Regional ARP Services reassured Morrison and the LCC that no revolution was under way. The Boroughs were similarly reassured by Scott’s creation of a range of Regional bodies, such as the Town Clerk’s Committee and the Regional Council of elected representatives to enhance consultation and co-operation. The regional organisation

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47 WA Robson The Government and Misgovernment of London Allen & Unwin (1939) p.468
48 See p. 89
was established primarily to ensure the efficient government of the region in wartime if invasion or bombing broke communications between Whitehall (or wherever Government might be relocated) and the region. Nevertheless, many local politicians were concerned at what they saw as the imposition of an extra layer of government between them and the government to which they traditionally had access. Herbert Morrison later recalled that local authorities in London saw the Regional Commissioners as 'an insidious beginning of direct bureaucratic administration' but Scott, applying Anderson's principle of 'a maximum of contact and a minimum of interference' quickly won over the doubters. Additionally, Anderson assured local authorities that the role of the Regional Commissioners was essentially a wartime one and that they had no role in peacetime, not even in the implementation of the ARP Act. As Fulham Council heard on 15 February 1939 'The degree of control exercised by a Regional Commissioner in time of war on his own responsibility would depend on the extent to which communications would have been affected, but the regions would, in case of need, function as a self-contained unit.'

London local authorities thus accepted, with some reservations, the imposition of a regional system of government. They were aware both that such things were necessary as the country faced aerial bombardment and invasion and that regional government would be removed once peace was restored. Robson returned to urging a more permanent reform of local government in the metropolis in an article in The Political Quarterly (which he edited with Leonard Woolf) in 1941 using the pen-name Regionaliter. Having reviewed the frequent failed attempts to reform London government he despaired as:

> the stream of progressive thought fell on deaf ears so far as the local authorities were concerned ... [who] had been clinging to office and power [with] an irrational loyalty to the existing order regardless of its merits ... these forces conspire to defeat all attempts to bring the local government structure into conformity with the needs of our time. A full blown system of regional administration came into existence as an essential part of the

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49 Morrison How London is Governed p.108
50 Harold Scott Your Obedient Servant p.121
51 Fulham Council Minutes - 15 February 1939
Government's war organisation ... at one stroke had been installed a fully-fledged system of regional government which, while leaving the local authorities apparently untouched, offers a formidable challenge to their future existence and status ... In the war emergency we now confront they are without doubt a necessary and perhaps indispensable addition to the machinery of state... Our system of local authorities has many serious defects which are deserving of criticism and censure; but as instruments of democracy they possess merits of supreme value.52

The regional system was thus, by 1940, working in a satisfactory manner but any assessment of its effectiveness must await the details of its performance in the blitz and, once the threat of further massive blitz and of invasion had passed, the local authorities regrouped and demanded a rapid return to the status quo ante.53

Review of Policy Formation and Implementation to the Blitz

With events in ARP having been related up to the opening of the London Blitz, an interim, assessment of policy implementation will now be attempted. There was no formal stated ARP 'policy' until July 1935 when the Home Office ARP Department issued its First Circular to local authorities. Thereafter, its implementation to September 1940 fell into the three phases of the initial 30 months to December 1937, when any measures of precautions taken by local authorities were totally at their discretion, then the nine months of 'compulsion' from the ARP Act to the Munich crisis and, finally, the two years of accelerated preparations from Munich to the Blitz. Wider ARP measures covered the protection of the electricity, gas and water utilities as well as of factories, the railways and the docks. These matters are intentionally excluded from consideration in this thesis as are such essential measures as the expansion of the London Fire Service, the evacuation schemes for children and other 'useless

52 Regionaliter (W.A. Robson) 'The Regional Commissioners' The Political Quarterly (1941) pp 144-153
mouths' and the vital role played by the voluntary services. Further, the provision of emergency hospitals (lest the attack approach that forecast), and the wider question of the value of those Air Staff Threat Assessments, are not addressed. Therefore this brief assessment is restricted to those measures undertaken to directly protect the civilian population of London.

The First Circular was issued in 1935 but, as the subject was politically very sensitive and the policy on ARP was in a early stage of development, the threats and the measures considered necessary were stated in only very general terms. The Circular briefly mentioned the gas, high explosive and incendiary bomb threats but its purpose was to allocate responsibility for, and initiate action, the general aim of which was of:

minimising the consequences of attacks if ever they should be delivered ... responsibility will rest on local authorities for ensuring that adequate measures of civil protection against air raid dangers are taken in their own districts ..... 55

In the following 2½ year voluntary period, the measures for which central government was responsible (primarily anti-gas training and equipment), policy was clear, funding was available and preparations progressed. However, the extent of local authority tasks tended to emerge only when the problems were tackled 56 in 1938, not least because funding was delayed for 2½ years.

Public support for ARP increased through the Munich crisis once the public realised that sensible ARP measures were essential. They supported the expanded fire service and stored their gas masks, but the public debate continued on the adequacy of the (blast-proof) air raid shelters provided by the government. Generally the preparations being made appeared to meet

54 Primarily the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) for Air Raid Precautions – later for Civil Defence, the St John's Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society, who all had essential roles to play.
55 First Circular paragraphs 6 and 7
56 One vital measure, not mentioned in the First Circular, was the establishment of the Air Raid Warden Service which, from 1937, grew to be the largest of all the local ARP Services.
the requirement although doubts existed as to the level of provision. Meanwhile implementation was aided as the public read of Japanese bombing in China, the use of gas in Abyssinia and almost daily reporting of the Spanish Civil War.

Although the First Circular was published, there was no legal basis for taking ARP measures until January 1938 when the ARP Act made local authority compliance compulsory. This allowed government grants for authorised ARP expenditure so implementation was much more successful. However, this made local authorities more dependant on, and more vulnerable to, central government requirements. The Act was substantially reinforced by the Civil Defence Act (1939), then by the introduction of the more specific and imperative Defence Regulations. With the expansion of civil defence, there was also no shortage of advice and information on just how policies were to be implemented as the legislation was supported by a range of ARP handbooks and numerous Home Office and Regional Circulars. The Act also greatly assisted implementation by increasing the number of Regional Officers supporting local authorities preparing local schemes, advising on training their ARP Services and, after Munich, authorising local ARP expenditure qualifying for grant-aid.

In the summer of 1938, a range of Parliamentary and extra Parliamentary support and interest groups emerged and their membership and influence increased greatly during the Munich crisis. The main task of these groups (notably the Air Raid Defence League and the ARP Institute) was to encourage the British public to understand, then work for, effective protective measures. The public devoured a range of books, such as W.F. Deedes' *Complete Guide to Civil Defence Measures*,57 in addition to the official ARP Department Handbooks, giving advice on how best to protect their homes and their families while public lectures were well attended. However, not all interest groups were supportive as the Communist Party

maintained its flow of alternative schemes of shelter protection in relevant Boroughs. Other groups, such as the Cambridge Scientists Group, the (pacifist) Peace Pledge Union and offshoots of the Communist Party, worked to discredit official policy. But these were minority views so general implementation was not significantly retarded.

The numbers of skilled ARP officials was initially small but their numbers grew once the two Central Anti-Gas Schools started producing instructors for local authorities to use as their local instructors. Implementation was also aided by the appointment by local authorities of government funded, full-time ARP Officers, often ex-army with anti-gas experience, to recruit and train ARP volunteers. At the higher level of ARP organisation, preparations were expedited by Anderson's appointment as Lord Privy Seal, while the quality of the young staff attached to his Private Office was impressive and several later rose to become Permanent Secretaries, and one, the Cabinet Secretary. Anderson's leadership undoubtedly acted as a catalyst to implementation at all levels.

The rapid approach of war meant that no steady social or political environment existed in which to implement policy but this was more than compensated for by the increased public support for effective ARP measures. In spite of the press and public criticism of the ARP Services, seen to be doing little during the 'phoney war', that interlude was used for further training by the ARP Services in London. The British public cast off the 'phoney war' mentality when they saw the German forces approaching the Channel coast and responded by enrolling in the ARP Services at a level approaching war establishment.

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58 Such as: St Pancras Communist Party Air Raid Precautions Plan for St Pancras October 1938 as reproduced in St Pancras Council Minutes -16 November 1938.
59 See p.13
60 See p.106
61 Edward Bridges became Cabinet Secretary while Thomas Sheepshanks, Harold Scott and Philip Allen all later became Permanent Secretaries.
Recalling the Munich crisis, Hodsoll later admitted that ‘the capital was generally lagging behind the rest of the country’\textsuperscript{62} but, two years later and within reasonable bounds, ARP policy (or more correctly the range of Civil Defence policies) had been implemented. Just how London’s ARP organisations and Services coped with the Blitz when it opened, and was sustained for seven long months, is discussed in the following two chapters.

\textsuperscript{62} Hodsoll Papers 6/2, Chapter 12 ‘Munich and After’ (unpublished) Churchill Archive
Chapter Five
The 'Big Blitz' on London - September 1940 to May 1941

Introduction
This chapter continues the analysis of Civil Defence in London through the 'Big Blitz' from September 1940 to May 1941, an eight month period in which London suffered frequent and intense aerial attacks which put the Civil Defence organisation and its range of ARP/CD Services to a severe test. But it was not only the organisation and those Services that were under fire as both central and local government were also severely tested. Under nightly attack from the Luftwaffe, most components of Civil Defence performed well but a number of serious deficiencies were revealed and major changes were soon made in leadership and in the post-raid ARP/CD Services. Policy remained unchanged, other than in a minor modification of shelter policy.

The 'Big Blitz' is here considered in three phases starting with the initial four weeks from 7 September, when unpredicted problems caused by regular and intense bombing required major changes to be made in CD at all levels. The second phase was the final three months of 1940 when the attacks continued but the recently amended ARP/CD post-raid Services were seen to cope with the results of the raids. The final phase discussed was the first five months of 1941, when the less frequent, but often more intense, air raids again fully stretched the Services before the Luftwaffe withdrew to their Russian Front. The discussion of each of the three phases will comprise summaries of the nature of the attack experienced, their results and the performance of the Services, the problems identified and the changes made in CD leadership and organisation. One difficulty in defining the three phases of the Blitz is that each was not totally exclusive as the benefits of organisational and administrative changes made in one phase were often not seen until subsequent phases. Thus the appointment of Herbert Morrison as Home Secretary on 3 October 1940, taken as the opening of the second phase of the Blitz, tends to be seen as the reason for the improvement in ARP organisation.
However, the majority of the changes which brought about those improvements had been initiated during Sir John Anderson's tenure of the office.

In summarising the events of this testing period across the London Region, this chapter emphasises administrative and organisational matters and omits mention of the many acts of heroism displayed by the hard-pressed ARP Services. Of the problems identified during the Blitz, those of shelter provision and care of the homeless predominated in the Parliamentary and public debates of the time. This chapter mentions failures in two Boroughs, while the aspects of central government activity discussed will include the continuing problem of shelter provision (including the resurgence of deep shelter demands), the problem of the care of the homeless and the essential repairs to public utilities. Chapter 6 will examine in more detail aspects of the performance and effectiveness of both local and central government in London. Finally, although the provision and operation of Fire Services is excluded from consideration in this thesis, the organisational changes in fire prevention and fire-fighting organisation will be mentioned as the formation of both the National Fire Service and of the Fire Guard organisation were integral elements of the Civil Defence effort in London.

Before details of the Blitz are discussed, it is first appropriate to acknowledge both the overall cost of the Blitz on London in human terms and the fact that the casualties suffered were not as high as had been predicted. To put the impact of the Blitz into context, it is also appropriate to review the state of London ARP at the opening of the raids and to comment on the effect of wartime censorship. Censorship limited the detail and completeness of contemporary press reporting of the Blitz so this thesis relies on a hitherto untapped source of authoritative information on London: namely the secret reporting regularly submitted by the London Regional Commissioners. The Senior Regional Commissioner addressed London MPs on the

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1 The bravery of individuals and of groups in the ARP Services is well documented in the popular wartime and post-war publications.
London situation in February 1941 (script at Annex A) and initiated regular reports\textsuperscript{2} from 1 January 1941 until the end of the war.

First, the human cost must be put into perspective as, during the ‘Big Blitz’, some 19,600 Londoners were killed and 29,200 seriously injured - the monthly casualty totals are given in Table 5. Yet these were far lower than had been predicted and prepared for. On 8 October 1940 the Prime Minister told Parliament that:

\begin{quote}
the mortality is less than one tenth of the mortality attaching to the German bombing attacks in the last war … we expected to sustain losses which might amount to 3,000 killed in a single night and 13,000 wounded… [so we] made hospital arrangements on the basis of a quarter of million casualties merely as a first provision.\textsuperscript{3}
\end{quote}

However, Churchill admitted that ‘the destruction of property has been considerable’ and the people of London were aware that the bombing had exposed a number of serious shortcomings in the ARP preparations made by both central and local government. Major changes were made at all levels of the Civil Defence organisation.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|c|c|}
\hline
Month & Killed & Injured & Total \\
\hline
August 1940 & 214 & 435 & 649 \\
September & 5,730 & 9,003 & 14,733 \\
October & 5,090 & 7,268 & 12,358 \\
November & 1,876 & 2,961 & 4,837 \\
December & 827 & 2,020 & 2,847 \\
January 1941 & 639 & 1,053 & 1,692 \\
February & 283 & 472 & 755 \\
March & 1,202 & 1,765 & 2,967 \\
April & 2,557 & 3,029 & 5,586 \\
May & 1,418 & 1,667 & 3,085 \\
June 1941 & 0 & 11 & 11 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{London Region Casualties - August 1940 to June 1941}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{2} In HO186/952 (Jan 41-Mar 42) and HO186/2352 (1943-45) as supplemented by the ‘Parker Papers’
\textsuperscript{3} HofC Debs. Vol. 365 Cols. 290 - 18 October 1940
Next the effect of censorship on the reporting of events must to be mentioned. Wartime censorship severely limited the extent of accurate information published in the press and local authority records. Little useful information on the results of the bombing attack was published lest such intelligence should 'aid the enemy.' Attacks on the Thames-side docks and the surrounding working class residential areas of Stepney, West Ham or Poplar were reported as being 'in an East End Borough' and this, sometimes, disappointed local people whose tribulations did not seem to merit recognition. Also, the daily Air Ministry and Ministry of Home Security communiqués gave little useful information. Casualty figures were initially issued only monthly or, if referring to a specific incident, publication was delayed, again to deny intelligence to the enemy. However some specific statements of damage giving exact locations were issued if the Government wished to publicise a particular raid e.g. when Buckingham Palace or a hospital were hit or an ancient building destroyed. Some censored photographs were published but their captions were optimistic and designed to boost morale, often concentrating on alleged German barbarities or the ability of London and its CD/ARP Services to 'take it'. Contemporary press reports are interesting but of limited value; however, primary sources on the character and effect of the London Blitz include Cabinet Committee Minutes and Ministry of Home Security and London Region assessments and summaries. These are supplemented, where appropriate, by local authority records and by published and unpublished memoirs.

In spite of censorship, some criticism of central and local government planning and of the shortcomings exposed early in the Blitz was published. Ritchie Calder's articles and reports in the Daily Herald and the weekly New Statesman & Nation exposed certain inadequacies in civil defence measures and the organisation of welfare and other post-raid services. Adverse press criticism was noted by the authorities and sometimes discussed by the War Cabinet who sought to maintain a non-party approach to Civil Defence. Calder's influential reports and articles amounted to overt press campaigns for which some success was claimed. However,

*Collateral damage to schools, hospitals and civilians were described as 'indiscriminate attacks.'*
some of his front-line reporting was exaggerated and has been accepted without question by
some later authors.

As coverage of each individual raid is unnecessary, it is considered that the most useful
accurate and concise summary of events in London from September 1940 was the speech to
London MPs by Senior Regional Commissioner, Sir Ernest Gowers, in February 1941. Gowers
presented the factual achievements of Civil Defence as well as admitting to the
London MPs the defects of the organisation and changes successfully made through the
autumn of 1940. Perhaps of even greater value for the range and depth of detail included, are
the series of London Region Intelligence Branch Reports (LRIBR) instituted by Gowers.
These, initially fortnightly, and classified SECRET 16 page reports, gave 'a general survey of
the Civil Defence position in the London Region.' Although not inaugurated until early
January 1941, they reviewed, using all the sources available to the Regional Commissioners,
the character and the effect of the air raids on London since August 1940. They frequently
returned to specific incidents and raids to analyse and update statistics and draw lessons for
handling the effects of future attacks. Additionally, these reports, not previously quoted in the
literature, benefit from Gowers' command of the English language, later demonstrated in his
Complete Plain Words, as he avoided jargon. But before these events, the successes and the
occasional shortcomings are related, it is appropriate to detail the extent of London's
preparedness for the long-expected aerial bombardment.

The state of London's ARP in August 1940 has been briefly mentioned for, as a result of the
extra year of preparation provided by 'the phoney war,' ARP Services achieved an acceptable
level of manning, training and equipment. The authorities were reasonably confident that their
Services stood ready to deal with the type of attack predicted. One ARP Controller recorded:

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5 See Annex A
6 London Civil Defence Region Intelligence Branch Report (LRIBR) No I dated 7 January 1941
7 See p.110.

146
'When the actual bombing started, the services were able to go into actions like veterans as training situations corresponded closely with the actual results of the attacks." The Clerk of the LCC was similarly confident of the preparedness of LCC administered Services including, significantly, the rest and feeding facilities prepared for the homeless:

London Services are adequately equipped for the task that any day they may be called upon to carry out... although not up to full strength, their deficiencies are not critical... when they are required to go into action, the Civil Defence Services of London will give a good account of themselves. ... I am sure that the same is substantially true of [the Borough Services]... the organisation of the feeding centres for the shelter of the homeless has been completed and tested... The CD Services can be relied upon to do their part in maintaining the civil and industrial life of the metropolis if called upon to do so."

The expected onslaught was seen to be approaching as the German forces advanced to the Channel coast. The destruction of Rotterdam by the Luftwaffe on 10 May 1940 and the collapse of France in June saw Britain 'standing alone' already with some 6,000 refugees from the continent in London clearing stations. In June, Home Secretary Sir John Anderson established a small 7 member 'Executive Sub-Committee' of the Civil Defence Committee which could be called at short notice to deal with civil defence business. This Executive Sub-Committee did not, in fact, meet until 21 September meanwhile CD matters continued to be discussed by the full Civil Defence Committee - a much larger, more cumbersome, group as each of the 16 Ministries with an interest in CD was represented. Londoners were aware that the feared onslaught was imminent and German command of the French coastal airfields following the Dunkirk evacuation increased the area of England vulnerable to bomber attack.

In June, General Sir Hugh Elles, warned the public of the probability of:

... bombing ... not everywhere, not all the time but it is a certainty. Bombing is beastly

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8 W Eric Adams, Civil Defence in Islington 1938-45. Typescript (UD but c 1945) in Islington Archives
9 Notes prepared for Lewis Silkin MP by Salmon 13 Jun 40 LCC File CL/CD/I/4 at LMA
10 CAB 463 - Cabinet CD Cite, 18th Meeting 22 May 1940
11 The Executive Sub-Committee comprised the Home Secretary, Scottish Secretary, the Ministers of Health, Transport, Food, the President of the Board of Education and the Office of Works. It met in Anderson's office when required - sometimes daily, occasionally more frequently but never less that weekly.
12 In April, General Elles had became the MHS Chief of Civil Defence Staff in London.
thing... it is very much on the sticking power of us, the civilians, that the result will turn. 13

Optimistically some British observers noted that, to date, the Luftwaffe, had avoided attacking London by concentrating attacks on military airfields and coastal ports. In July 1940, the Luftwaffe attempted to achieve air superiority over RAF Fighter Command prior to an invasion of the United Kingdom. As the 'Battle of Britain' developed, the German attacks encroached on the London Region when Croydon airfield and its surrounding aircraft (and other) factories were bombed on 15 August. By early September, civilians had been killed in coastal areas from Aberdeen to Portsmouth. In these attacks, particularly those on Portsmouth and Ramsgate, the problems posed by the Unexploded Bomb (UXB) and the numbers rendered homeless by the bombing, emerged. 14

In a broadcast on 5 September Air Marshal Joubert warned:

... we must expect an intensification of the German attack - heavy bombing both by day and night - and a corresponding amount of suffering to all of our people... but we must try to stick it ... 15

On the day before Joubert's broadcast, the Cabinet Committee had been given reassurance on the ability to cope with people made homeless by bombing, the accuracy of which was reported to be poor. The Committee was assured that there had been little difficulty in finding temporary accommodation for the homeless, but some problem had been experienced in the interim. 16

On Saturday 7 September, the weekly Local Government Chronicle reassuringly led with 'It looks as though the word Blitzkrieg had better be dropped. A war of attrition such as is going on at present is no lightning war even if it is a prelude to a more concentrated attack in a

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13 Gen. Sir Hugh Elles on BBC 20 June 1940 Report filed in LCC CD/1/4 at MRO
14 LRIBR No 1 - 7 January 1941
15 The Listener 12 September 1940 Broadcast by AM Sir Philip Joubert 5 September
16 CAB 73/3 - Cabinet CD Committee, 32nd Meeting, 4 September 1940
week's time.' 17 But this was to be 'Black Saturday', the opening of the 'Big Blitz', marking the start of a period in which German bombers attacked London in strength each night for the next two months - a period which severely tested local and central government.

Sir Ernest Gowers later reminded London MPs that:

... September 5 is the date when the real attempt to dislocate the life of London by promiscuous and sustained night bombing began. From that day to 3 November, a period of sixty days, there was a raid every night. During the remaining 27 nights of November there were only three that were free of them. In December however, the enemy attacked on only seventeen nights and in January only thirteen. ... The results on the night of 7 September were disastrously effective. Then came a period when the main form of attack was the dropping of heavy high explosive, including large numbers of parachute mines, interspersed promiscuously with incendiaries. This had its greatest success on the night of October 15. Then there was a rather futile interlude during which small high explosive was dropped in large quantities, sometimes as many as fifty bombs together. This was no doubt very terrifying to the people who happened to be there, but did less damage to persons and property than smaller quantities of larger bombs. Latterly there has a reversion to the original tactic of starting fires first and then bombing them, with these differences; that parachute flares instead of daylight are now used to open the proceedings, that the incendiary bombs are vastly more numerous, and that the subsequent bombing with high explosive has not up to now been pressed home to anything like the extent that it was at the beginning. .... 18

The initial month of the Blitz requires closer attention as not only were the value of the majority of plans and Services acknowledged when the Services performed well, but the attacks also rapidly exposed major problems. Gowers explained these 'unexpected difficulties':

It was our over insurance against damage to the person and under-insurance against damage to homes that early presented us with the grave problem of looking after the unwounded people who had lost their homes and the lesser problem of repairing those homes. 18

17 Local Government Chronicle 'Notes of the Week' 7 September 1940
18 Address by Sir Ernest Gowers to London MPs at the House of Commons, 7 February 1941 Typescript in the Parker Papers and photocopied as Annex A to this thesis.
With the Blitz and the environment of ARP preparedness having been introduced at some length, the three phases of the Big Blitz will now be analysed - commencing with the sudden impact of Black Saturday, 7 September 1940.

Phase One: The Opening Of The Big Blitz - ‘Black Saturday’ To 3 October 1940

The Blitz on London opened with intense air raids on the East End docks and surrounding areas at 1700 on 7 September. The word ‘Blitz’ quickly became accepted usage for these bombing attacks although they did not reach the level of the true Blitzkrieg predicted in pre-war assessments. However the severity of the raids of the first few days and nights initially overwhelmed several local organisations. The raids represented, in Gowers’ words the ‘attempt to dislocate the life of London by promiscuous and sustained night bombing’ while the official communiqués covering the weekend of ‘Black Saturday’ 7 September admitted in the next morning’s papers:

Bombing was widespread and in the later part of the attack appeared to be indiscriminate. Damage was severe but ... not serious. The major weight of the enemy’s offensive was concentrated on both banks of the Thames, east of the city, especially on the riverside where three extensive fires and a number of others were caused. Much damage was done and a number of persons rendered temporarily homeless ... Throughout all these areas the civil defence services are speedily and successfully dealing with the tasks imposed upon them ...

The primary German targets for the first day and following few nights were the docks of East London so, on the north bank, the brunt was borne by the Boroughs of West Ham, Poplar and Stepney. West Ham’s local government organisation virtually collapsed although the Civil Defence Services across the Boroughs performed with much credit. Just outside the LCC area, West Ham had a large number of industrial enterprises on the river bank and adjacent to the docks, all interwoven with extensive working class housing. Such was the damage inflicted by the 7 September daylight raid that some of the roads were alight and some

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19 Air Ministry and Ministry of Home Security Communiqué in The Times, Monday 9 September 1940
residents had to be evacuated by river. Unprecedented destruction was experienced and the fire problem overwhelmed local resources. Reinforcements were sent in from other regions - the Chief West Ham Fire Officer cautioned a fire team about the way they were attacking a blaze on a 7,000 ton ship alongside a local quay, only to be told that they were inter-regional reinforcements from Rugby, never before having seen a ship let alone fight a fire on one! With the docks set ablaze by the initial daylight raid, the area could be seen for many miles and, in the subsequent nine hour night raid, the bombers had no problem identifying their dockside targets. But such was the inaccuracy of the bombing that considerable collateral damage was inflicted on the insubstantial terraces in the residential areas Many ships were sunk, a number of docks destroyed and hundreds of families made homeless. The bombers returned to attack the East End of London for the next few nights. A senior West Ham fireman recorded:

... West Ham, Poplar and Stepney were particularly hard hit. ... the inevitable overspill of bombs aimed at the docks and factories wreaked devastation in streets crowded with houses built forty to the acre. The streets presented a frightful spectacle. Great gaps were torn in the houses and heavy clouds of mortar dust smothered everything in sight. Still, grotesque figures, sprawling in the roadway ... bricks and tiles, roofing timbers and shattered glass littered the road ... Survivors, dragged from the rubble of their homes ... were escorted to a rest centre established at the South Hallsville School in Agate Street. A large bomb hit the crowded rest centre and many of the hapless refugees together with tons of debris collapsed into a vast crater. ... some spoke of 450 dead, ... some even more. The official casualty list ... named 73 dead.  

But there was no outright panic in the areas attacked but the heavily bombed populations were often understandably anxious to move to safer areas. When Malcolm MacDonald, the Minister of Health, visited the southern part of West Ham on Sunday 8 September, he was:

... met by five councillors who demanded [general] evacuation of the population.

MacDonald refused, telling them that the Cabinet view was that there would be no general

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20 Cyril Demarne *The London Blitz - A Fireman's Tale* After the Battle (1991) p.35
21 The numbers actually killed in this incident and its historiography are the subject of Annex B.
22 Demarne p.35
evacuation of areas under attack. ... Over the weekend some 30,000 people were thus evacuated and another 30,000 went under their own steam.  

A similar request by Hackney Council was reported to the Cabinet CD Committee as Hackney wanted:

to evacuate all women and children and also workless and homeless men in their area. The Senior Regional Commissioner was to inform Hackney that plans are being made to evacuate women and children and aged and infirm persons from eight London boroughs of which the need was more urgent than Hackney.  

The successes of the Civil Defence Services was acknowledged, as Gowers confirmed:

It is beyond question that the layout of the Civil Defence Services reflects the greatest possible credit to the foresight and energy of those pioneers, Wing Commander Hodsoll and others, who were building the foundations long before any of us three came upon the scene. It is no less beyond question that no praise could be too high for the courage, devotion and resourcefulness of the men and women of these Services ... 

A Ministry of Home Security paper concurred:

... the organisation of the ARP Services has proved to be on sound lines and the operation of the services has been satisfactory. The Wardens' Service has amply demonstrated its value and the organisation generally stood up well to a severe test. ... the strength of the ARP Services was designed to take the initial shock of a heavy large scale attack ... it was always intended that schemes of mutual aid should be put into operation in cases of severe attack ... 

Homelessness

The ARP Services were dealing with incidents for which they had been equipped and trained, but these early raids quickly brought to the fore a number of 'unexpected difficulties' that were not predicted, and thus not prepared for. By 13 September the attack had been extended to include many other parts of Inner London - Buckingham Palace was hit with the Royal

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23 CAB/102/726 - Interview with Mr C.J. Wood of the London Region, Ministry of Health, dated 20 October 1942
24 CAB 75/3 Cabinet CD Committee Executive S-C, 2nd Meeting 23 September 1940
24 Sir Ernest Gowers to London MPs - 7 February 1941 - Parker Papers and Annex A.
26 HO186/634 ‘Lessons of Intense Air Attack’ 17 December 1940
Family in residence - all good for morale but many East End homeless families then declined to be billeted 27 or re-housed in these West End and north London Boroughs which were now also subject to bombing. The number of homeless persons in the London Region rapidly built up to a peak of 25,500 in mid-September 28 - a problem which received Cabinet attention and Government action. The total numbers of homeless people throughout the Big Blitz, who had to be temporarily housed in local authority Food and Rest Centres are detailed in Table 6 which covers the whole Blitz period from September 1940 to June 1941. Those sheltering in Food and Rest Centres then had to be billeted by the authorities in alternative accommodation and, eventually, re-housed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number Homeless</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number Homeless</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number Homeless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 Sep 1940</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>18 Dec 1940</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>14 Mar 1941</td>
<td>1,563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Sep</td>
<td>10-15,000</td>
<td>25 Dec</td>
<td>2,914</td>
<td>21 Mar</td>
<td>6,838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Sep</td>
<td>25,590</td>
<td>31 Dec</td>
<td>6,212</td>
<td>28 Mar</td>
<td>3,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07 Oct</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>07 Jan 1941</td>
<td>5,145</td>
<td>04 Apr</td>
<td>1,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Oct</td>
<td>13,600</td>
<td>14 Jan</td>
<td>5,806</td>
<td>11 Apr</td>
<td>1,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Oct</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>21 Jan</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>19 Apr *</td>
<td>16,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Oct</td>
<td>18,500</td>
<td>28 Jan</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>26 Apr</td>
<td>6,703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06 Nov</td>
<td>10,300</td>
<td>01 Feb</td>
<td>2,333</td>
<td>02 May</td>
<td>2,803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Nov</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>08 Feb</td>
<td>1,485</td>
<td>09 May</td>
<td>1,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Nov</td>
<td>10-12,000</td>
<td>15 Feb</td>
<td>1,268</td>
<td>12 May</td>
<td>12,281</td>
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<td>27 Nov</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>22 Feb</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>19 May</td>
<td>5,260</td>
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<tr>
<td>04 Dec</td>
<td>5,400</td>
<td>28 Feb</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>26 May</td>
<td>1,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Dec 1940</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>07 Mar 1941</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>18 Jun 1941</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* On 17 April 1941 there were 14,658 new admissions to Rest Centres in the LCC area.
Sources: Compiled from fortnightly reports in HO186/952

Table 6 - Homeless Persons in Rest Centres in the London Region
11 September 1940 to 18 June 1941

27 'Billeting' was the official boarding or lodging of a homeless family on a householder, if necessary by compulsory order. The householder received payment for this from the local authority in whose area the homeless family had been living.
28 HofC Debs. Vol. 365 Cols. 408-410 - 9 October 1940
The large numbers of ‘those rendered homeless by the bombing’ soon overwhelmed the meagre level of welfare provision that had been made by the authorities. Anderson reported to the War Cabinet on 10 September on the ‘difficult situation’ of the homeless in the East End which:

had not perhaps been well handled by all of the local authorities but arrangements had now been made for the matter to be taken over by the LCC. It was proposed to transfer the homeless people from the East End of London to districts further West. 29

The initial attacks on the East End continued by day and night for some days and many people left the area. Most people remained in the target area with many of the homeless taking refuge in the designated Rest Centres - often empty schools - and these also suffered bombing. The tragedy of the South Hallsville School (See p.151) was reported by Ritchie Calder, in the Daily Herald of 11 September, as a failure of the Ministry of Health to provide safe shelter for the refugees and to evacuate the homeless to safety. Calder’s report was discussed in some detail at the Cabinet CD Committee meeting that morning when the Minister of Health outlined the situation regarding Food and Rest Centres in the East End:

Most local authorities had made excellent arrangements. There were however two principal difficulties:

a. Equipment was too primitive as people would have to remain in centres for longer than had been contemplated. The LCC had been given authority for expenditure on more and better equipment.

b. 43 of the centres had themselves been put out of action and in the East End, the centres had been overcrowded. Arrangements from the first for co-operation between one local authority and another, the LCC and Essex CC making special arrangements and the Ministry of Health strengthening the organisation in the Department for this question.

Reference was made to the attack in that morning’s Daily Herald which alleged that people had been killed as a result of delays in moving them from a Rest Centre. The Minister of Health said that these attacks appeared to refer to a case in which 300 people had been collected in a Food and Rest Centre on Sunday night. On the following afternoon when arrangements had been made for their transfer to Essex, it had been decided not to move them owing to an air raid alarm. The Centre had been struck by a bomb that night and some casualties had occurred. The Minister said that he proposed to see Mr Ritchie Calder, 30 the

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29 CAB 65/9 246 (40)
30 There is no record of any such meeting.
author of the article, and discuss the question with him. If the organisation had been at fault in any respect, the matter must be investigated.

The Ministry of Information said that he had seen the editors of the London papers on the previous day and had discussed with them the line that should be taken about the present situation. 31

Calder had visited the site of the bombed South Hallsville School on the morning after the incident and claimed to have stood on the rim of the crater with his local contact, Rev W.W. Paton, later to become the West Ham ARP Controller.32 In his Daily Herald reports Calder undoubtedly exaggerated the casualties suffered as the subsequent official enquiries 33 reported to the Ministry that only some 73 bodies had been found at the site. 34 An example of the newspaper reports of the period being accepted without question by later authors, this incident was still being quite erroneously described in 1985 as 'the biggest civilian disaster of the war' 35 while, in 1995, Philip Ziegler quoted 36 Calder's figure of 450 fatalities although at least two post-war books 37 quote the official figure of 73 dead.

There is no doubt that thousands of London homes were destroyed (or otherwise made uninhabitable) by HE bombs. Further, the Luftwaffe's use of inaccurate but powerful 'parachute mines' and the large numbers of unexploded (UXB), or delayed action, bombs caused whole streets of houses to be evacuated and increased the number of temporarily homeless people 38 to be cared for by the local authorities. Table 7 gives those numbers for the LCC area and the London Region. Bomb disposal was a military responsibility - UXBs were cleared by teams of army specialists and parachute mines by the Royal Navy. Initially, the number of these specialists did not meet the demand for their services. Also Ritchie

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31 CAB 73/3Cabinet CD Ctte 33rd Meeting 11 September 1940
32 See p 206
33 See Annex B - the results of the Regional Enquiry were reported by the Town Clerk of West Ham giving the official figure of 73 dead at the Council Meeting on 24 May 1941.
34 HO/186/241 'ARP Incidents in West Ham' - this file contains the result of a Regional Enquiry in response to a Ministry of Information question in December 1940 - letters from West Ham and Regional HQ dated 5 and 7 December 1940 give the figure of only 73 bodies found.
37 DeMarne p.32 and Winston Ramsay (Ed.) The Blitz Then and Now Vol. II (1990) p. 77
38 At some times UXBs accounted for 40% of the homeless people in Food and Rest Centres.
Calder consistently reported that the level of provision and the equipment of the LCC Rest Centres was totally inadequate once the unpredicted scale of homelessness was experienced.

The estimated number of houses in the County of London (i.e. the LCC area) in 1937 was 790,224.

Table 7 - Damage to Houses in the Administrative County of London and the London Region - December 1940 to June 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Demolished or beyond repair</th>
<th>Demolished or beyond repair</th>
<th>Damaged but Repairable</th>
<th>Damaged but Repairable</th>
<th>First Aid Repairs Completed</th>
<th>First Aid Repairs Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Admin County</td>
<td>London Region</td>
<td>Admin County</td>
<td>London Region</td>
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<td>London Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Dec 1940</td>
<td>17,988</td>
<td>32,160</td>
<td>210,626</td>
<td>466,765</td>
<td>109,553</td>
<td>309,657</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 Jan 1941</td>
<td>23,835</td>
<td>41,085</td>
<td>300,109</td>
<td>681,502</td>
<td>273,040</td>
<td>644,192</td>
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<td>24 Feb 1941</td>
<td>23,921</td>
<td>41,242</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>290,739</td>
<td>676,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Mar 1941</td>
<td>24,030</td>
<td>41,585</td>
<td>307,002</td>
<td>706,905</td>
<td>306,787</td>
<td>706,230</td>
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<td>9 Apr 1941</td>
<td>26,323</td>
<td>47,795</td>
<td>358,536</td>
<td>831,330</td>
<td>338,011</td>
<td>774,216</td>
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<td>15 May 1941</td>
<td>36,164</td>
<td>61,948</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>29 May 1941</td>
<td>37,652</td>
<td>63,757</td>
<td>537,273</td>
<td>1,177,491</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>12 June 1941</td>
<td>36,757</td>
<td>63,477 *</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>N/a</td>
<td>464,422</td>
<td>997,922</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 March 1942</td>
<td>40,819</td>
<td>67,579</td>
<td>635,686</td>
<td>1,345,162</td>
<td>586,812</td>
<td>1,208,174</td>
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</table>

Source: Data in HO186/952  * Revised figures
The estimated number of houses in the County of London (i.e. the LCC area) in 1937 was 790,224.

Families were initially cared for in LCC Schools from which the children had been evacuated ('first line' centres), backed up by the use of church halls ('second line' centres), but few were equipped with sufficient beds, blankets or cooking facilities as it had been expected that the homeless would stay only a few hours before being billeted or re-housed. There was thus a requirement to feed these people and this led to demands for proper canteens or other 'Food Centres' which were provided after the experience of the first few days of the Blitz. There was thus, initially, a general failure by the Boroughs in billeting and rehousing these families so there was a build up of homeless people requiring protection, feeding, welfare advice and rehousing - an organisational problem that had not been well thought out as the scale of the problems of physical destruction and homelessness had been underestimated. However, the scale of the attack meant that these problems were almost inevitable, not least because the unprecedented tasks involved in delivering 'post-raid services' to tens of thousands of homeless people fell to the hard pressed officials of the local authorities. The homeless people in need of food and shelter often roamed the streets of their Borough seeking advice and
welfare support from scattered and poorly co-ordinated Council-run services. The virtual
collapse under fire of the local authority administration in West Ham is detailed in Chapter 6
but West Ham was not alone in not have properly planned its post-raid welfare services to
deal with uninjured survivors. Those citizens finding themselves homeless, often without
cash, identity cards and ration books, found that they had to report to several Council Offices
spread through the Borough to register for assistance, billeting and rehousing. It took some
days before the requirement for Councils to co-ordinate their welfare provision was
recognised and often leadership in the local authorities was lacking. The Government was
aware of these local authority shortcomings and Ministers, led by the Prime Minister, made
visits to the blitzed areas to witness what was being reported both officially and in the press.
At the Cabinet Meeting on 11 September the Deputy Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, was
tasked with a ‘review of the steps being taken to deal with the damage caused by air raids in
the London area to the utility services, transport and food supplies and the measures being
taken to accommodate the people rendered homeless.’ 40 Two days later Malcolm MacDonald
reported to the War Cabinet on ‘the improvement of morale of the people during the last 36
hours largely due to the heavy anti-aircraft fire. This has, to some extent, impeded the
evacuation of the homeless as some people were now reluctant to leave their homes. Large
numbers from the East End had been moved to the West London Boroughs and to Essex’. 41

On 21 September, Anderson called the first meeting of his small Executive Sub-Committee
and announced that:

a Special Commissioner is to be attached to the staff of the London Region to co-ordinate
the work of the LCC and the Borough Councils and Voluntary bodies in providing
accommodation for persons rendered homeless in air attacks on the London Region. The
Sub-Committee noted with approval the proposal to appoint Mr H.U. Willink MP as Special
Commissioner for this purpose. 41

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39 CAB 65/9 247 (40) Meeting 11 September 1940
40 CAB 65/9 249 (40) Meeting 13 September 1940
41 CAB 75/3 Executive S-C 19 Meeting 21 September 1940
A King’s Counsel and Conservative MP for Croydon North 1940-48, Willink quickly toured the London Region and started co-ordinating the efforts of various bodies involved in the care of the homeless. He also brought in extra human and financial resources to attack the problem. His appointment was not universally welcomed as Calder, in the *Daily Herald*, was demanding a Welfare Board for London as ‘a supervening authority to get on with the job of finding homes, arranging communal feeding and relieving the intolerable blunders which still persist.’ He wrote that ‘Under the arches of East London, the homeless are asking “Who is Mr Willink?”’ It is not much use telling them that his nickname is Happy Harry.’ Next day Calder returned with ‘Mr Willink is willing - but powerless - he told us so yesterday.’ Willink appointed some dozens of women social workers to counsel homeless people whereupon Calder christened them ‘Happy Harry’s Harriets’. Calder then turned his attention to demanding canteens for communal feeding in the East End and used his contacts in the Ministry of Food to get canteens for hop-pickers returning to their East End homes. He was an old friend of Bob Boothby MP, Parliamentary Secretary to Lord Woolton, Minister of Food. Calder had an arrangement to telephone Lord Woolton if he came across such a need and, when informed of the hop-pickers’ plight, Woolton and Boothby sent three canteens and received Calder’s thanks in the *Daily Herald* of 3 October - the day on which Calder’s friend Herbert Morrison was appointed Home Secretary.

**Shelters**

Predictably the human cost and the massive physical destruction generated by the bombing generated additional demands for more and better air raid shelters. Gowers succinctly summarised the situation and its associated problems to London MPs:

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42 *Daily Herald* 2 October 1940
43 *Daily Herald* 30 September 1940
44 Boothby, a fellow Scot, treated Calder with some caution and, in a letter dated 27 September, warned Lord Woolton ‘Fleet Street is prepared to launch a heavy and concerted attack on the Government for the alleged inadequacy of its treatment of the problem of refugees, the homeless, ... I think the attack began with Calder’s article in the *Daily Herald* this morning and the main barrage may open up on Monday next.’ [R. Rhodes James *Bob Boothby - A Portrait* Hodder & Stoughton 1991p. 266]
... public shelter was only intended for those who might be caught in the street during a raid and unable to get home. Partly ... because they preferred to get away from solitude in the noise of battle into company where they could not hear it, many people took to spending the night in the tubes and public shelters. It thus became necessary to convert into dormitories places which had never meant to be used for that purpose. It was a colossal task, and it is not surprising that the doing of it presented ample scope for criticism. It is now largely accomplished... Important as this question is, it is easy to exaggerate its magnitude. ... The problem ... never affected more than about ten per cent of the population of the Region and now affects little more than three per cent ... it is imperatively necessary to see that people who want to sleep in public shelter can do so in tolerable conditions, yet the policy of dispersed shelter remains the right one, and the primary need is to provide sufficient dispersed shelter and to attract people back to it. 

Once regular nightly bombing raids were experienced, people sought safe shelter and the extent to which they found it depended upon both the level of local provision and the culture and psychology of those seeking shelter. Whereas the Council in Poplar, although basically disagreeing with the policy of ‘dispersal’, had taken advantage of the public surface and Anderson domestic shelters funded by the Government, Stepney Council had not provided much public or domestic shelter. The population in Stepney thus resorted to their Great War practice of taking refuge under railway arches and in large commercial premises. The result in Stepney was that the few large shelters quickly became overcrowded whilst, across London, others took to ‘the tubes’ - the underground railway stations and uncompleted tunnel endings.

It was not just access that created problems for, as the original plans had assumed that air raids would be short, little provision was made for sanitation or feeding arrangements. The result was that public shelters quickly became overcrowded and insanitary potential health hazards.

The demand for air raid shelters was much increased when those seeking a night’s sleep during the now regular all-night raids opted to spend the night in shelters which were never planned as sleeping accommodation. Once shelterers demanded overnight refuge, much work

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45 Sir Ernest Gowers to London MPs - 7 February 1941 - Parker Papers. See Annex A.
was needed to provide extra shelter accommodation. Also a more extensive provision for
health and comfort was needed within public shelters if shelterers were to get a safe night's
sleep to enable them to work the following day. Anderson immediately set about increasing
the amount of shelter available by encouraging the distribution of further Anderson domestic
shelters, by increasing the building of surface shelters and by increasing public access to
'safe' commercial and business premises. Finally, he reversed the previous ban on opening of
the underground railway premises to the public. Prolonged public use of these stations created
sanitary problems and, at the Executive Sub-Committee Meeting on 21 September, Gowers:

... referred to sanitary problems resulting from the number of people using the Tubes as
shelters. The Borough Councils had been given instructions to keep them clean - action to
be taken by the police to clear the Tubes for cleaning by 6 a.m.

[London Transport] had requested police and sanitary assistance to keep the Tubes both
clear and clean. The Sub-Committee agreed that:

i. As soon as reports showed refugees were seriously interfering with legal traffic on the
underground railways an announcement to be made to able bodied men not to shelter
there. Strong action (including the use of the military if necessary) should then be taken
to remove any able bodied men disregarding this prohibition.

ii. It might be necessary that women and children provided with reasonable shelter at or
near their homes could not be allowed to use the Tube for shelter. 46

Although the first of the monthly official shelter censuses was not taken until November
1940, there is no doubt that over 177,500 people nightly took shelter in the tubes at the peak
of the Blitz in mid-September.47 Subsequently many tens of thousands of people took
nightly refuge in the tubes, although census figures showed that only a small proportion of the
total population actually sought shelter. The Official Historian recorded that, through
September and October 1940, the proportion of people seeking shelter in the tubes was
probably much higher than the 4% of the total population of the region recorded as doing so
in November.47 Titmuss wrote of:

the function of the shelter as safety valve for the badly housed ... and as a means of
providing a feeling of warmth and security for those who found comfort in the actual

46 CAB 75/3 Executive S-C 1st Meeting, 21 September 1940
47 T.H. O'Brien Civil Defence p. 508
presence of their fellows, was not properly grasped. ... [the poor] had lived too long on top of one another to mind about any lack of privacy.

Sir John Anderson, Gowers and Admiral Evans, set in hand a range of necessary measures to improve the comfort and hygiene of large public shelters by installing bunks ('bunking'), issuing tickets for admission to regular shelterers ('ticketing'), encouraging the installation of canteens and, most importantly, improving hygiene and sanitation. Also, the post of 'Shelter Warden' was established as a control element in the larger public shelters.

The whole question of shelter policy is discussed at some length in Chapter 6 including the revival of demands for 'deep shelters' particularly by J.B.S. Haldane, as Chairman of the ARP Co-ordinating Committee, who led a deputation to Sir John Anderson on 17 September claiming 'to speak for 700,000 organised citizens representing local authorities, trades unions and other important bodies.' Haldane called for 'An Immediate Shelter Policy' but the attitude of the Cabinet, particularly of Churchill, to the Communist Party agitation was seen in their reaction to the CPGB-inspired occupation of the Savoy Hotel during an air raid on 15 September. The Cabinet resolved 'to take strong action to prevent such demonstrations.'

Particular problems arose in Stepney where little had been done by the local Council to provide public shelters. The propensity of many Stepney people to seek refuge under railway arches or in large 'official' and 'unofficial' communal shelters led to severe problems and these were not resolved under the leadership provided by the local Labour Party Leader and ARP Controller Councillor M.H. Davis. The largest shelter in East London was 'The Tilbury', the huge London and Tilbury Railway warehouse on the Commercial Road, Stepney. A portion of this space was designated the 'official' shelter while the remainder of

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49 'What the Haldane Committee Stands For' in A.R.P. News December 1940
50 CAB65/9 250 (40) 16 September 1940
51 See pp.197-199.
52 The site is now occupied by the massive Operations Centre of the National Westminster Bank.
the space was considered private property. The latter was occupied by the public but, as an
' unofficial' shelter, this was considered of no concern to Stepney Council on the grounds that
'it had been refused powers and would be trespassing on private property.' With an
estimated 16,000 shelterers occupying the Tilbury each evening, without real sanitary
provision, this represented a health hazard. Led by Ritchie Calder's Daily Herald and New
Statesman reports of the filth and misery he saw, the press highlighted the situation and
directed its venom at central government and the Councils of both West Ham and Stepney:

... some officials never imagined what the Blitzkrieg would be like, but also the existing
machinery of local government was unequal to its task and that the conflict of interests and
functions of government departments led to tragic confusion. ... I suggest that a Welfare
Board for London should immediately be appointed to override the sometimes inadequate
local councils.  

The matter came to the attention of the War Cabinet on 2 October when Anderson reported
that:

Admiral Evans had been given the fullest powers to deal with the matter including the
supercession of the ARP Officer [in fact the Controller] in Stepney. The Prime Minister
referred to a statement by the editor of the New Statesman which had been brought to his
attention giving an account of the conditions in the large shelter in Stepney. ... from all he
heard the position called for drastic action and the ARP Officer in Stepney should be
immediately superseded. 

Within a day, Councillor Davis was 'superseded' and the post of ARP Controller in Stepney
was given to the Town Clerk, Mr E Arnold James. But, as explained in Chapter 6, this did not
solve the problem. Continuing obstruction by local officials and elected councillors required
further drastic action in Stepney by the Ministries of Health and Home Security in December
1940. 

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53 Ritchie Calder Carry On London 1941 p. 56
54 Ritchie Calder New Statesman 21 September 1940 pp.276-278
55 CD 65/9 264 (40) 2 October 1940
56 See p.197-200

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Debris Clearance

Other unexpected major problems caused by the September raids were the amount of debris to be cleared, the many roads and the fractured water, electricity and gas mains which required urgent repair to keep London going. The repair of public utilities required skilled specialist manpower while the clearance of thousands of tons of debris needed a large labour force with transport. Normally this work would be carried out by the local authorities and the public utility companies, but their resources were overwhelmed by the scale of physical damage. Some form of higher management was required to co-ordinate the substantial effort necessary to restore public services and to boost public morale by removing acres of unrepairable buildings. Just as H.U. Willink was appointed as Special Commissioner for the Homeless, the Cabinet CD Committee approved a similar appointment using the former Head of the Civil Service when Anderson announced that 'he had invited Sir Warren Fisher to undertake duties as Special Commissioner for this task.' 57

Gowers summarised the extent of the damage and debris problems and their resolution to London MPs:

The gas position was at one time very serious. ... the real trouble has been with the mains. There have been 7,579 fractures of them ... at one time 20% of gas consumers were without a supply. Water has not been quite as bad ... (5,171 fractures) ... as the interconnection of mains generally makes supply by another route possible ... as in the matter of the homeless, the possibilities in October seemed to us so grave as to justify the appointment of a Special Commissioner to give his whole time to supervising, co-ordinating and stimulating repairs to public utility services and roads, as well as to the allied subject of clearing debris. [Sir Warren Fisher's] achievements include the extraction from the Army of 600 skilled men for repairs to mains, ... and the continuous employment of a force now amounting to 16,000 civilians and 10,000 military pioneers on the clearance of bombed sites and blocked roads, as well of the use of 3,000 Royal Engineers to assist in road repairs. 58

56 See p.197-200
57 CAB 75/3 Executive Sub-Committee, 1st Meeting, 21 September 1940
58 Sir Ernest Gowers to London MPs - 7 February 1941 - Parker Papers and Annex A.
Morrison Replaces Anderson

It has been shown that organisational and administrative changes were made in the initial month of the Blitz at local authority level and two new Special Commissioners were appointed at London Region to deal with homelessness and repair of public utilities. Thus the Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security, Sir John Anderson, had set in train a range of reforms to enable the Civil Defence organisation (which Anderson himself had shaped and prepared for war) to cope with the problems that had not been predicted. Anderson rightly took credit for the generally successful performance of the organisation and its ARP Services but he was open to Parliamentary and public criticism following the initial attacks and the perceived lack of adequate shelters for the population. Anderson was a very experienced and capable administrator but he was no Parliamentary performer. Lord Deedes recalled that he "knew Sir John Anderson quite well - he was an excellent administrator but, like Sir Tom Inskip, he was not seen as a suitable figure for war ... War required people to change their roles from tasks of administration to that of fighting a war." Churchill was, presumably, of a similar view as he replaced Anderson with Herbert Morrison as Home Secretary on 4 October 1940. Anderson moved into the War Cabinet, as Lord President of the Council, with the task of co-ordinating home affairs and his biographer related an incident which demonstrated Anderson's inability to cope with his critics:

the workings of the popular press were remote from his understanding - he summoned a conference of editors. In no uncertain terms, he told them that a policy of deep shelters would not be adopted and virtually recommended them to drop their campaign. 'Is that the policy of the Government?' one of his hearers enquired, and John replied in tones of thunder: 'Do you think I should have said what I have said were that not so?' From that moment he was doomed. The attacks in the press persisted and became more personal to him. As the force of the enemy's onslaught continued and the winter drew on, the demands for some mitigation of the Government's policy became irresistible. The simple fact was (as Ritchie Calder has written in Lesson of London pp. 83-87), that 'lots of people wanted

59 Deedes dismissed Inskip as 'a prayer book scholar' who became Minister for Defence Co-ordination 1936-39. He was also Lord Chancellor 1939-40 and Lord Chief Justice 1940-46.
60 Interview with Lord Deedes 12 August 1998
communal shelters, preferably deep ones. ... there is no doubt that lots of popular shelters were no safer, and often less so, than the domestic shelters.' 61

In the Parliamentary debate on the war situation, held some five days after Morrison’s appointment, Winston Churchill paid fulsome tribute to both Anderson and Morrison. He praised Anderson’s work:

... there is no better war horse in the Government. I am ashamed of the attacks made upon him in ignorant and spiteful quarters ... he is a tower of strength and good sense, fearless and unflinching in storm and action I rely greatly on him ... Far-reaching measures are being taken to safeguard the health of the people under these novel and primordial conditions ... Widespread organisation and relief to those whose homes are smitten is already in being and is expanding and improving every day. ... 62

Churchill warmly welcomed Anderson’s successor Herbert Morrison by telling the House ‘In my right hon. Friend the new Minister of Home Security we have a man of warm sympathy, of resource and energy, who is well known to Londoners and has their confidence’. 62 But Anderson’s opponent Aneurin Bevan, who admitted that he ‘was making an unpleasant speech’, attacked Anderson’s performance in the House as Home Secretary on the Defence Regulations, on the Courts (Emergency Powers) Bill, on the internment of aliens and finally:

The deep shelter policy of the right hon. Gentleman .. has been shown to be a disaster ... a great deal of damage has been done to the to the morale of London and the country by his deep shelter policy... there is a resentment in the East End at the fact that the policy of the Government has not provided them with deep shelters ... 63

Anderson’s biographer described the Minister’s feelings on being removed from his Department and reprinted A.P. Herbert’s poem ‘Tough Boy’ published in the Sunday Graphic on 20 October 1940:

[Anderson] had been superseded for the first and last time in his career, and he felt it deeply..... [he] was bitterly disappointed at being removed from the administration of a Government Department for which he had a great affection and where he believed he was to

62 HofC Debs. Vol. 365 Col. 249 8 October 1940
63 Ibid. Cols. 348-350
good purpose. ‘I should have liked to have seen the job through, Bill’ he said to William Mabane, with a rare display of emotion, on his last evening at the Home Office ...

AP Herbert’s poem ran: You will not mind, as many do,
    The foolish things the clever say:
    You saw the grim decisions through;
    The sticky jobs all came your way.

    But millions, from your armoured nest
    Emerging safe, defiant, free,
    Will say 'John Anderson knew best
    And we can be as tough as he. 64

The popular press, led by Ritchie Calder, a friend of Morrison and a fellow member of the Labour Party ARP Committee, recognised the massive task that Morrison had before him. However, Calder welcomed this appointment of ‘Mr London’ as Home Secretary. Calder used the front page of the Daily Herald of 4 October to press Morrison to reform London local government under the headline GO TO IT HERBERT!:

When I heard that you had been appointed Home Secretary I went home and slept soundly. The tragedy of harried, homeless families and of the hungry, ill-cared for ‘not technically homeless’ was in the first desperate weeks a breakdown of co-ordination.

What I know of local government in London, I learned largely through you but that does not prevent me from saying that municipal government in London, with the LCC emerging creditably after a difficult start, could not carry the impossible burden imposed upon it.

I think you will agree that asking the Mayor of _______ to handle the evacuation or billeting of the homeless was rather like asking the Mayor of Dunkirk to evacuate the Brigade of Guards.

Nothing which has been done in the past month has completely redressed that first and tragic failure. Things have improved, it is true, but through practical work not staff work. That is not your method. I am sure that when you have surveyed the extent of the breakdown you will agree with the conception of a London Welfare Board. It is the wartime equivalent of a Greater London Authority - reinforced by representatives of various ministries, of the LCC and of municipal government. 65

Morrison’s apposite promotion was the final major reform of the unprecedented, and very difficult, initial month of the Blitz. The Times fairly assessed the situation:

64 Wheeler Bennett pp. 256-257
65 Daily Herald 4 October 1940 p.1
.. a given quantity of German explosives dropped on England now inflicts less than a tenth of the casualties it did in the last war.... This represents a remarkable success for the system of shelters; and Sir John Anderson ... is entitled to claim that he has done most of what is possible to solve the problem of safety, though he leaves to Mr Herbert Morrison a formidable task in solving those of comfort and health. 66

Thus Anderson had seen the ARP organisation and Services he had built up since November 1938 generally perform well under the onslaught. However, many problems rapidly surfaced and, although he set in train the necessary changes, he was moved on by Churchill and it was Morrison who had to tackle the next phase of the Blitz.

Phase Two - The Blitz Continued - 4 October to 31 December 1940

Morrison's promotion to Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security is taken as indicating the start of the second phase of the Blitz. The Times leader (above) acknowledged the 'formidable task' ahead of Morrison but also recognised that Anderson had done 'what was possible to solve the problem of safety' by setting in train major reforms in ARP organisation. He had appointed Special Commissioners to co-ordinate work on the two major unpredicted problems identified and, at a very different level and in co-operation with the Minister of Health, he had demonstrated the Government's resolve by removing the obstructive Councillor Morry Davis from his Controller's duties in Stepney. This phase of the Blitz, extending to the end of 1940, covers three further months of London suffering the nightly bombing during which Morrison continued and consolidated Anderson's reforms by progressing the provision of shelters, by revising the deep shelter policy and by dealing with other problems as they arose.

The press welcome for Morrison's appointment was not unanimous as the Daily Worker predictably referred to Calder's adulation of the new Home Secretary - an established enemy

66 The Times 8 October 1940
of the Communist Party. It commented that 'the people themselves will need something more than Mr Calder's flowery words.... Nothing has changed. The winning of deep shelters is still the peoples' job.' Two days later it complained of the photographic coverage of Morrison's tour of London shelters 'Pictures of a smirking Herbert Morrison in tunnels and shelters were all the go in the weekend propaganda sheets - and right in the front line was Mr Ritchie Calder of the Daily Herald who seems to have been on the Home Secretary's smile-tour.'

On the same day, the Daily Herald claimed success for Calder's journalism:

The Daily Herald campaign has got things done - and now Morrison goes to it to give you shelter. Within 24 hours of taking office Herbert Morrison declared open a Morrison shelter for 4000 East Londoners sixty feet underground - a tube station in the Bethnal Green district. He found 8,000 people used it unofficially then it was closed. In an adjoining borough London's most spectacular shelter that most nights holds 14,000. The official side was kept clean and tolerable while nine often thousand sheltered on the other side - intolerable.

Ritchie Calder's campaigns appeared to have some success as many of the measures for which he campaigned (communal feeding, better shelter sanitation, more comfort in shelters and better equipped Rest Centres) were adopted by Government. Calder's journalism did cause official concern, as Calder's daughter recalled a warning to her father:

Morrison called on him one morning around breakfast time in his flat off Fleet Street. [my father] opened the door in his pyjamas and dressing gown to find the Home Secretary on the step. Over coffee, Morrison warned 'you are getting close to the wind and you could end up in Brixton [prison] for giving aid to the enemy.'

Morrison rapidly established himself in the Home Office but the attacks on London continued nightly (with only 3 nights omitted) through to the end of the year with major raids being suffered. On 16 October, the Cabinet Committee heard:

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67 Morrison banned the Daily Worker from January - August 1942 under Defence Regulation 2D.
68 Daily Worker 5 October 1940
69 Daily Worker 7 October 1940
70 Obviously not a 'Morrison' table shelter.
71 Daily Herald 7 October 1940
72 Interview with Mrs Fiona Rudd nee Calder, 10 February 1999
With the exception of 7 September, the night of 15/16 October was the worst since enemy action had started. They were intense air attacks with 250 killed and 1100 injured with serious material damage. In Edmonton the water supply to the City was broken off and 1800 Pioneer Corps were at work repairing it. Of the 25 land mines dropped - 5 in St Pancras - most were UXB.\(^7^3\)

Casualties that night included the 64 deaths from the bomb which penetrated the Balham underground station. Later, on 8 December, a force of 300 aircraft started 1,850 fires in London and, on 29 December, the great incendiary raid overwhelmed the fire-fighting resources of the Region. Each of those raids had an impact on the ARP organisation in the London Region. The nightly raids sometimes started in the late afternoon and finished some hours before dawn so the work of caring for, feeding, billeting and rehousing the homeless problem continued although, as can be seen from Table 6,\(^7^4\) the numbers temporarily residing in Food and Rest Centres significantly declined from the peak reached in mid-September. There was some relief for the metropolis when the *Luftwaffe* occasionally diverted its attack to provincial cities - the first being that on Coventry on 13/14 November when the inter-regional reinforcements sent included many resources from the London Region. During the week ending 4 December, serious attacks were made on important targets in Liverpool, Leeds, Southampton, Bristol and Birmingham but this did not lessen the weight of the subsequent attacks on London. The London anti-aircraft barrage forced the bombers to attack from greater heights and less accurate area bombing often resulted. In general the Civil Defence Services continued to perform with credit, within the limits of that for which they were equipped and trained. Additionally, they quickly adapted to the new techniques (such as the introduction of the Incident Control Officer taking local charge of all resources at an incident) and new problems caused by the use of larger bombs and of explosive incendiaries used by the *Luftwaffe*.

\(^{73}\) Cabinet CD Committee 38th Meeting, 16 October 1940

\(^{74}\) See p.153.
The UXB problem continued to cause difficulties. On 30 September, there had been 1,200 UXBs in London awaiting disposal. The 12 Bomb Disposal Sections operating in August had been increased to 80 by October and the number of UXBs awaiting disposal by 1 January 1941 had dropped to only 200. Another problem for Morrison was the amount of time spent by the working population away from their workplaces once the air raid alarm had been sounded. Although this thesis intentionally omits consideration of the Warning System, it is significant to mention that the Home Office now sponsored a Roof Spotter system which trained and deployed Spotters who could warn their colleagues of the approach of enemy aircraft and it was consequently found that about 90% of 'alert times' could be spent out of the shelters - and thus productive work continued.

Occasionally very severe raids overwhelmed the London ARP Services. The big incendiary raid on London on the night of 29/30 December 1940 was later reported by London Region to:

have caused 5 conflagrations [major fires spreading], 28 major fires [over 30 pumps each], 51 serious fires [11-30 pumps], 101 medium fires [up to 10 pumps] and 1286 small fires. In March 1940 it had been recognised that no amount of fire fighting personnel could guarantee the avoidance of a conflagration in ... the City, Islington, Finsbury, Stepney, Poplar and West Ham as these areas contained the essential ingredients for a conflagration of high buildings stocked with inflammable goods, narrow streets and no adjacent open spaces to form a fire stop...... The 'complete burn outs' in the City resulted from damage to the water supply, the inadequacy of the water-relaying service partly due to it being low tide, the inadequacy in the number of fire boats and the shortage of experienced officers to take charge of individual fires. Though the whole of the front line major pumps in the outer London districts were ordered into the LCC area, the number of officers to direct their use was inadequate. 

The lessons of this raid were that reinforcement required leadership, standardised drills and equipment. After much consideration in the Home Office, the result was the formation of the National Fire Service (NFS) in August 1941. This represented some disappointment for

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75 HO186/952 LRIBR No 4 dated 12 February 1941
Herbert Morrison whose pride and joy, as the former Leader of the LCC, was the very efficient London Fire Service which, like the other 1599 individual brigades, was merged into the NFS. Additionally, the requirement for an efficient Fire Watcher Service, first recognised in September 1940, was given increased priority to provide a more effective level of Fire Watcher cover as 'first aid' fire fighting. Another lesson learned was the need to provide sufficient water for the fire fighters to use. Additional mains were installed, mobile pumps stationed on the Thames bridges to feed mains and also the LCC Architect's Department supervised the installation of storage basins in bombed site basements and at ground level. These basins held millions of gallons of 'static water' for fire brigade use and quickly became a feature of the London landscape.

Meanwhile, in October 1940, attention turned to the two-day Civil Defence debate in Parliament during which Malcolm MacDonald, the Minister of Health, in what he described as a 'very long speech on a difficult problem,' admitted the shortcomings of his Department. He detailed the problems of billeting and rehousing homeless people who were 'reluctant to move to leave their own boroughs and move to other distant boroughs where there were requisitioned houses' and he stressed the improvements made in the housing, feeding and billeting/rehousing situation over the last two months:

I have never denied [that] a great deal of the criticism which was offered was entirely justified ... the organisation in London proved to have many faults which were shown as soon as the heavy bombing began. ... I accept full responsibility for the mistakes which were made ... In the first place I did leave it too much to the local authorities, and I think our circulars issued to the local authorities did suggest a provision too low in centres where people had to spend considerably more than the 48 hours or three days originally anticipated. ... In London there are particularly difficult problems, owing to the large number of local authorities and the complicated distribution of responsibilities between them. ... Although improvements had begun before [Willink] was appointed to his important task, the rate of improvement has accelerated since. 76

76 HofC Debs. Vol.365 Cols. 401-409 9 October 1940
The rest of the first day of the Debate was taken with calls from London MPs highlighting Government shortcomings on the provision of shelters, for adequate rest and feeding facilities and for the creation of a single ‘Ministry of Civil Defence.’ A constructive contribution was made by the Member for Bromley and Bow, Charles Key MP, who said that he was one whose:

work in local government would not make me likely to be regarded as one who plums up central government...[but] in the early days of ARP, I, with many others in London, took part in deputation after deputation to the Home Office on the type of shelter to be provided... we then strongly advocated deep underground shelters ... as soon as [dispersed small shelter] policy was adopted, it became the duty of the local authorities to work out schemes which the policy involved. In a vast number of cases the local authorities in London did not face up to the responsibilities which had been placed upon them and deal adequately and properly with their own shelter problem. ... In my locality [Poplar], although we fought against the policy, we set to work, when it was adopted, to deal with the problem. ... we provided shelters in their own back gardens for 95% of the inhabitants and surface shelter for 20,000 ... although we have been one of the most heavily bombed areas of London, we have not had one death per bomb during the whole of the last month. This means that the policy of dispersal, however inconvenient it may have been to the people, has not led to a great loss of life. It has led to a preservation of life. 77

Key reported that the public shelters in Poplar had not been occupied by even 50% of the people who preferred to remain in their Anderson shelters and he explained that the reason that some people did go to public shelters was not to seek greater safety but because ‘our people like to get together and talk when there is anything going on as it helps them forget what is happening and underground shelter reduces the noise which people found trying. He added that Poplar had issued 140,000 sets of ear plugs to the populace. Key turned to:

the rest centres ... the part of the organisation of which we should be least proud. In the early stages the organisation failed completely. Again, I cannot exonerate the local authority, which was responsible. It happened not to be my local authority in this case. The Ministry of Health made it impossible for the LCC to make the necessary provision ... setting a limit of £20 per centre for the work of adapting a school as a rest centre. 78

77 HofC Debs. Vol 365 Cols. 440-443 9 October 1940
78 Ibid. Col. 445
Aware of the importance of the shelter question, Morrison appointed his good friend Miss ('Red Ellen') Wilkinson MP, 79 as Parliamentary Under Secretary with special responsibility for shelters. Morrison himself made a combative BBC Home Service broadcast on 3 November when he tackled head-on the campaign for deep shelters and, in fact, announced a change of Government policy under which a limited amount of deep shelter would be provided in the London Region by tunnelling under the tube system at selected stations (see below). Not only was Morrison new en poste, but his predecessor Sir John Anderson was a full member of the War Cabinet with responsibility for co-ordinating Home Affairs. Faced with the broadcast only a month after his appointment, Morrison sought Cabinet approval for his BBC script. The Cabinet toned it down and, at Anderson’s request, ensured that Morrison’s talk be ‘not represented as a reversal of existing policy.’ Anderson had told the Cabinet that Morrison’s new tube tunnels:

... did not represent any fundamental departure from existing [shelter] policy. ... to extend the tube shelters linked to the Tube system, would require very careful handling. There was a risk, if this proposal was taken up by the public in the wrong way, it might be used to discredit the whole of shelter policy.

Cabinet Conclusion The question was one of emphasis in presentation ... the statement should not be represented as a reversal of existing policy. 80

Morrison’s amended script (printed in The Listener, entitled ‘We Have Won the First Round’) concentrated on his aim of providing ‘More and Better Shelter.’ He announced that he would continue surveying basement shelters, provide for the extension of surface communal shelters, provide more steel for the building the larger Anderson shelters and for extending the smaller to 6 feet for the taking of bunks. He then turned to the question of deep shelters on which:

I have consulted the best expert opinion, including some fresh minds and I have come to three conclusions: a. Anything like a universal policy of deep shelter, for the whole people

79 Miss Wilkinson was another of Ritchie Calder’s friends. In October 1936 she had led the Jarrow Crusade to London and he was the only journalist to have completed the whole march. [New Statesman 7 November 1986]

80 Cabinet Conclusions 280 (40) 30 October 1940
or the greater part of it, is beyond the grounds of practical possibility. b. No appropriate amount of deep shelter, even in the most favourable event, can be ready until this winter is over. c. In some places and in some circumstances, the construction of deep shelter is practical and will be undertaken. The deep shelter provided in London by the tubes will be extended by tunnelling. Other matters ... Nearly 1,750,000 bunks have been ordered and installation has begun. Remember however that public shelters are not everything - far from it. Even in London the larger public shelters are used by less than one in six of the population as 85% sleep in their houses and flats with local protection, in their Anderson shelters or in communal public shelters. 81

Morrison then warned:

Be on your guard against all who seek to make this deep shelter cry a means of defeatist agitation. Political schemers sailing under all sorts of official-sounding names who seek to destroy our will to take risks in freedom’s cause are playing Hitler’s game ... Hitler is no doubt delighted with their manoeuvres. He knows that if our people could be stampeded into putting a narrow personal safety before success, he would win. That then is my interim report - a plain tale of how matters stand at the end of (my) four weeks in office. 81

His leading ‘political schemer’ was Professor Haldane and his ARP Co-ordinating Committee, who had written to Sir John Anderson on 3 October. He requested an answer to the points on deep shelters made during the deputation by his ARP Co-ordinating Committee. Now addressing Morrison, Haldane first reminded him of his (Morrison’s) views on deep shelter, before he gained Government office, which was that ‘100% bomb proof deep shelter was eminently desirable in the interests of policy.’ 82 Haldane now claimed that in his recent broadcast Morrison had:

Made it clear that Government policy was based on dispersal theory [which was] completely fallacious and cannot be supported on scientific grounds [and was] surely rejected by your proposal to extend the tube shelters .. 83

81 The Listener dated 7 November 1940
82 Haldane quoting Morrison HofC Debs. Vol.344 Col 1334 , 1 March 1939
83 ‘What the Haldane Committee Stands For’ in A.R.P, News December 1940

174
"We're going on to the next station; it's a better programme."

"What did I tell you? Give them an inch and they take a mile."

**Punch Cartoons of 13 and 20 November 1940**
Haldane called for 'fully bomb-proofed protection for the civil population, better conditions in public shelters to prevent the spread of disastrous epidemics' and, his overtly political point, 're-framing the machinery of ARP to reconstitute the office of Regional Commissioners so that local authorities have [for Haldane] adequate representation'. 83

Meanwhile shelter conditions in London improved to the extent that the Ministry of Health reported the:

harmful effect of too much publicity on the improvements and amenities now being provided in Shelters in London. There was no doubt that this new publicity was encouraging considerable numbers of people to return from the reception areas where facilities for entertainment were limited. 84

This public perception of improved shelter conditions was reflected by Punch (previous page) and Morrison's Executive Sub-Committee agreed that:

... it was undesirable to give excessive publicity regarding Christmas festivities and general amenities provided in shelters. The Press should mention improvements in sanitation and medical precautions but not create the impression that public shelters were to be regarded as night clubs. The general impression should be that shelters were clean but not gay. 85

The destruction of and damage to houses in London, the basic cause of homelessness during the Blitz, are detailed in Table 7. 86 The Numbers of Homeless in Rest and Feeding Centres, given in Table 6, show that, although the homeless never again reached the totals seen in mid-September, they fluctuated and peaked after each major raid. Ideally the homeless would remain in the Rest Centres for a maximum of 48 or 72 hours but they had to have billets or new houses to go to, so a major effort was made by Special Commissioner Willink and his officers to ensure that local authorities fully used the powers given to them by Government to requisition empty houses and repair damaged ones. The Cabinet CD Committee maintained a

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83 CAB 75/3 Exec S-C 32nd Meeting 5 December 1940
84 Ibid. 36th Meeting 19 December 1940
85 See p.156
close watch on the homeless statistics with the figures being provided to their weekly meetings - Willink, a future Minister of Health, often attended their meetings. He was reluctant to take over the direction of rehousing as he saw his task as co-ordinating and encouraging the work of the local authorities. The Cabinet Committee had a regular agenda item 'Assistance for Homeless' at which the Minister of Health reported:

In the Food and Rest Centres in the London Region numbers fell to 10,500 but have now risen to 13,600. In those boroughs where billeting arrangements have been good, accommodation is rapidly becoming exhausted. In other boroughs arrangements are in need of improvement and further billeting inspectors are being added to the staff of Mr Willink [who] found it impractical to transfer borough billeting officers to the staff of the London Region.

Willink's problems tended to change with the phases of the attack and with the mood of the people who were initially in favour of being evacuated to safer areas then opted not to move to the West End boroughs (which had plenty of empty houses), but soon were themselves subject to bombing. Nevertheless, the care of the homeless under Willink's leadership had been vastly improved and would never again reach the scale seen at the opening of the Blitz.

Similarly, the repair of roads and public utilities and debris clearance had also progressed under the leadership of Special Commissioner Sir Warren Fisher. He had acted quickly but, at the Cabinet CD Committee, he found that he could not immediately employ troops as Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, preferred to use civilian workers. Thus by early October:

Arrangements [are being made] with unions concerned for 2,000 Sappers to work on difficult cases and the PLA is lending 200 foremen. Fisher is proposing to use 5,000 soldiers clearing the East End [of debris] ... there is a considerable amount of suitable civilian labour unemployed in the East End and there would certainly be serious political trouble if effect was given to this proposal and the Government would be forced in the end to give way ... Fisher's immediate objectives are a. To restore gas, water and electricity using Royal Engineers to augment and assist other highly trained civil personnel. b. To break the back of urgent repairs to roads and house demolition by using soldiers pening the civil labour squads being organised and got ready for work.

87 Cabinet CD Ctte 38th Meeting 16 October 1940
88 Cabinet CD Ctte 36th Meeting 2 October 1940
The first batch of some 8,700 Pioneer Corps personnel started work with Fisher's organisation on 14 October, joining a 10,000 strong civilian labour force to clear debris and repair damage to roads and public utility mains. This force recovered some 700,000 bricks each week which were distributed to local authorities for ARP use, mainly for adding extra safety layers and blast walls to shelters.

Special Commissioners Warren Fisher and H.U. Willink had dealt with the administrative problems of public utility repairs and re-housing, both having brought in additional resources and co-ordinating action across the London Region. However, the shortcomings of Stepney and West Ham Councils exposed in the initial days of the Blitz, caused the performance of these two authorities to be closely monitored by London Region and the Ministry of Home Security. The Controller in Stepney had been replaced on Ministry orders by the Town Clerk, but he did not prove satisfactory and a further change was being considered by the Ministry.

In West Ham, where the post of ARP Controller was held by the Mayor, yet another change of Controller was threatened following the annual Mayoral elections. The new Mayor had no ARP experience and, backed by his Minister, Gowers insisted that the Town Clerk be appointed Controller. The Council objected and the affairs of both West Ham and Stepney came before Morrison at his Executive Sub-Committee (S-C) meeting on 28 November.

**Control in Stepney** A preliminary discussion took place on the defects of the present administrative machinery for Civil Defence in the Borough of Stepney ... the Regional Commissioner proposed to hold a conference on the subject ... that afternoon and hoped to submit recommendations to the S-C on the following morning. [Gowers] would welcome any suggestions Ministers might make regarding a suitable person for appointment as Special Commissioner to take charge of the CD organisation in Stepney.

**Control in West Ham** The position in regard to CD in West Ham, long regarded ... as unsatisfactory. The Council had recently made new appointments to the post of Controller and Deputy Controller which did not accord with the view expressed to the Council by the Commissioner. The Mayor, who had been appointed by the Council, was unsuitable for the post. The Regional Commissioner proposed, if the Sub-Committee agreed, that a direction should be issued that day requiring the Council to appoint the present Town Clerk who was regarded as a suitable candidate by those best qualified to judge.89

89 CAB 75/3 Cabinet CD Committee Executive S-C 29th Meeting 28 November 1940
Next day the matters were again discussed:

Control of CD Measures in Stepney and West Ham The S-C were informed that the Regional Commissioner ... had agreed to meet the West Ham Borough Council before issuing the direction to them calling upon them to appoint the Town Clerk as Controller of ARP.

As regards Stepney, the conference with the Regional Commissioner on the previous day amply confirmed the need for finding a substitute for the present ARP Controller ... it would lead to a good deal of opposition on the part of the Town Clerk and the local authority in Stepney. It was probable that the Town Clerk would begin legal proceedings to test the validity of the directions issued.  

A new ARP Controller in Stepney was imposed by the Ministries of Home Security and of Health in December when the Town Clerk of Islington, W Eric Adams, was appointed. This matter and the continuing problems of leadership and ARP Controller are examined in detail in Chapter 6 as they both presented unprecedented and thorny problems for Government who needed to act to preserve local government democracy while ensuring that effective administration was provided while the Blitz continued.

Changes were also made at the senior level of the London Region where the then Senior Commissioner, Captain Euan Wallace MP, resigned at the end of December 1940. He had been suffering from cancer for many months but Regional staff clearly felt that 'Wallace was sacked'. He died five weeks later, having taken a progressively less active role in attending the Morrison’s various committees. On 1 January 1941, Sir Ernest Gowers was promoted to be the Senior Regional Commissioner for London bringing positive leadership as well as pioneering the collection and use of statistics and of the reporting used extensively in this thesis. Admiral Evans moved over to take responsibility for Civil Defence Personnel in the Region and handed over his responsibility for Shelters in London to the highly respected new

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90 CAB 75/3 Cabinet CD Exec S-C 30th Meeting 29 November 1940
91 Wallace was the Unionist MP for Hornsey, Financial Secretary to the Treasury 1938-39 and Minister of Transport 1939-40.
92 Interview with Mr K.A.L. Parker 19 January 1988
Special Commissioner, Alderman Charles Key MP. Key retained his place on the Poplar ARP Committee throughout the war although pressure of work caused him to relinquish his Chairmanship of the MBSJC. A former East End Headmaster, Charles Key was popular with the people of the East End and with the press - Ritchie Calder ran several articles and reports on the advances in shelter provision which Key achieved, although much early work had been completed by Admiral Evans and his staff before December 1940.

In this second phase of the Blitz, London had been raided on almost every night for three months but it again had survived, not least because the improved and better co-ordinated ARP organisation and because its Services generally continued to perform well. However, the ARP Services were occasionally over-stretched. On 29 December they had been overwhelmed and major organisational changes, including the formation of a National Fire Service (NFS), were necessary.

Phase Three: The End Of The Big Blitz - January to May 1941
Following that massive incendiary raid of 29/30 December, the frequency of Luftwaffe raids on London fell but occasional intense raiding involved further incendiary attacks and the use of heavier HE bombs. Raids continued for the first five months of 1941 but the raid of 10/11 May proved to be the end of the 'Big Blitz.' There were some daytime raids but the main weight of the attack was again by night. The heavy raids on 3 nights of January 1941 were followed by a gap of two months in which there were no major raids on London but the massive raid of 8/9 March was 'nearly as bad as that of 15 October.' Another month's gap occurred before 19/20 March when 'Only on 15 October has London experienced so heavy a scale of attack by night.' 93 Another pause in the onslaught was noted as 'by early April only

93 HO186/952 LRIBR No 7 dated 26 March 1941 p.2
one night raid was experienced in the fortnight ending 9 April... The raid of 16/17 April (remembered as 'the Wednesday') was:

The heaviest raid of the war ... the most severe weight of the attack fell on West Ham (150 killed), Poplar (where a shelter received a direct hit killing 44) and Stepney where three public shelters were hit... and this was followed three nights later by another heavy raid. 

[remembered as 'The Saturday']

Three weeks later, the attack of 10/11 May proved to be the last big raid of Blitz but the physical damage to London (including the House of Commons) was considerable.

Heavier But Less frequent Raids

The above brief summary of the incidents of the Big Blitz concentrated on the heavier raids but other aspects, such as the use of heavier bombs and the increased fire threat, merit attention as they affected the ARP/CD organisation and administration of the metropolis. The heaviest raid of early January 1941 was that on 11/12 when:

HEs (High Explosive bombs) and IBs (Incendiary Bombs) were dropped in large numbers

... The worst incident was at the Bank where a single large bomb, or two 500 lb bombs falling together, caused the booking hall and circular gallery to cave in. 

The way in which the authorities dealt with the Bank incident, and the success with which the incendiary bombs were dealt with, demonstrated the value of 'fire watching' and the use of the military specialists. The 'Bank Tube Disaster' killed 111 people but the military was immediately brought in to keep the traffic flowing:

the bomb, which penetrated the road surface exploded immediately beneath the surface, disrupting the road upwards and causing it to collapse into the (200 ft diameter) gallery. By Sunday 12 January, 40 Sappers, 260 Pioneers, 5 cranes, 19 compressors ... were at work. The crater to be spanned measured 156' 6" ... A large box girder bridge weighing 57 tons was delivered in 29 railway trucks. The spanning was completed in 4½ days. For the reconstruction of the crater 2,713 tons of concrete was cleared in 13 working days. 225 tons of steel [and] 131 tons of cast iron were cleared in the same period.

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94 HO186/952 LRIBR No 9 dated 23 April 1941 pp. 1-4
95 HO186/952 LRIBR No 2 dated 15 January 1941 p.1
96 HO186/952 LRIBR No 8 dated 9 April 1941 p.6
The Bank disaster was not the first incident in which bombs had killed people in shelters or, more importantly, in underground (deep) stations. On 16 January the Executive Sub-Committee discussed 'the extravagant claims of Professor Haldane' on cement production for shelters and the desirability of an official report to counteract those claims although:

... the agitation for deep shelters was now thought to be less active as a result of recent incidents e.g. the bomb explosion at Bank Station. It was suggested that discrete publicity might be given to some of these incidents. [Morrison] said he would be broadcasting shortly on the shelter problem and would consider this suggestion ...

The next major raid on London followed two months later - on the night of 8/9 March, not surprisingly officially described as 'the worst since early January.' The majority of damage was in the centre of London and the bomb which hit the crowded Café de Paris (advertised as 'safe', being 20 ft below ground) in Leicester Square killing 34 of the 212 who died that night in London. A much heavier raid, by at least 350 aircraft, was experienced eleven nights later, on 19/20 March when the official report admitted:

Only once, on 15/16 October, when some 400 aircraft came into action, has London experienced so heavy a scale of attack by night, and the fatal casualties were this time much heavier, for 751 persons were killed. ... For the first time a heavy incendiary attack on London was made simultaneously with a very heavy attack with high explosives; but the volunteer fire parties were in no way daunted and eased the work of the regular Brigade by preventing many fires.

Again a month of respite was enjoyed, other than by those who suffered the occasional minor raids, before Londoners experienced, on 16 April, 'the Wednesday' being:

the heaviest raid of the war. 450 or more aircraft were in action ...more bombs and more parachute mines were dropped, more fires were started, more civilian damage done and more casualties caused than in any previous raid. The attack continued without any appreciable pause from 2100 hours to 0430 hours. 1,428 HE bombs were dropped and 108 parachute mines. The bombing was widespread and indiscriminate, involving 66 boroughs, but the greatest weight was felt in a quadrilateral, whose corners were Willesden and Hackney on the north bank, and at Barnes and Lewisham on the south. ... there were nearly 400 more fires than on any previous occasion - 1,542 in the LCC and 700 in Outer London...

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97 There is no reference to this broadcast in The Listener.
98 CAB 75/3 Cabinet CD Ctte Exec S-C 5th Meeting 16 January 1941
99 HO186/952 LRIBR No 6 dated 12 March 1941 p.1
100 HO186/952 LRIBR No 7 dated 26 March 1941
... Fire watchers put out many thousands of incendiaries and thus kept down the number of small fires ... A large increase in the personnel is necessary to cope with raiding on this scale ... If a greater number had been available damage would have been reduced and a considerable number of fires which were inevitably left unattended ... while the necessary fire engines travelled from distant stations ... 101

In that raid some 1674 people were killed and, three nights later on 19 April, the next major raid ("The Saturday") killed another 769 Londoners 101:

The first phase of the raid had not been concentrated in any particular area but the second started with fire-raising in the Docks and was heaviest in the East End. 57 boroughs were affected, 460 fires were started, and 919 bombs and 119 parachute mines were dropped. The incendiary attack differed from that of April 16/17 in that it was more concentrated [over Barking, East Ham, West Ham and Stepney] and in having a greater proportion of HE with the IBs ... There were 1,460 fires 101

What proved to be the final raid of the Big Blitz was that on 10/11 May when 1,418 people were killed in the London Region. And the amount of blast and fire damage to buildings of historic interest caused the Commissioners to establish a committee under the Deputy Architect of the LCC (J.H. Forshaw) to ensure that further damage to historic buildings was minimised and they were not demolished without due consideration. 102 The emergence of this new incendiary threat and the Regional Commissioner's remarks on 'fire watchers' warrants further consideration103 as they became a large component of the civil defence 'army,' as the 'Fire Guard.'

Meanwhile, in 1941, there were several indications that the Luftwaffe was using larger weapons. In a raid on Hendon by a single aircraft on the night of 13/14 February, a total of 196 houses were demolished and, on the next night a bomb dropped 700-800 feet from houses caused considerable damage. 104 An analysis of the weight of bombs dropped on London in the raid of 10/11 May concluded that the bomb weights were those shown in Table 8.

101 These numbers are the revised fatalities recorded, after further analysis, of the raids in LRIBR No 10 dated 7 May 1941.
102 HO186/952 LRIBR No 9 dated 23 April 1941
104 HO186/952 LRIBR No 5 dated 26 February 1941 p.1

183
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bomb Weights</th>
<th>1800 Kg</th>
<th>1000 Kg</th>
<th>500 Kg</th>
<th>250 Kg</th>
<th>50 Kg</th>
<th>Unclassified.</th>
<th>Total bombs</th>
<th>Mines</th>
<th>Oil bombs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number dropped</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>2031</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: LRIBR No 15 dated 16 July 1941

Table 8 - Weights of Bombs Dropped 10/11 May 1940

The London Region Intelligence Branch reported:

Regarding the raids of 16/17 and 19/20 April it should be noted that in the Administrative County [the LCC area] there has been a rise in the number killed and the total casualties per bomb since September-October 1940 due, probably, to the use of bigger and better bombs by the attackers and to the fact that less use is made of shelters... and government concern returned to the question of shelter provision and administration.

The Shelter Situation

Mr Churchill himself took an interest in shelter administration and, in December 1940, the Executive Sub-Committee was told that the Prime Minister ‘thought the responsibility for shelter administration should be with one department’. The Sub-Committee prepared a defensive memo which stated that the problem of shelter administration and policy was:

a. With 29 local authorities within and 66 outside the LCC area, the standard of performance and the ability of those authorities varies a good deal.

b. The trouble was limited to a very few of those authorities.

c. Delays in improvements have been due to the shortage of materials although twice as many bunks have delivered to London local authorities as they have been able to erect. Extra seating has been authorised at the expense of the Exchequer but local authorities have not been able to get these made.

d. The Regional Commissioner should be the channel of communication. The Ministry of Health continues to function as at present inspecting shelters and stimulating local officials.

105 CAB 75/3 Cabinet CD Ctte Exec S-C, 37th Meeting, 23 December 1940
The compromise reached between the Ministries re-allocated shelter responsibilities:

The Ministry of Home Security (MHS) will remain responsible for the number, allocation and construction of shelters including the requisitioning of premises; the Ministry of Health (MoH) will assume all responsibility for all other matters relating to shelters. The MHS is to be responsible for safety; the MoH for provision and distribution of food. As the MoH has delegated its powers to the Regional Commissioners, they will be administratively responsible for carrying out the policy both with regard to the construction and the management of shelters. 106

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date (1941)</th>
<th>Public Shelter Provided by Night</th>
<th>Public Shelter Provided by Day</th>
<th>Numbers Sheltering in Tube System</th>
<th>Date of Tube Census</th>
<th>Number of Bunks Provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 January</td>
<td>1,317,500</td>
<td>1,295,000</td>
<td>74,700</td>
<td>15 January 1941</td>
<td>395,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 February</td>
<td>1,308,500</td>
<td>1,293,000</td>
<td>53,000</td>
<td>15 February</td>
<td>504,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 February</td>
<td>1,307,250</td>
<td>1,280,750</td>
<td>54,150</td>
<td>27 February</td>
<td>527,926 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 March</td>
<td>1,238,300</td>
<td>1,247,550</td>
<td>53,250</td>
<td>27 March</td>
<td>589,164</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes 22,000 bunks in 73 Tube stations
Source: Compiled from Fortnightly Reports in HO186/952

Table 9 - Shelter Provision in London Region

The main innovation in shelter administration was the appointment, on 1 January 1941, of Alderman Charles Key as Special Commissioner for Shelters in London. He quickly set about ensuring more and more comfortable shelter places were provided. As a good Labour Party man and a former member of the Party ARP Committee with Ritchie Calder, Key got a good press from Calder. The actual figures for the growth of shelter provision are shown in Table 9 and Calder's supportive *Daily Herald* article on 8 February, headlined LONDON SHELTER CHIEF GETS THINGS DONE reported:

Alderman Charles Key [is] only a month in post. I saw him yesterday ... on January 1/2 only 4% of the people of the London Region (270,300) were in public shelters thus only one fifth of the accommodation was being used. In domestic shelters only 14% of the people were using them. Throughout the London region there are public shelters for 1,377,500 (19%) of the population There are domestic shelters for 4,461,000 (61%) of the population therefore 80% of the population had been provided with shelter accommodation and in the Inner Ring (the 28 Metropolitan Boroughs) shelter was provided for 92%. In the Tubes bunking had been provided ...

106 London Regional Circular 285 quoted in LRIBR No 2 dated 15 January 1941
Punch Cartoons showing Morrison tackling the Shelter Situation (16 October 1940) and the Fire Prevention Problem 31 January 1941
in 46 stations, was proceeding in 14 and the material had been delivered for the remaining 17 stations. 107

On 13 March Ritchie Calder gave more information on Key’s successes, or rather of the shelter administration led by Key. The article also welcomed the appointment of an Assistant Commissioner who was a senior welfare advisor in the East End, a member of Lord Horder’s Committee on Health in Shelters and the husband of the ARP Officer of Stoke Newington:

Mrs Cresswick Atkinson (has been appointed) Assistant Commissioner for Shelters responsible to Charlie Key. Morrison (i.e. indoor) shelters are now being delivered at rate of 7,500 a week and 23,300 Andersons have been delivered since January and Key is conducting a personal Blitz on laggardly local authorities ... there were 203,000 people in shelters compared with 270,000 on 6 January. That is 3% of the Regional population and 5% in Inner London in public shelters in the February census ... There is no guide as to what might happen if heavy raids return. 108

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>London Region Group</th>
<th>Shelterers as % of Shelter Capacity</th>
<th>Shelterers as % of Local Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andersons Others All Domestic Public and Domestic</td>
<td>Public Domestic Public and Domestic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gp1 - Westminster/ Fulham/Hammersmith etc</td>
<td>8% 5% 6% 8%</td>
<td>3% 5% 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gp2 - Paddington/St Pancras/Islington/St Marylebone etc</td>
<td>14% 6% 9% 10%</td>
<td>3% 7% 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gp3 - Stepney/Poplar/Hackney/Finsbury etc</td>
<td>34% 12% 24% 25%</td>
<td>12% 22% 34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for London Region</td>
<td>22% 10% 19% 18%</td>
<td>3% 13% 16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Reports in HO186/952

Table 10 - Shelter Usage in London

The creditable rate of shelter and bunking provision is shown in Table 9 while the relatively low level of shelter usage is given in Table 10. This limited use of public shelters is shown in the numbers sheltering in Tube stations in April 1941 given in Table 11.

107 Daily Herald 8 February 1941
108 Daily Herald 13 March 1941
Fire Prevention Measures

The threat posed by incendiary bombs, and the consequent requirement for a force of 'amateur' fire fighters to assist the AFS and the London Fire Brigade, was recognised well before the war. The basic equipment for supplementary fire fighters was the stirrup pump but, by the outbreak of war, only 9,500 stirrup pumps had been delivered and, by June 1940, local authorities had received 86,000. The Civil Defence Act (1939) made individuals and industrial concerns responsible for the protection of their property from fire but it was realised that an army of civilians would be needed to properly help the professional and auxiliary fire fighters. In September 1940 the Government brought in the Fire Watchers' Orders for the protection of business and commercial premises by requiring that 'at all times a person should be available to detect fire and to summon assistance'. These Orders proved quite ineffective as they applied only to businesses which employed 30 workers or warehouses bigger than 50,000 cu ft. 109

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of count</th>
<th>Shelterers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27 March 1941</td>
<td>53,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 April</td>
<td>46,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 April</td>
<td>58,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 April</td>
<td>73,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 April</td>
<td>68,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 April</td>
<td>81,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 April</td>
<td>74,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 April</td>
<td>78,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 April</td>
<td>76,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 April 1941</td>
<td>66,520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from LRIB Fortnightly Reports

Table 11 - Numbers Sheltering in the Tubes - April 1941

109 O'Brien Civil Defence p.592
When he addressed London MPs in February 1941, Sir Ernest Gowers summarised the fire
prevention problem and its solution to date, emphasising that:

There has been no failure in the Civil Defence Services. On the contrary, London was
pioneer in the formation of voluntary fire fighting squads for dealing with incendiary bombs
in the localities in which the members reside. Even before recent events emphasised the
importance of this, our voluntary fire fighting parties, supplementary to the Civil Defence
services proper, comprising nearly 200,000 people, and the numbers have since been nearly
doubled. To them must go much for the credit for the fact that, except for the City fire on
29 December, where the circumstances were exceptional, there have been comparatively
few really serious fires in London since mid-September. Where the failure has been is in
the neglect of owners and occupiers of shops, factories and warehouses to look after their
own property ... (the recent Orders) require the owners of all business premises to make
adequate arrangements for detecting and extinguishing incendiary bombs, they place an
obligation on employees on those premises to take a part in this duty ... they contain
provisions for further compulsory service if these measures should not prove enough. There
is ample evidence that they have been taken very seriously, indeed, the raids that have taken
place in January have made it clear that the lessons of 29 December have already been
learned. 10

The supplementary fire parties came under the direction and control of the local Air Raid
Wardens but their powers to enter premises was severely restricted so, on 19 October 1940,
the powers of entry held by the AFS was extended to Wardens. But fire watching and fire-
fighting was unpopular and the number of volunteers was insufficient. Following the fire
bomb raid on 29 December and the obvious shortcomings of the fire watching resources of
London were obvious to the authorities. Two days later the Cabinet Civil Defence Committee
agreed that compulsion might be necessary. Morrison broadcast an appeal for volunteer street
fire fighting parties and, on 15 January 1941, took new powers requiring men aged between
16 and 60 to train for, then perform, fire watching duties of 48 hours per month.

The main lesson learned from the raid of 29 December was that of the need for a National
Fire Service in place of the 1600 local authority brigades - but this topic is intentionally
excluded from this thesis. The prevalence of the incendiary attack, recently combined with
HE bombs, in the April raids was a danger which had been amply demonstrated in the fire
raid of 29 December. The fire problem was exacerbated by the vulnerability to even small (1 Kg) incendiary bombs of inner city commercial and business buildings which were not patrolled by 'Fire Guards' who could 'spot' and extinguish IBs before a fire took hold. Not least among the problems of providing Fire Guards for commercial and business premises was the lack of people willing to volunteer for such duties among the dramatically lower population which remained in the metropolis once the Blitz had started. Many men and women had been recruited to the armed forces and for industry while many people voluntarily evacuated themselves and their families away from London. Of the some 75% of the pre-war civilian population remaining in London, many were already volunteer members of the ARP/CD Services so there were few potential volunteer Fire Guards. Also many preferred to remain at, or close to, their homes rather than serve night-time duties at some distant commercial or industrial premises. Many people voluntarily evacuated themselves and their families away from London and, not unreasonably, there was a distinct lack of people willing to volunteer for fire prevention duties among the much reduced population. The more vulnerable inner city areas also showed the greatest drop in population and the figures for the Metropolitan Boroughs discussed in this thesis are given in Table 12.

In August 1942, a more direct criticism of the Fire Guard organisation was published by the Area Commander of the City of London Fire Guard who explained the weaknesses of the earlier Orders and Circulars which:

... acted as a brake on the enthusiasms of local authorities in carrying out these orders [as]
1) Adequate steps were not taken to ensure that every registerable man was in fact registered 2) There were too many grounds for exemption which seriously weakened it from the start and 3) The claims for exemption were not dealt with in reasonable time. The Fire Guard was born months, possibly years, after it should have been. It was brought into existence in January 1941 possibly because of the fire raid on London on 29 December 1940 and showed that obligations placed on occupiers of premises to have fire watchers on premises was, in many cases, honoured in the breach rather than the observance. It was

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110 See Annex A.
possibly also that the damage done that night disclosed that the fire bomb menace then had been unanticipated.  

Table 12 - Population Changes in London 1939 - 1941

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough Population [in thousands]</th>
<th>Mid 1939</th>
<th>Sep 1940</th>
<th>Dec 1940</th>
<th>31 Mar 41</th>
<th>31 Dec 41</th>
<th>% C of A</th>
<th>% E of C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulham</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammersmith</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>101%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Pancras</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddington</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampstead</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Marylebone</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islington</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poplar</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepney</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackney</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finsbury</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambeth</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Admin. County                    | n/a      | 3,079    | 2,511    | 2,355     | 2,315     | 82%      | 98%      |
| Outer London                     | n/a      | 4,352    | 3,982    | 3,923     | 4,059     | 91%      | 102%     |
| Greater London                   | n/a      | 7,431    | 6,493    | 6,278     | 6,374     | 87%      | 98%      |

Source: LRB Report No 31 dated 31 March 1942

Columns F and G (in italics) have been calculated from statistics quoted

Homelessness

Such was Willink's success that by 1941 not only were those rendered homeless likely to spend much less time in Rest Centres before being billeted or, ideally, re-housed but conditions in the Centres were much improved, made safer and better equipped with bedding and feeding facilities. The latter enabled two hot meals a day to be served and hot drinks were available when required. Information officers were appointed to co-ordinate the information required by the homeless who no longer had to tour separate Council offices across the Borough to register their plight and apply for assistance and rehousing. At larger bomb incidents an information office supported by WVS (originally the Women's Voluntary

\[111\] 'Manpower and the Fireguard' by J.F. McCartney, Area Commander, City Fire Guard in Journal of the Air Raid Protection Institute Vol 4 No 6 August 1942
Service for Civil Defence) staff would attend to provide 'on the spot' help and advice including information as to the whereabouts of the nearest Rest and Feeding Centre. Once in the Rest Centre the homeless now had the support of a co-ordinated range of post-raid services as well as the services of 'Happy Harry's Harriets' 112 who provided professional social support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Accommodation required for 5 per 1000 of the population</th>
<th>Accommodation required for 2 per 1000 of the population</th>
<th>Billets available using compulsory powers</th>
<th>Possible number who could be re-housed using requisitions</th>
<th>Billets immediately available</th>
<th>Number Billeted to date</th>
<th>Number Re-housed to date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>County of London</td>
<td>14,795</td>
<td>5,930</td>
<td>46,931</td>
<td>20,637</td>
<td>9,435</td>
<td>124,836</td>
<td>34,961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of Region</td>
<td>21,405</td>
<td>8,560</td>
<td>307,633</td>
<td>15,261</td>
<td>7,650</td>
<td>153,787</td>
<td>24,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total London Region</td>
<td>36,200</td>
<td>14,400</td>
<td>354,564</td>
<td>35,898</td>
<td>17,085</td>
<td>278,623</td>
<td>58,985</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: LRIBR No 5 dated 26 February 1941

Table 13 – London Accommodation Situation at 24 February 1941

The third phase of the Blitz thus saw fewer, but more intense, raids which again stretched the CD/ARP services to their limits, but they continued to perform effectively.

The Big Blitz - Interim Conclusions

It is now appropriate to attempt some interim conclusions on the Blitz and London’s response. When the feared Blitz opened in September 1940, the civilian population experienced the worst the Luftwaffe could deliver and the shock experienced by civilians and the Civil Defence organisation was considerable. The trained and equipped ARP Services performed with credit and the organisation generally, using Gowers’ phrases, ‘proved to be on sound

112 See p.158.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Borough</th>
<th>Area (acres)</th>
<th>Number of houses 1939</th>
<th>Total Wt. of bombs (Kg) Nov 1940 - July 1941</th>
<th>Total serious casualties Sept 40 - Sept 41</th>
<th>Wt. Of bombs (Kg) per acre</th>
<th>Casualties per 1000 of population</th>
<th>Wt. Of bombs (Kg) per 1000 population</th>
<th>Houses demolished &amp; beyond repair per 1000 population</th>
<th>Houses demolished &amp; seriously damaged per 1000 pre-war houses</th>
<th>Borough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Croydon (CB)</td>
<td>12672</td>
<td>65,550</td>
<td>123,378</td>
<td>1,151</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Croydon (CB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finsbury</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>10,500</td>
<td>19,636</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>Finsbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulham</td>
<td>1706</td>
<td>29,964</td>
<td>13,976</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Fulham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackney</td>
<td>3287</td>
<td>37,859</td>
<td>45,110</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>Hackney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammersmith</td>
<td>2287</td>
<td>23,959</td>
<td>13,325</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Hammersmith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampstead</td>
<td>2265</td>
<td>16,997</td>
<td>14,344</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Hampstead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islington</td>
<td>3092</td>
<td>46,926</td>
<td>32,910</td>
<td>1,729</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Islington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambeth</td>
<td>4083</td>
<td>48,873</td>
<td>145,983</td>
<td>2,722</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>Lambeth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddington</td>
<td>1357</td>
<td>21,592</td>
<td>16,856</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Paddington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poplar</td>
<td>2331</td>
<td>23,977</td>
<td>61,808</td>
<td>1,525</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>936</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>Poplar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Marylebone</td>
<td>1473</td>
<td>19,974</td>
<td>27,181</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>St Marylebone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Pancras</td>
<td>2694</td>
<td>25,670</td>
<td>40,878</td>
<td>1,488</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>St Pancras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepney</td>
<td>1766</td>
<td>37,206</td>
<td>72,216</td>
<td>1,298</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>768</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>Stepney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Ham (CB)</td>
<td>4689</td>
<td>.50,247</td>
<td>52,724</td>
<td>1,660</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>West Ham (CB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>2305</td>
<td>22,536</td>
<td>125,258</td>
<td>2,142</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1,764</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>Westminster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Constructed from London Region Intelligence Branch Report No 28 dated 28 January 1942

Table 14: Casualties and Damage in Selected London Boroughs - September 1940 – September 1941
lines' however 'unexpected difficulties' quickly became obvious. The destruction of many homes, particularly in the initial target area of the East End, meant that thousands were made homeless and the organisation set up by the Ministry of Health and the local authorities to deal with them was grossly inadequate. The intensity of the attack resulted the breakdown of local authority administration on certain areas. Many people were evacuated to other Boroughs or to rural areas and many more voluntarily evacuated themselves, but the bombing attacks continued nightly for some months. The destruction of homes and the disruption of public utilities continued and exceptional measures were taken by central government. Special Commissioners were appointed to co-ordinate resources and work on the homeless, on the repair of public utilities and on the provision of adequate dormitory shelters. Extra domestic and public shelters were provided, hygiene and feeding arrangements were improved and the shelters made safer and more comfortable. A major change at the top of the Civil Defence organisation was made in early October 1940, when Morrison replaced Anderson as Minister of Home Security and Home Secretary. Morrison gave new impetus to reforms in the organisation and in the administration of Civil Defence matters including the removal of one local authority leader and the imposition of a Ministry ARP Controller. Finally, in January 1941, Gowers was made Senior Regional Commissioner and he appointed Key to oversee shelter matters.

The Big Blitz damaged all boroughs across the Region and Table 14 shows the severity of the bombing in 15 selected boroughs. More significantly, by the end of December 1940, some 13,000 Londoners had died as a result of enemy action and many more were injured, however these casualty rates were far less than those predicted in pre-war assessments. The raids continued through to mid-May 1941 by which time the Luftwaffe, using 'bigger and better' bombs, concentrated their attacks into fewer but more severe raids. The German invasion of Russia in June 1941 resulted in the redirection of Luftwaffe bomber forces to their Eastern Front so attacks on the UK, and on London in particular, faded to the occasional incursion. London had thus survived the Blitz and Londoners had shown that 'they could take it'
however, there then followed a period of some 2½ years of comparative respite before the metropolis again came under sustained attack.

The next chapter examines more closely several of the key topics mentioned in this chapter. Greater attention will be paid to the Government’s handling of the local authorities in Stepney and West Ham, the shelter question, the care of the homeless and of fire prevention then central government shortcomings receive closer attention.
Chapter Six
Dealing With Unsatisfactory Local Authorities and Central Government Shortcomings 1940-41

Chapter 5 summarised the events of the eight month period of the 'Big Blitz' on London including the casualties, damage, the successes and the failures of the authorities and their often fully stretched ARP/CD and post-raid Services. The performance of local authorities 'under fire' varied and some had difficulties with central government. This chapter examines the uneven performance of two London Region local authorities and then examines the shortcomings of central government exposed by the Blitz.

Examples of the generally satisfactory performance of local authorities and their ARP Services, such as the activities and results achieved in Westminster, Islington, St Pancras and Poplar, tended to be routine and not newsworthy and it was not until late in 1941 that the Government considered publishing a booklet detailing and applauding the achievements of the Civil Defence Services. The failures of local government, particularly those in Stepney and West Ham, were not detailed in the Official Histories or the standard post-war works while coverage of the shortcomings of central government planning (particularly regarding homelessness, shelter provision and effective fire prevention) do not refer directly to the London situation. Consideration of these topics in this chapter will be traced beyond the end of the Big Blitz in June 1941 to allow the changes made to be properly assessed.

Local Government Failures in Stepney and West Ham

Mention has been made in previous chapters of the difficulties encountered by central government and the Regional Commissioners in dealing with the Metropolitan Borough of Stepney and the County Borough of West Ham. The citizens of these heavily bombed boroughs also suffered as a result of the poor leadership provided by their elected Councillors but, in general, their individual ARP Services performed well. Had the severity of the Blitz
suffered in West Ham and Stepney not reached the level it did, then it is quite possible that their local administrations would have coped successfully. However, it is significant that the Borough of Poplar, with its common boundaries with both Stepney and West Ham, and which suffered a similar amount of bombing, had a local leadership which proved exemplary. As a result of the local authority failings shown, central government had to take action but, as the war was seen as being a fight to save democracy, any 'interference' by central government risked being described as undemocratic. Even the official histories neglect to detail just what the shortcomings were in the Stepney and West Ham so an attempt to clarify the reasons for and method of, government interventions in both boroughs is made below.

**The Metropolitan Borough of Stepney**

The ethnic division of the people of Stepney into sizeable Jewish and Irish factions grew from the flow of immigrants into East London. Both factions were, by the 1920s, firm supporters of the Labour Party whose local Leader was 'the communal upstart', Councillor 'Morry' Davis. With initial local political objections to the taking of ARP in Stepney, and contrary to the specific advice from the Government, the Borough entered the war with the uncooperative Councillor Davis as its ARP Controller. A 1985 assessment of Davis included:

> By 1938 readers of the local press were becoming used to allegations of inefficiency and corruption in the affairs of Stepney council. At the end of 1936 these concerned the work of the Stepney Public Cleansing Committee and in 1938 there was a political storm at the Town Hall arising from charges of incompetence in relation to the provision of air raid shelters, for which Davis, as official 'Air Raid Precautions Controller' was responsible. Not only were the allegations well founded but they were accompanied by strong rumours of bribery. Davis had also become an embarrassment on the LCC.  

Once the Blitz was experienced, the publicity (led by Ritchie Calder in the *Daily Herald*)

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1. The West Ham, East Ham and Stratford Express 27 December 1940 wrote of 'COUNCILLORS AS DICTATORS. Councillor Collins [Leader of the minority Municipal Reform Party] intended to intimate to the Regional Commissioner that the party they received was not representative ... we should not be ignored ... it is a war for democracy but the [majority Labour] party [makes it] "Good Old Dictators."'

given to the grossly insanitary conditions in the larger official and unofficial public shelters in Stepney (particularly the notorious ‘Tilbury’ shelter) caused the Prime Minister to propose to the War Cabinet that Davis should be ‘superseded’ as Controller.³ The Ministry of Home Security planned to replace him with a Ministry officer, Captain A.R. Beaumont but Stepney Council objected and sent a deputation to the Ministry. Harold Scott, at Regional HQ, recorded:

... last night the Regional Commissioners summoned Mr Davies [sic] to meet them and, as a result of their discussion it has been decided to substitute the name of the Town Clerk for that of Mr Beaumont as Controller of Stepney and to attach Mr Beaumont to him permanently. This arrangement has been accepted by the [Stepney] Civil Defence Committee ... The Commissioners came to the conclusion that it would be better to have a local man as Controller if this can be done with consent. ⁴

The Ministry report of the same meeting recorded that:

Davies [sic] and [his] Civil Defence Committee undertook to accept this arrangement and give it every support. As you know we had the idea at one time of putting Mr James in as Controller and attaching Capt. Beaumont to him and this is the arrangement now pertaining ... the expenses in question are a liability of the Borough Council ... I hope the council will not be obstructive in payment of expenses. ⁵

The name of Arnold James was substituted for Beaumont’s on the draft of the Directive but Stepney Council Minutes reflect a slightly different order of events as Councillors heard that:

The Town Clerk reported the receipt of Directions from the Minister ... under Defence Regulations to transfer the functions of the Council under Civil Defence Acts to the Town Clerk as ARP Controller.... It was moved that a deputation of the Mayor, plus five Councillors and the Town Clerk be formed in order to interview the Home Secretary to ascertain the reasons for the Minister’s decisions.⁶

The Government initially had reservations about Mr James, the former Town Clerk of Finsbury, who had there overseen the infamous Deep Shelter contract,⁷ but Stepney preferred

³ See p. 162
⁴ HLG 7/51 Minute 4 October 1940 from Scott, HQ London Region PO Box 501
⁵ HO186/2228 Minute dated 9 November 1940
⁶ Stepney Council Minutes - 9 November 1940
⁷ See pp. 121-125

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their Town Clerk as Controller if Davis had to go. The local press saw the appointment as that of a 'civil dictator' \(^4\) and *The Times* also used the word 'dictator':

Orders have been issued by the Ministry of Home Security and the Ministry of Health under Defence Regulations giving Mr J.E.A. James, the Town Clerk, all civil defence powers formerly exercised by the Stepney Borough Council and Emergency Committee. It is the first borough in the country since intensive air attacks began in which the government have used the power under the Defence Regulations to nominate a civil 'dictator.' Under the new scheme Mr James will be able to take quicker and more direct action than was possible hitherto to deal with difficulties arising from the bombing of the Borough. \(^9\)

A threat to local democracy was perceived and Morrison received a telegram from the Manchester Civil Liberties Conference 'representing 88,000 organised supporters urgently protesting against any form of dictatorship being set up in East London.' \(^10\)

Once appointed in Stepney, Town Clerk Arnold James subsequently claimed to have had difficulties in discharging his new job as Controller. He was now an officer of the Ministry, but his allegiance to the Council led him to resign after only a few weeks *en poste*. James informed the Council of:

> the acceptance by the Regional Commissioner of his resignation as ARP Controller ... He advised us that he felt the obligation imposed on him to conform strictly to the directions and instructions of the Ministry of Home Security without regard to views and policies of the Council was incompatible with his position as Town Clerk and his consequent duty to the Council. In view, therefore, of this obvious conflict of duty, the Town Clerk felt himself compelled to ask to be relieved of his onerous duties as ARP Controller. In this situation it should be mentioned that the Regional Commissioners appreciate the difficult situation created by the appointment of Town Clerk as ARP Controller and were, in accepting his resignation, expressly appreciative of the services rendered by him in an arduous position \(^{11}\)

London Region were, however, far from appreciative of James' work as, two days earlier, at the Cabinet Civil Defence Committee Morrison admitted he:

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\(^{8}\) *West Ham, East Ham and Stratford Express, 27 December 1940*

\(^{9}\) *The Times* 7 October 1940

\(^{10}\) HO 186/2228 Telegram to Morrison dated 5 October 1940

\(^{11}\) Stepney Council Minutes GP, Staff and Education Ctte dated 6 December 1940
had recently come to the conclusion that a further change was needed in Stepney and that the present Controller must be replaced. The Mayor and Borough Council of Islington had been consulted and had agreed that their Town Clerk, Mr Adams, should be seconded to Stepney. It was hoped that no further action would be needed. On the other hand, so long as Stepney Borough Council continued to exercise their peacetime functions, there was a possibility that they might obstruct CD measures in various ways. The Ministry of Home Security and the Ministry of Health were considering at the present time what additional powers would be needed to enable the government to suspend all of the functions of any local authority whose administration was found to be unsatisfactory. 12

The Town Clerk of Islington was therefore imposed upon Stepney as its ARP Controller but Mr Adams' memoirs do not cover his period of secondment. The Ministry of Health also transferred First Aid Posts and Ambulances to his control 13 but his time in Stepney was not easy as the Council and its officers made his life difficult. On 1 April 1941 Adams was visited by the Inspector General of ARP (Hodsoll) who noted:

Mr Adams has been in Stepney about 3 months and, although I realised that he had a difficult and arduous task in front of him, I had not realised the really terrible difficulties which he had to overcome. Apart from the fact that there was no proper organisation or control at all in Stepney, that the Controller first put in had to be got rid of and that the Borough Engineer had to be superimposed, made Mr Adams' position even more delicate. It is amazing to me that Civil Defence personnel worked as well as they did and, although they are more or less working independently, there is no doubt they put up a very fine show. Mr Adams has just moved into his new HQ 14 where he will have the whole of his staff together and he hopes in another 3 months really to have the whole area straightened out. This will be a very fine achievement because there is not lacking a great deal of subterranean opposition on the part of the Council and officials to impede and sabotage his work by subtle and underground ways which are hard to combat ...

The strength of the Services is fairly reasonable but, of course, but it is extremely difficult if not impossible to get any part-time volunteers. Mr Adams is trying to get some proper order exercised over the Services and there has been, up to recently, no inducement to take some pride in themselves ... the show has been entirely happy-go lucky.

His Chief ARP Warden, whom I met, is not possibly the best person but Mr Adams is not doing anything about him for the time being.

12 CAB73/2 War Cabinet CD Committee Minutes CDC(40) Series - 4 December 1940
13 HLG 7/51 dated 5 December 1940
14 The old Stepney Town Hall had been bombed
The Medical Officer of Health, Dr O'Shiel, is another difficulty. He has always been a trouble and I remember him well from the old days and he has clearly taken little or no interest in the welfare of his personnel. Mr Adams is still having to overcome a good deal of attitude of mind, the "this is the way we did it before and we don't see why we should do anything else." ... there is nothing wrong with their fighting spirit - which is first class.  

On 2 June 1941, Adams' secondment ended and he returned to his duties as Controller in Islington with the OBE awarded to him on 1 January 1941 and the thanks of Herbert Morrison. In a message to the Mayor of Islington, Morrison said 'Mr Adams has more than justified the confidence that I and the Regional Commissioners felt in his ability to pull things round in Stepney. He has been outstandingly successful in a post requiring exceptional qualities of initiative, energy and, not least tact.'  

In Stepney, the post of Controller was taken over by Captain A.R. Beaumont who had served as Deputy to both James and Adams. But by now the Blitz was over and a period of relative calm allowed the authorities to regroup. In June 1943, the Stepney situation was raised by the Mayor and the Senior Regional Commissioner (Gowers) reported the request to Morrison:

When [Admiral] Evans was in Stepney the other day the Mayor tackled him on the question of restoring Civil Defence to Council control. Evans asked me to put it in writing. I should like very much to do what he asks if it were not that this would mean handing over to Morris Davies (sic) and Arnold James. The latter we might get over by stipulating that someone other than James should be Controller. But Davies would be inescapable. It was Davies' conduct of affairs that led to the ousting of the Council in 1940 and I am told that we should be most unlikely to find a reformed and repentant Davies if we restored him now. I think therefore (though reluctantly) that we ought to refuse, in spite of the awkwardness of not being able to give the true reason for our refusal. So does Key. But I think I ought to find out before doing so if this is what you wish. It would be quite likely that the Mayor may appeal to you directly or through Mr Attlee.  

[Manuscript Annotation by Morrison] I might consider if Morris Davies and Arnold James were put out of action on CD. If I restored CD powers stipulate that it is on the undertaking of good conduct. HM  

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15 HO186/625 dated 4 April 1941  
16 HLG 7/51 dated 6 June 1941  
17 The Ministry paid the whole of Beaumont's salary. As Stepney Council was not asked to contribute. [HLG 7/51 dated 6 June 1941]  
18 Attlee was the local MP for Stepney (Limehouse)  
19 HO186/2228 Gowers to Morrison dated 23 June 1943
No action was taken at this time but responsibility for the homeless was transferred back to Stepney Borough Council on 6 November 1944, the matter having been discussed with the Mayor (W.J. Edwards JP MP), the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk. By this time Morry Davis was in prison for an unrelated criminal offence (and thus disqualified for further local government office) while Arnold James was also disqualified by the District Auditor for his illegal actions concerning the financing of the deep shelter case in Finsbury. Geoffrey Alderman has explained Davis’ fate and legacy:

On 16 August 1944 Davis was involved in a bizarre incident at Hendon underground-railway station. He tried to avoid prosecution for alleged non-payment of a railway fare by inciting an employee of Stepney Borough Council to issue him with a false National Identity Card. Davis had in fact paid his fare but had mislaid his ticket and appears to have panicked in consequence. Something of his true nature had, perhaps, come to the very public surface at last. Neither his position as Labour Leader on Stepney Council, nor evidence as to his good character ... could save him from a six month prison sentence (24 November 1944) The Davis era had come to an abrupt but not inappropriate end. ...... a Labour politician whose leadership brought obloquy on the Party in Stepney and whose political activities acquired the dimensions of a scandal. Two consequences ... [were] his leadership of the Labour Party in Stepney repelled many non-Jews and Jews alike and was, in my view, partly responsible for the strength of Communist politics in East London just before, during and immediately after the Second World War. In particular, his removal through imprisonment resulted in severe damage to the image of Labour in East London; it took several years for the Stepney Labour Party to recover from this episode and while doing so the Communist party was able to reap a predictable harvest of seats on both Stepney Council and the LCC. 20

These unprecedented events of central government removing responsibilities from a local authority, were not mentioned by O’Brien in Civil Defence while his colleague, R.M. Titmuss, merely stated:

Some boroughs had to be given a lot of help by the central departments. One was Stepney, which was deprived - for reasons other than its housing repair record - of certain powers by the Ministers of Health and Home Security ... 21

20 Alderman p.264
In retrospect, the Government took too little action too late. In Stepney, the lack of co-operation by the Council was confirmed by C.J. Wood, the regional representative of the Ministry of Health, who later stated:

... the steps taken in Stepney were not a success. The running of the Emergency services by a staff appointed by a central department involved a great deal of duplication and difficulty due to the refusal of the local authority to co-operate. Many emergency services are run in most boroughs by people seconded from other bodies. These were all removed by Stepney Borough Council when the Regional Commissioner appointed a Controller of his own.

Rehousing and billeting continued to be run by the borough for a time with no liaison with the Controller's department and, at the request of the Ministry of Home Security, the Ministry of Health appointed its own Billeting and Rehousing Officer. These subjects, however, tied up inextricably with first aid [repair of houses] responsibilities... in a borough like Stepney, where direct labour is employed and the borough therefore controls most building labour, the first aid responsibilities had to be done by the Borough Engineering Department [which] in that situation it was difficult to bring to a pitch of efficiency. These difficulties in Stepney discouraged the Home Secretary from taking the same steps in West Ham.22

Recalling these events in 1988, the former Deputy Chief Administrative Officer at London Region HQ agreed with Mr Wood, admitting that 'Stepney was dispossessed after the Blitz but it was feeble check' then added 'and we nearly did it with West Ham.'23

The County Borough of West Ham

The Borough of West Ham had a reputation for local initiatives and action on behalf of its poor. With the construction of the Royal Group of Docks and industrial developments around the confluence of the Thames and the River Lea, a large working class population needed to be housed. There thus grew up a large amount of cheap, densely packed housing in the southern half of the Borough while the original centre of West Ham (including most of the council offices) remained in the northern half. Having returned Keir Hardy in 1892, the Labour Party enjoyed a reliable majority in West Ham but, in 1943, a Fabian writer

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22 CAB102/726 Interview with C.J. Wood, London Region, Ministry of Health on 20 October 1942
23 Interview 19 January 1988 with Mr K.A.L. Parker formerly Deputy Chief Administrative Officer London Region
commented on ‘the condition of the Borough during recent years when the Council, though a Labour Council, is low in vitality and practically lacks opposition, for there are 57 Labour members on a Council of 64’. This Council had to cope with the full weight of the attack in the initial days of the Blitz - a task which proved too much for the more traditional methods of the Council, its members and officers. A Regional Officer later recalled:

The bulk of the first attack on London fell on West Ham ... [where] the Controllers had been a succession of doddering and hopelessly inefficient mayors under whose rule the Chief Officers of the Council went their own way and there was a complete lack of co-ordination...... administration in West Ham had gone to pieces ... a number of councillors and chief officers were doing something but there was no co-ordination or co-operation except that councillors who were left wished the view that south West Ham must be evacuated.

However ‘doddering and inefficient’ the Mayors of West Ham may have been, they were the elected representatives of a solid Labour borough. In her Fabian booklet, Dorothy Idle wrote that ‘Lack of effective opposition had undoubtedly a weakening effect. In addition, West Ham Council was, on the average, too old to meet the present emergency - such figures as were available showed it to fall not far short of sixty. These elderly representatives annually elected their Mayor and they had decided that their civic leader should also be their ARP Controller. The October 1940 Mayoral election produced the 70 year old Alderman Hall as Mayor who had no experience of ARP work or of ARP Committee matters. Hall was nominated as Controller and the Regional Commissioner, for the Home Secretary, raised the alarm by writing to West Ham stating he was:

... of the opinion that it would be most undesirable in existing conditions, when raiding is likely to continue to be a daily occurrence, that there should be a complete change in the direction of Civil Defences Services in West Ham. Experience throughout the Region has shown the advantage to the course which has been generally followed by other boroughs in appointing the Town Clerk to be Controller and the Commissioners desire the Council to consider urgently the adoption of a similar course in West Ham.

24 Dorothy Idle War Over West Ham (1943) p.31
22 CAB102/726 Interview with C J Wood London Region, Ministry of Health on 20 Oct 1942
26 Doreen Idle p.60
27 Doreen Idle did not mention that the Prime Minister reached his 66th birthday in November 1940
28 West Ham Council Minutes - 18 November 1940
When the Council suggested they merely appoint the Town Clerk as Deputy Controller, the Regional Commissioners suggested that 'there might be advantages in having an oral exchange of views with representatives of your Council at Regional HQ.' They met on 2 December and, next morning, a further request was sent to West Ham stating that the meeting had been reported to the Minister who would like to have the opportunity himself of meeting the Council representatives before coming to a decision. In the meantime it must be understood that the appointment of the Mayor as Controller has not been approved by the Regional Commissioners. 29

Herbert Morrison convinced the councillors of the merits of appointing, if not the Town Clerk, then his Deputy, Mr E.E. King, as Controller - a proposal made by the opposition at a Council Meeting on 6 December. On 23 December the Council wrote to London Region to announce the appointment of Mr King and, by return, the Regional Commissioners 'noted the appointment and did not desire to raise any objections.' 29

But this was not the end of the affair for, not only were these administrative exchanges taking place over a period during which West Ham was continuing to experience severe and almost nightly bombing raids, but Mr King himself took a few days leave to visit a sick daughter in Scotland. In his absence, poor administration during raids caused problems which came to the notice of the regional authorities. They had previously had some doubts reported to them by the Regional Officer at No 7 Group (which covered West Ham) who had been investigating some minor administrative shortcomings in the Borough:

Everything points, at present, to Mr King playing a double game - he wants to be the next Town Clerk of West Ham and to do so he has to keep on the right side of the Council. Consequently he loses no opportunity of siding with the Council against the County and RHQ at the same time avoiding an open disagreement with the last two 30

29 Ibid. - 25 January 1941
30 HO 186/2431 Memo from No 7 Group dated 1 March 1941
A further change of Controller was made and this time the saviour of the Council was the Presbyterian Minister Rev W.W. Paton. He had been active in popular political movements in West Ham for some years. In October 1935 he had, with other religious leaders and local politicians, urged the Council 'to bring all possible pressure to bear against the scheme' for local authorities to take action on the Government's ARP proposals in their *First Circular*. Once the Blitz had started, Rev Paton (now a local hero for his leadership in Silvertown and popularly known as 'the Governor') became a member of the West Ham Council and, in November 1940, of the Emergency Committee. When the Controller crisis revived during Mr King's temporary absence, it was Rev Paton who agreed to take the post of Controller in March 1941 - an appointment that received the approval of the Regional Commissioners.

Calder greeted the appointment in the *Daily Herald* as:

> ... the success story of the Blitz - of how the County Borough of West Ham won a victory for democracy.

At one time it appeared that the Ministry of Home Security would take Civil Defence administration out of the hands of the elected Councillors as in the case of Stepney and place it in the hands of an ARP Controller nominated by London Region. I stood with the Rev Paton, the Governor, on the tip of the crater - tears running down his cheeks - into which the school had disappeared. He is a councillor in West Ham and with other members he made an appeal that the elected Council should be given another chance. They promised the Home Secretary that everything that needed doing would be done and the Home Secretary agreed. Drastic changes were made. The administration was galvanised into vigorous life ... their reward was to see West Ham rise to new heights of achievement.  

But Calder's optimism was only partially justified as problems continued to be reported by London Region. A complex dispute arose concerning the powers of the Controller, the Town Clerk and the Council which was reported by the Regional Commissioner as:

> ... the continuing trouble in West Ham, where the Council is at loggerheads with the Emergency Committee and both are at loggerheads with the Controller. In spite of a warning given by the Regional Commissioners at a Conference with the Council, the

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31 Rev Paton was a friend of Calder and, before the war, had approached him seeking support for the pensioners' campaign group Paton had founded. Paton's flock suffered in the Blitz and the devastated South Hallsville School was in his area - Calder was on the site with Rev Paton when Calder wrote his seminal account of the disaster (p. 155 and Annex B)

32 *Daily Herald* 4 March 1941

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Council have passed a resolution limiting the discretion of the Emergency Committee in a way inconsistent with the doctrine laid down by the Ministry. The task of getting an efficient machine set up in the present circumstances seems almost hopeless, and we may ask for the supercession of the Council in Civil Defence matters.

In the next monthly report, Gowers stated that 'Trouble with West Ham continues.' The County Borough retained its civil defence powers but it was a close decision for, as the former Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of London Region admitted when referring to Ministry's intervention in Stepney, 'we nearly did it with West Ham.'

The Limited Effectiveness of Government Intervention

It has been shown that a combination of the ineffective leadership provided by the Councils in Stepney and West Ham, and their resistance to adapt their, often ideologically based, management style to the severity of the air raids, all contributed to the failure of the administrative machinery. In addition both Councils were reluctant to co-operate fully with central government in the pre-war period. The Government eventually intervened by removing Civil Defence responsibilities from Stepney and came close to doing so in West Ham. The appointment of the Town Clerk as Controller in Stepney in early October was not a success as his allegiance to the Council limited his effectiveness and he was replaced in early December 1940. The Town Clerk of Islington was imposed but local officials so failed to co-operate with Mr Adams that Hodsol used the word 'sabotaged' when he inspected the Stepney situation. Fortunately the Blitz faded by June 1941 and Adams returned to Islington to be replaced by a Regional Officer who remained as Controller until the end of the war. Some functions were returned to the Council in late 1944, by which time the former Town Clerk and Morry Davis, the awkward Labour Leader and original Controller, had been

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33 HO186/952 LRB Report dated 16 August 1941  
34 HO186/952 LRB Report dated 10 September 1941  
36 See p. 200

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removed from further office by the separate, and quite unrelated, administrative and criminal cases in which they had become involved.

Less drastic action was taken in West Ham, moderated as a result of the experience of direct government intervention in Stepney. In West Ham the eventual appointment as Controller of the local Presbyterian Minister was unique but Rev. Paton appears to have been the sole local personality who had the required qualities of leadership necessary in a Borough whose population had dropped to only 35% of its pre-war level. The absence of leadership in Stepney and West Ham was in marked contrast to that provided in Poplar by the Town Clerk, Mr H.E. Dennis, and the local MP Charles Key. The latter initially remained the Chairman of the MBSJC and on the Poplar ARP Committee. Key so impressed all who saw his work on the Council, on the MBSJC and in the House of Commons that he was appointed Special Commissioner for Shelters. Key too was a life-long Socialist but he avoided dogma in Town Hall politics and demonstrated effective management to the benefit of Poplar and London Region.

Overall most London authorities had performed well under fire but local ARP Services were the legacy of pre-war central government planning and it was the shortcomings of some of those central government plans that resulted in severe problems for some people in London. The major problems presented were those of the care of the homeless, of the provision of air raid shelters and of the organisation of an effective Fire Prevention force, all three of which are now considered in more detail.

Central Government Performance - Homelessness

In no sphere of Civil Defence was the unpreparedness of the London authorities so dramatically demonstrated by the Blitz as was the poor provision made for those made

Like W Eric Adams, Mr Dennis was awarded the OBE in January 1941 for his work during the Blitz
homeless by bombing. Following the Munich crisis, the care of the homeless was made a responsibility of the Ministry of Health and thus it was that Minister that accepted the blame for the shortcomings exposed. Malcolm MacDonald admitted to the House of Commons that ‘the criticisms made were entirely justified ... the organisation in London proved to have many faults.’\textsuperscript{38} The unpreparedness for the amount of homelessness was a legacy of the reluctance of the authorities who, although they prepared for thousands of casualties each day completely failed to realise that the same bombs would inevitably demolish thousands of houses and thus cause many more thousands of people to require refuge, food and rehousing. The Editor of the Civil Series of the Official History of the War acknowledged the importance of pre-war planning and agreed that:

perhaps more than any other history, Civil Defence had most of its problems definitely shaped before the outbreak of war. Consequently Major O’Brien’s Part One [the pre-war chapters] must be important and substantial.\textsuperscript{39}

In \textit{Civil Defence} O’Brien detailed the history of his subject. He only briefly mentions the question of homelessness but refers readers to the extensive survey published as one of the three \textit{Problems of Social Policy} by his colleague R.M. Titmuss in 1950.\textsuperscript{40} This thesis does not produce significant new information on the topic but concentrates on the organisational and administrative aspects of London’s homeless problem. Titmuss observed that few pre-war authors had mentioned the potential problem of the homeless but he does mention G.T. Garratt, who witnessed the problem during the Spanish Civil War. In his contribution to \textit{The Air Defence of Britain},\textsuperscript{41} Garratt forecast the probable German targeting of the East End which would result in large numbers of homeless and noted that:

some preparations have been made for dealing with each devastated area but none for coping with the survivors who are not hospital cases ..... To anyone who has been working

\textsuperscript{38} HofC Debs. Vol 365 Cols 401-409
\textsuperscript{39} CAB103/387 Memo by Prof. Hancock dated 6 September 1947
\textsuperscript{40} Titmuss had been selected to write this history during the war and had started by 1943. He became Professor of Social Administration at the LSE in 1945.
\textsuperscript{41} See p. 13
in eastern Spain, where air attacks were part of one's normal life, the arrangements being made in London and elsewhere seem hopelessly casual. 42

Perceptively, Garratt predicted the requirement for Rest and Feeding Centres or:

clearing houses capable of dealing with four or five thousand people ... it is possible to house a very large number of refugees on a limited floor space, if, but only if, other arrangements for cooking etc. have been made in advance. ... it would be fatal if this is done by politicians who suffer from the Poor Law outlook on life.43

The allocation of responsibility for London's homeless to the Public Assistance department of the LCC built in additional problems of Treasury constraints on expenditure for the preparation of Rest Centres. The LCC was responsible for Poor Law administration in the County of London rather than the Boroughs 44 and was therefore responsible for planning refuge accommodation. Poor Law regulations stated that homeless people had to be differentiated into 'natives' of the borough (the responsibility of that Borough) and 'refugees' who would be the responsibility of central government or their 'home' borough. Finally the Ministry of Health had limited LCC expenditure to only £20 on each Rest Centre so that few beds, blankets and food stores could be provided. The otherwise untrained staff of the Centres were to be the Relieving Officers of the LCC and the County Boroughs. The minimal provision was, to some extent, understandable as such homeless as were planned for were expected to remain in the Centres for only a few hours, sustained by 'tea and bread' administered under Poor Law conditions while those in financial distress were to be referred to the local Assistance Board.

The homeless were expected, within a few hours, to move on to alternative accommodation with friends or relatives and any better, or more comfortable, Rest Centres might encourage them to remain. Little thought had been given to the probable need to billet homeless people

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42 Garratt The Air Defence of Britain Penguin London 1938 p. 141
43 Garratt pp.138-139
44 See p.44 for West Ham's conflict with the Ministry of Health in 1923
on local householders or to requisition empty houses to provide new homes. Titmuss described this as 'the most critical of all social consequences of air attack not envisaged' \textsuperscript{45} and, at the opening of the war, plans for the homeless were only on paper. Even by September 1940, only a limited provision had been made.

In London 'resettlement', the second stage of dealing with the homeless, was at a very early stage as there was to be no requisitioning of houses in advance of the requirement. Thus, when the attack started in earnest, the result was that the few and ill-equipped Food and Rest Centres soon filled up. With more homeless people admitted on successive nights, they soon became overcrowded. As detailed in Chapter 5 - particularly in Table 6 \textsuperscript{46} - the numbers of homeless people in the Rest Centres rose to 16,000 by the fifth night of the Blitz then peaked at 25,590 in the London Region on the night of 25/26 September. Next day Henry Willink was appointed Special Commissioner for the Homeless. He reorganised the system of care and gave the LCC a virtually free hand to properly equip and staff the Rest Centres. Willink also established hostels for single men left in London when their families had been evacuated and he chased the Boroughs to expedite house repairs as initially some Boroughs, like Stepney, would only use their direct labour force to repair the Council's own properties. The numbers of homeless fell steadily but each heavy raid was marked by an increased number of admissions - the biggest raid, on 16 April 1941, saw 14,658 new admissions on 17 April. Willink's measures ensured that they were rapidly moved on by billeting and rehousing so that, by 26 April, the Regional Commissioner was able to report only 6,703 people in the London Region's Rest Centres. \textsuperscript{47}

Willink's task was to effect co-ordination between the Boroughs and the LCC. He declined to interfere with Borough billeting arrangements but, rather, he urged them to fully use their

\textsuperscript{45} Titmuss p. 251
\textsuperscript{46} See p.153
\textsuperscript{47} Statistics from Table 6 (p.153)
powers of requisitioning and he drafted in extra LCC staff and encouraged volunteer organisations into the Boroughs to boost the work force. On 12 June 1941, in his first speech to Parliament as Special Commissioner, Willink reviewed the situation and summarised his co-ordinating work with the London local authorities. He opened by admitting:

[homelessness] .. was the least prepared for in the whole field of Civil Defence. One of the matters that took us most by surprise in September was the extraordinary extent of the homelessness which surrounded destroyed houses, the enormous number of people that were out of their houses and needed succour very badly indeed. ... I can assure the House that the arrangements made by the local authorities for dealing with this problem in London has improved progressively in the last eight months. [recent heavy raids] were dealt with more speedily and more successfully than any of the earlier raids ... it was suggested to me that some local authorities ... would be wholly ineffective as billeting authorities, and that I should exercise that power. Apart from the appalling dislocation such a process would have involved, where the billeting staff was to be got I do not know. I came to the conclusion that local authorities in the London Region were most anxious to do all they could to serve their people [and] it was vital to make the fullest possible use of every sort of volunteer ...

The tribute to the various voluntary services provided by the Womens' Voluntary Service (WVS), the Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) and the Red Cross was most appropriate as such groups often manned the range of Welfare and Information Bureaux as well as providing succour and refreshment to victims and CD Services at incidents across the Region. There was some opposition to the use of volunteer workers, particularly in West Ham where the Council refused to use the FAU in Rest Centres in the Borough as many of their volunteers were conscientious objectors. Willink went on to stress the need for continuing need for co-operation -'a process that never ends' - then turned to the rest centre service.

In the raids (of 16 and 19 April and 10 May) the First Line Centres of London took the strain without any call on the reserve centres ... that resulted from the liaison between the police and the wardens getting people into the centres.

As the raid of 10 May was the final major attack of the Big Blitz, Willink's summary of

48 HofC Debs Vol.372 Cols.378- 383, 12 June 1941
49 Idle p. 72
50 HofC Debs Vol.372 Cols.384-386, 12 June 1941
events is a useful point at which to accept his assurances that, by 12 June 1941, this homelessness situation was well under control and had been brought to that state, not by 'dictatorial' interference from above, but by encouraging co-operation between all the local agencies and reorganising available resources.

**Shelter Policy And Provision**

The evolution and implementation of the Government's shelter policy has been detailed in the preceding chapters where the policy of 'dispersal and protection' has been emphasised. The public were discouraged from taking refuge in large communal shelters and were (eventually) provided with small domestic shelters or larger shelters for those whose homes were unsuitable for 'Anderson' shelters. These public shelters were mostly surface brick and concrete structures although a number of larger public refuges were constructed in the strengthened basements of steel-framed private or commercial buildings. None of the dispersed shelters met the requirements of those demanding bomb-proof protection for this was too expensive in material and labour. Whereas the cost of an Anderson domestic shelter for six people was some £7 10s, the cost of providing bomb-proof 'deep shelter' approached some £12 to £15 per head.

Since Sir John Anderson's appointment as Lord Privy Seal with responsibility for Civil Defence in November 1938, the design, production and distribution of Anderson shelters and the construction of surface public shelters had provided a reasonable shelter situation by the time the Blitz started in September 1940. The early raids of the Blitz caused many to take advantage of the shelters provided but many in the East End of London resorted to the large communal shelters and in warehouses and railway arches used in during the raids of 1917. Many of these were often not officially approved as safe refuges and the public also took to using the underground railway stations. Once the night raiding continued, the public needed to sleep, so shelters were used as dormitories and sanitation and feeding arrangements were urgently needed - and were eventually supplied. Anderson had been Minister of Home
Security since the outbreak of war and it was to his credit that the value of the shelters, both domestic and public, was demonstrated on numerous occasions when both types of shelters suffered severe damage. Yet the shelterers often emerged alive and well, although shaken by their experience and frequently dismayed by the destruction of their home only feet from the shelters. Nevertheless, there had been several direct hits on shelters which resulted in loss of life and the demand for more adequate protection by the construction of deep shelters constantly resurfaced.

Anderson had set in motion a series of improvements in shelter provision by the time he was replaced as Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security on 3 October 1940. More domestic shelters were issued and more surface shelters constructed. However, in some areas, Anderson shelters proved prone to flooding and there were problems with many surface shelters as, due to a misunderstanding in a Ministry Circular, some surface shelters were built with the wrong, or no, mortar and had to be rebuilt. Anderson worked for better shelter conditions while Calder's critical and constructive journalism had highlighted appalling misery and filth in some of the larger shelters. Lord Horder's Committee investigated and reported on Health in Shelters while Admiral Evans concentrated on shelters at regional commissioner level. All these moves were well under way by the time Anderson was replaced by Morrison in early October 1940.

Morrison's appointment as Minister of Home Security did have a beneficial effect on the provision of shelters (including the distribution of the new indoor steel-framed 'Morrison' shelter) and the living conditions within them. The previous chapter has related Morrison's positive approach to shelter question both in Cabinet and in public. In his radio broadcast Morrison not only attacked those making unrealistic deep shelter demands but he also

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51 Lord Horder was a leading medical man. His committee included Sir Wyndham Deedes (Chief Warden of Bethnal Green and Bill Deedes' uncle whose house Bill shared in the borough) and a leading social worker/welfare specialist Mrs Cresswick Atkinson.

52 See p.173-4
announced the limited deep shelter programme. Whilst Anderson stressed that the new shelters were a mere extension of current policy, Morrison’s decision to start excavating deep shelters was a definite change of policy. However, the time taken to construct the eight deep shelters meant that they had no impact on the supply of shelters until opened in 1944. The Cabinet were aware that fatalities still occurred if bombs penetrated deep into tube railway stations and the London Passenger Transport Board heard, on 7 November, of recent Tube station incidents where bombs caused considerable damage far underground. These included the incidents at:

Trafalgar Square (40’ crater 42’ below street level), Bounds Green (37’ below street level), Balham (70’ diameter crater containing 5,000 tons of clay) and two incidents at Euston (47’6” and 56’ below street level.) 53

The Board also heard of the plans for deep shelters built below certain tube stations 54 referred to by Morrison in his broadcast:

In accordance with the decision of HMG to provide deep level shelter accommodation for 100,000 persons, the board have been appointed agents for the Home Office for the construction of these works. The MHS will bear the entire costs of the scheme ... plans are being prepared having regard to the possibility of the Board utilising these tunnels after the war for the proposed deep level Tube line. The Board are, however, under no obligation to take over these works. 54

Work started in December 1941 but they were not finished until around late 1942, by which time the ‘Big Blitz’ had passed so they were held in reserve until July 1944 when some were opened to the public during the V1 attacks. The construction programme was publicised in professional journals but their exact location was kept secret. In particular several references to the project and details of the method of construction were published in The Engineer

53 LTPT Board Minutes at MRO Ref 1297/LPT01/05 dated 7 November 1940 - in London Metropolitan Archive
54 North of the Thames: St Paul’s and Chancery Lane (Central Line) and Mornington Crescent, Warren Street or another and Goode Street (Northern Line). South of the Thames: Oval, Stockwell, Clapham North, Clapham South and Clapham Common or another.
### Table 15 - Shelter Provision and Cost in St Pancras

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Shelter (a)</th>
<th>Number provided (b)</th>
<th>Seating Capacity (c)</th>
<th>Approximate Total Cost (d)</th>
<th>Approximate Cost per head (d/c)</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Andersons</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>35,780</td>
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<td>Morrison Shelters</td>
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<td>Strengthening all Surface Shelters</td>
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<td>Maintenance All Shelters</td>
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<td>12,826</td>
<td>144,468</td>
<td>£690,179</td>
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</table>

Source: Councillor C Allen Newbery *St Pancras at War* typescript dated November 1945 - Camden Archives.

between September and December 1941. Some post-war books have mentioned the deep shelters although the authors have adopted conspiracy theories regarding the planned use of the facilities. It is a credit to the standard of construction that the ‘new’ shelters on the Northern line remain to this day and are used for commercial purposes. A typical example of the eight deep shelters eventually completed is that which was constructed under Belsize Park LT Station which was built to hold 8,000 shelterers and comprises twin 16’6” diameter tunnels, each 1,400’ long, built under the existing tube lines. Each tunnel was bisected horizontally with a concrete floor so there was 5,600 feet of tunnel at each location. Steel bunks were installed for all shelterers and adequate sanitation, electric lifts and twin stairways.

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55 e.g. Peter Laurie *Beneath the City Streets* The Penguin Press (1970 revised 1979 and 1983) and the more technical Nigel Pennick *Bunkers Under London* 1985
56 See Robin Woolven ‘The Belsize Deep Shelter’ in the *Camden History Society Newsletter* No 121, September 1990. This shelter is one of six currently (2001) used by Security Archives for document storage. The steel bunks remain in place and are used as shelving for archive boxes.

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provided. Completed by late 1942, the opening of these shelters in 1944 is covered in Chapter 7.

Charles Key MP was appointed Special Commissioner for Shelters in January 1941, with Mrs Cresswick Atkinson as his Assistant Commissioner dealing with welfare matters. Key successfully applied his management skills to the task of boosting shelter provision and comfort. Another friend of Ritchie Calder, Key predictably received a good press in the *Daily Herald* and Tables 9 and 10 detail the successes in providing more shelters and the limited extent to which those shelters were used by Londoners. Reliable statistics for shelter provision during the height of the Blitz are scarce for, as a statement included in a Cabinet Office survey of shelters, noted:

> It was extremely difficult for the Government and is similarly difficult for the historian to discover exactly what progress was made during the frenzied months of the Blitz when detailed written records were sacrificed, at all levels, on the altar of practical action.

The extent to which shelter was provided in individual Boroughs is equally sparse but information complied in 1945 by the Chief Warden of St Pancras on shelters in his Borough is given in Table 15 above. The approximate cost of each shelter place in the various types of shelter in that Borough may be compared with the £15 per head figure estimated for various types of deep shelter. Key and his staff co-ordinated shelter resources and encouraged the various authorities to use their powers to the full in attacking the shelter problem, he operating in a manner similar to that with which the problem of homelessness was attacked. Under Anderson’s then Morrison’s direction, first Admiral Evans, then Ellen Wilkinson MP and eventually Charles Key MP greatly improved shelter provision and the level of shelter comfort. It is important to remember that the majority of Londoners did not use the shelters provided for them. As Table 9 shows, even in the East End, where the usage was highest, only 34% of the local population used shelters while shelters overall were used to only 18% of

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57 See pp. 1857
58 CAB 102 Cabinet Office Paper on Shelters dated May 1949
total capacity. Morrison's appointment replacing Anderson did result in a change of policy in that some deep shelter construction was authorised but, even if all of those new shelters were completed, they would have house only another 100,000 people which was but a small fraction (1.6%) of the population of the London Region. Nevertheless the virtual end of the Big Blitz by mid-May 1941 came as a welcome respite and an opportunity to review the Civil Defence organisation in London.

The Fire Prevention Requirement And Its Manning

Consideration of the London Fire Fighting Services has been specifically excluded from this thesis but the fire prevention organisation – the Fire Watchers to report and, ideally, promptly extinguish incendiary bombs - warrant attention as the training and organisation of these organisations fell to the ARP Wardens as well as the NFS. Government planning had failed to fully appreciate the extent of the incendiary threat and, once the Blitz demonstrated the need for better fire prevention, more effective cover proved difficult due to severe labour shortages in the metropolis. The competing demands of industry, the armed forces, the Home Guard and the other Civil Defence Services added to the problems of recruiting from a much reduced population. In addition, citizens were reluctant to undertake duties in commercial or other properties which were often far removed from their own homes.

In the run up to war the threat from poison gas was emphasised at the expense of that from high explosive and incendiary attack although, following the Munich crisis, large numbers of Auxiliary Firemen were recruited and trained. Concern remained that more precautions should be taken to support the regular and auxiliary fire-fighters. This support was to take the form of organised and trained street fire parties, operating under the Wardens’ Service. Equipped with hand pumps and buckets of sand, these parties were to extinguish small incendiary bombs before they created sizeable fires which required the attention of the hard-
pressed fire-fighters. When the Blitz opened it was immediately apparent that many fires could have been avoided if ‘first aid’ fire-fighting had been available, particularly inside (or on the roofs of) London’s many business and commercial premises. Out of business hours, many of these premises were left empty (and thus unguarded) and vulnerable to incendiary attack. In September 1940 the first Fire Orders were issued but these proved inadequate as they applied only to the larger business concerns and premises. Gowers welcomed the strengthened Orders announced in October 1940 under which the owners of all business premises were required to guard their premises and employees were obliged to undertake fire watching duties. However, the results of the fire-bomb raid of 29 December were raised next day at the Cabinet CD Executive Sub-Committee as:

.. [many of] last night’s ‘numerous serious outbreaks of fire’ ... could have been avoided if the arrangements for roof watchers could have been more complete.... The Home Secretary thought the terms of reference of the Order [should make] such parties compulsory ... at present it did not sufficiently cover shops or large factories where the numbers of employees were small - private effort was not enough.  

New Fire Regulations resulted on 15 January 1941 whereby civilians were required to serve up to 48 hours per month as trained Fire Watchers, but again the opportunities for avoiding service were taken advantage of by thousands of people.

Orders and Circulars ... acted as a brake on the enthusiasms of local authorities in carrying out these orders. 1) Adequate steps were not taken to ensure every registerable man was in fact registered 2) there are too many grounds for exemption which seriously weakened it from the start and 3) The claims for exemption were not dealt with in reasonable time. The Fire Guard was born months, possibly years, after it should have been. Brought into existence in January 1941, possibly because of the fire raid on London on 29 December 1940 showed that obligations placed on occupiers of premises to have fire watchers on premises was, in many cases, honoured in the breach rather than the observance. It was possible also that the damage done that night disclosed that the fire bomb menace then had been unanticipated.  

59 Cabinet Civil Defence Committee, Executive S-C 40th Meeting 30 December 1940
60 J.F. McCartney (Area Cdr City Fire Guard) Journal of the Air Raid Protection Institute Vol 4 No 6 August 1942

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Those obstacles were encountered in the City of London whereas in neighbouring Stepney, the Ministry of Home Security officials in charge had different cultural problems. As Hodsoll reported:

They have about 4,000 Fire Watchers in the Borough but have the greatest difficulty in persuading people to sign the form which will enable them to get their tin helmets. So far only 200 people have signed. The position is a curious one ... people are perfectly prepared to go out and put out fires but they will not sign a piece of paper binding them to do so .... People in the East End have a rooted objection to signing pieces of paper that might commit them to all kinds of things.

There is a good deal of vamping going on and one case quoted to me [was] of a man who made £250 in 3 weeks; and the wardens, when they go off duty, go out collecting 5s 0d from anyone they can find, nominally to do fire watching. This is a thing which is very difficult to keep a check on down in the East End, particularly with so many Jews about, and it is a thing that it is almost impossible to stop. Mr Adams is doing everything he can to stop their highly illegal operations. 61

London Region was in no doubt that the faults in fire prevention did not rest with the CD Services. Gowers explained:

London was pioneer in the formation of voluntary fire fighting squads for dealing with incendiary bombs ... our voluntary fire fighting parties ... comprising nearly 200,000 people, and the numbers have since been nearly doubled. To them must go much for the credit for the fact that, except for the City fire on 29 December, where the circumstances were exceptional, there have been comparatively few really serious fires in London .... Where the failure has been is in the neglect of owners and occupiers of shops, factories and warehouses to look after their own property. Nor can it be denied that the Order made last summer, requiring them to do so, was neither bold enough in conception nor strictly enough enforced. The recent Orders ... they require the owners of all business premises to make adequate arrangements for detecting and extinguishing incendiary bombs, they place an obligation on employees on those premises to take a part in this duty... and they contain provisions for further compulsory service if these measures should not prove enough. There is ample evidence that they have been taken very seriously indeed... 62

61 HO186/625 dated 1 April 1941
62 Gowers to London MPs 6 February 1941 - original script in the Parker Papers

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With compulsion introduced, the numbers required and enrolled in Supplementary Fire Parties by 31 May 1941, including those unwilling to take duty away from their homes, are given for the LCC Area and the London Region in Table 16. The problem with Supplementary Fire Party numbers seemed to be the reluctance to serve away from home. London Region reports show that Fire Parties were organised as part of the Wardens' Service and that ‘the largest area not satisfactorily covered is the West End of London where there is a greater proportion of empty houses than elsewhere.’ In an attempt to boost Fire Party numbers Regional HQ proposed that those who were willing to a wider undertaking would ‘receive a priority free issue of steel helmets and be enrolled as members of a Local Government organisation for the purposes of the Personal Injuries ( Civilians) Scheme.’ But the free helmet offer was not convincing and those unwilling to serve away from home were considered as mere ‘useful reinforcements.’ The solution was found in the formation of the Fire Guard Organisation and this is covered in Chapter 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Administrative County</th>
<th>London Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number enrolled before 1 January 1941</td>
<td>62,083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number enrolled 31 May 1941 willing to give 48 hrs per month anywhere in the area</td>
<td>48,489</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number enrolled 31 May 1941 willing to give 48 hrs per month near their homes</td>
<td>201,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number likely to be required</td>
<td>526,420</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: LRIB Report No 13 dated 18 June 1941

Table 16 - Supplementary Fire Party Enrolments

In summary, the incendiary threat to London was slow to be recognised as was the need for an effective fire prevention organisation. After the experience of the early raids of the Blitz, Fire Guard Orders were issued but these proved grossly ineffective and new Orders were urgently introduced. Further strengthening of the Orders, eventually with compulsion for

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63 LRIB Report No 13 dated 18 June 1941 and No 20 dated 1 October 1941
many civilians followed the ‘fire raid’ on London of 29 December. In a period of severe manpower shortages it was fortunate that the fire raid of 10 May 1941 marked the virtual end of the Big Blitz.

The End Of The Blitz

In general the CD Services and the organisations across the London Region coped well with the ‘Big Blitz’ but some local authorities required more firm direction and, following some central government shortcomings in planning and preparations, major changes were found to be necessary in some post-raid services. After eight months of occasionally severe air attack, the population of London had survived - not least because they and the authorities had taken reasonably effective precautions. Londoners sometimes used the shelters provided, generally carried their gas masks when the threat was high and appeared to cope with the human loss and physical damage. Many tens of thousands of Londoners were active in the ARP Services and many more thousands in the fire prevention organisations. After May 1941, the attack faded as the main offensive elements of the Luftwaffe were transferred to the Eastern Front. Although the threat of invasion receded, government remained most concerned at the prospect of renewed heavy attacks on London and with new weapons. The public could not be allowed to grow apathetic and Hodsoll recalled that:

the use of gas was still possible and Morrison decided to remind the public that the gas menace still was existed. Sarah Churchill [the Prime Minister’s daughter] was photographed on the Home Office roof and I showed her how to fit her gas mask. 64

Soon intelligence reports were indicating that a completely new range of weapons, the size and nature of whose warheads were unknown, was being developed for the attack on this country. It was thus correctly feared that the respite was only temporary and the effectiveness of the CD Services had to maintained. Chapter 7 details the progress of the

64 Hodsoll Papers 6/2  Chapter 16  The Problems of the Blitz
ARP/CD organisation and services first through a period of 2½ years of relative quiet and then through the final year of the war when the air attack on the London Region returned with new and more powerful weapons.
Chapter Seven
Civil Defence Maintained from June 1941 to Final Victory
- The Difficult Lull, the Baby Blitz and the V Weapon Onslaught

Introduction

This chapter continues the account of the administration, organisation and performance of the Civil Defence Services in London from the end of the 'Big Blitz' in May 1941, through 2½ years of change and relative inactivity and the brief 'Baby Blitz' to the return of a major German offensive with the new 'V' weapons. The V weapon offensive opened in June 1944 and its end in March 1945 marked the end of the bombardment of the metropolis. The final four years of the war saw major changes made to London's Civil Defence Services as severe manpower restrictions required the authorities to maintain effectiveness with many fewer personnel to deal with the new German weapons. The extent of the changes so radically altered the nature of the CD Services that what once were predominantly volunteer services controlled by local authorities, became partially conscripted bodies, effectively directed by central government through the increasingly powerful and effective London Regional organisation.

The evidence is presented in four separate, but connected, sections dealing with different aspects of the administration and organisation of CD in London. The first details the reorganisation of the CD Services to rectify defects exposed in the later phases of the Blitz. These changes were made during the 2½ year lull in enemy activity over London which followed the virtual end of the Big Blitz in May 1941. Although the bulk of the Luftwaffe was then deployed to the Russian front, London's CD Services had to be maintained at an effective level lest the bombers return - a task that was made more difficult by competing manpower demands of the armed forces and industry. Compromises and alterations in the Services were made necessary by manpower shortages which remained the primary administrative concern of the London Regional Commissioners through to the end of the
onslaught. The changes made included much cross-training, the nationalisation of the fire services, the creation of an effective fire prevention organisation and the provision of adequate fire-fighting water supplies. The effectiveness of the smaller and, during the 2½ year lull, largely inactive CD Services had to be maintained as the authorities feared saturation reprisal attacks on London.

The second section will deal with the new threat to London posed when, from late 1942, intelligence reports showed the Germans to be developing a new range of weapons, of unknown firepower, designed for use against London. Once again the German capabilities were exaggerated, but the intelligence available was often confusing and the new weapons were not used until after the Allied forces had invaded continental Europe. However, extensive preparations had to be made to deal with these new weapons, the V1 (pilot-less aircraft) and the V2 (Long Range Rocket) used respectively from June and September 1944. These preparations and the performance of the reorganised CD Services during the ten month onslaught will be discussed.

The third section considers the increased role and importance of the regional level of Government. This was essential to make best use of limited civil defence manpower and equipment in the face of new and more powerful weapons. In particular, the CD Reserves had to be directed and controlled at a level above that of the individual local authorities whose role consequently decreased. So efficiently did the local authorities appear to perform, albeit with Regional co-ordination, that both the Coalition government in 1944 and the 1945 Labour administration rejected calls to reform London local government.

Finally, the fourth section of this chapter will present a brief assessment of policy implementation for the period 1941-45 before drawing general conclusions on the operation and effectiveness of civil defence in London in those final four years of war.
The move away from local authority control of the former voluntary based CD Services is reflected in the limited use made of local authority sources in this chapter and the increasing reliance on regional and central government papers. Information on the V2 Long Range Rocket was kept from the public for some two months after the offensive had opened and information on the weapon was not included in the regular SECRET reports by the Regional Commissioner. Following the Blitz there had, however, been some relaxation of security on the reporting of casualties as:

... experience proved that unless detailed information was issued promptly and authoritatively when serious air raids had taken place, there was a danger that rumour might create public alarm, and it was therefore agreed that news of the air raids or civilian casualties should not be suppressed or delayed except insofar as this was vitally necessary on the grounds of national security.²

This relaxation also enabled the Ministry of Home Security to publish, in 1942, the profusely illustrated 160 page book *Front Line 1940-1941, The Official Story of Civil Defence of Britain*, written anonymously by Morrison’s friend Clem Leslie, Chief PRO at the Ministry of Home Security. Like other books published by the Ministry of Information, locations are disguised but Sir John Keegan has pointed out these booklets ‘tell no lies and admit a good deal of the truth.’³ *Front Line* was a fair summary of ARP/CD achievements during the Big Blitz and was well received by the British public; however it was published in a period of relative Luftwaffe inactivity when the authorities had to maintain CD effectiveness and public support as further heavy attacks on London were expected.

The Long Lull and Major Reorganisations

Following the virtual end of air raiding on London in May 1941, the number of civilian air raid fatalities and casualties in the London Region dropped to zero for many months until

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¹ Particularly the regular reports submitted by the London Regional Commissioner. The majority are in PRO files HO186/952 and 2352 but the latter lacks several significant reports included in the Parker Papers (particularly that on the initial V2 offensive) which have now been copied by the PRO.
² HO186/952 LRIB Report No 14 dated 2 July 1941 p.13
³ See p17.
significant raiding by new and more powerful German weapons systems was mounted in 1944. The extent of this 2½ year relative lull is shown in Table 17 (p.228) which details the monthly casualty figures in the London Region. It was a period of relative inactivity on the part of the Luftwaffe over London and for the CD Services. The occasional raid did take place and the 90 fatalities in July 1941 resulted from 'a minor attack ... which included direct hits on three shelters in Poplar' which caused 30 of the Region's fatalities that month. It can be seen that fatalities virtually ceased after July 1941 but resumed at a relatively low level in 1943 and rose again during the 'Baby Blitz' by manned aircraft in early 1944. London fatalities increased considerably when the new weapon offensive was opened in June 1944. These vengeance weapon (Vergeltungswaffen) raids continued through to the end of March 1945 when advancing allied forces overran all of the continental launch sites and allowed CD Services in the UK to be disbanded as the threat of aerial attack had disappeared.

The big raids of the Blitz exposed serious shortcomings in the Civil Defence Services, particularly in fire fighting, fire prevention and the water supply for the fire fighters. The threat to London was dramatically reduced when the Luftwaffe moved its bombers to its eastern front for the Operation Barbarossa, their invasion of Russia, which opened on 22 June 1941. However, there remained for the next three years the possibility that saturation air raids on London would be resumed, particularly as reprisals once the RAF (and USAAF from 1942) started bombing the German homeland in growing strength, so the maintenance of the effectiveness of the CD Services was vital. In addition, from the winter of 1942, the British government was receiving a range of, initially imprecise, intelligence reports indicating that the Germans were developing new and more powerful weapons, particularly the pilot-less aircraft (the V1) and a long range ballistic rocket (the V2), whose warheads were assessed to be up to 10 tons. Both systems were designed to attack London.

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4 HO186/952 LRIB report No 16 dated 30 July 1941
5 The term 'Baby Blitz' is that used by Basil Collier in The Defence of the United Kingdom - Official History of the Second World War. HMSO 1957 p.327
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Seriously Injured</th>
<th>Total Casualties</th>
</tr>
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<td>1,418</td>
<td>1,667</td>
<td>3,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>July</td>
<td>95</td>
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<td>October</td>
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<td>January 1945</td>
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Source: Typescript in Parker papers (u/d)

Table 17 – London Region Casualties May 1941-May 1945
Problems and Solutions

The Nationalisation of the Fire Services

Although this thesis does not attempt to assess Fire Service matters, it is necessary to mention that the Blitz had exposed serious fire-fighting problems, particularly outside London (beyond the remit of the exemplary London Fire Service), not least in the lack of standardisation of equipment and drills and the lack of experience in controlling large forces dealing with major fires. These problems were reported by London Firemen\(^6\) who travelled outside their region to reinforce provincial forces and were also apparent when provincial resources were sent to reinforce the London Region. The incendiary threat and the vulnerability of urban London had been dramatically demonstrated by the fire bomb raid of 29 December 1940. This caused the authorities to consider major changes in fire prevention and fire-fighting services. In fact, by late April 1941, serious consideration had been given to reorganising, initially on a County or Regional basis, the 1,600 individual fire brigades operated by local authorities across the country.

Less than 48 hours after the fire bomb raid of 11 May 1941, Herbert Morrison told Parliament that ‘a drastic change of [fire fighting] organisation must be made’\(^7\) and the result was the formation, on 18 August 1941, of a National Fire Service (NFS) by integrating the AFS and the local brigades. Under the new arrangements, the London Region was subdivided into five ‘Fire Force’ areas amalgamating the London Fire Service (LFS), the AFS and the 66 other brigades in the Region. Major Jackson, the head of the LFS was made Chief Commander of the London Fire Region while Commander Firebrace, his predecessor at the LFS, was made Chief of Staff at the Home Office Fire Department. Announcing the nationalisation of local authority fire services, Herbert Morrison promised to return them to local authorities after the war. In his first ‘Orders of the Day’ on the formation of the NFS, Morrison charged its

\(^7\) HoC Debs. Vol. 371 Col. 1085 13 May 1941
members to 'Train, Organise, Practise and Be Ready' as, although enemy activity in the London Region remained at a very low level, the threat of massive air raiding remained a vital concern.

Fire Prevention, Compulsion and the Fire Guard

Fire Prevention was an aspect of ARP that had not been adequately planned and previous chapters have shown that fewer big fires would develop during incendiary attacks if citizens could extinguish incendiary bombs before they developed into major fires. The formation of Fire Watchers and Street Fire Parties eventually directly involved millions of local volunteers. After the firebomb raid of 10/11 May 1941, it was realised that better fire prevention measures were vital and, in August 1941, firewatching was made compulsory for the civilian population. Eight months later, Fire Watchers were reorganised into the 'Fire Guard' - an organisation that was professionally trained, equipped, administered and led by paid Fire Guard officers, in London (other than the City), under the direction of local Chief ARP Wardens. The unpopularity of firewatching was reflected in Punch of 2 April 1941. But huge numbers of citizens were involved, such that Herbert Morrison later spoke of 'a gigantic Fire Guard Service so large that the full total of its members has never been computed, but which may, at a conservative estimate, be given as around the five million mark.'

Predictably, the absence of raiding caused problems for the Street Fire Parties so that, in July 1941 Gowers reported 'there has been a falling off in keenness as a result of the lull in raiding.' Further reform and better enforcement of the Orders was necessary and Gowers reported, in March 1942, that 'Feeling is blowing up among Local Authorities over their continuing uncertainty whether some long-demanded reforms are to be made or not.'

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8 Quoted in Wallington p.178
9 See pp.218-222
10 Quoted in TH O'Brien Civil Defence (1955) p.605.
11 HO186/2352 Report July 1941
12 HO186/2352 Report March 1942
improved ‘Fire Guard Plan’, with the personnel organised separately from the Wardens’ Service, was progressively introduced from late 1943. Street Fire Parties across the Region were issued with better equipment, including 600 trailer pumps and 250 wheelbarrow pumps, to enable them to better deal with incendiary bombs. In October 1942, the military authorities had authorised the Home Guard to undertake fire watching in the many unprotected business premises in London. The enrolment of millions of Fire Guards was a major task for the local authorities as many people objected to doing additional duties after an extended day’s warwork and many exemptions were requested. The extent of the applications for exemption from the Compulsory Enrolment of Fire Guards in London by 1 October 1941, is given in Table 18 and demonstrates the unpopularity of Fire Guard duties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Enrolments</th>
<th>1,123,035</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Without application for exemption</td>
<td>242,756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications for exemption on medical or hardship grounds</td>
<td>107,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other applications for exemptions</td>
<td>773,275</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: LRIB Report No 20 dated 1 October 1941

Table 18 - London Region Fire Guard Enrolments and Exemptions

Nevertheless, and in spite of some friction13 between the Minister of Home Security and the London Regional Commissioner, the latter was able to report, in late 1943, that ‘Steady progress has been made in the application of the Fire Guard Plan to the Region.’14 Two Metropolitan Boroughs (Fulham and Deptford) were among the ten London authorities whose plans had already received approval, while another twenty had reported their readiness for a test by Regional Officers. The Fire Guard Organisation thus remained a local authority responsibility in spite of suggestions made to Morrison by his responsible Parliamentary

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13 See pp.261-263 for Morrison’s annoyance at Gowers’ actions on the London Fire Guard.
14 HO186/2352 Regional Commissioner’s Quarterly Report, October - December 1943
Secretary, Ellen Wilkinson MP, that she had long considered that a National Fire Guard should be created 'as the only solution to the manning of the Fire Guard.'  

**Emergency and Static Water Supply**

Another problem encountered during the major fire bomb raids had been the lack of water for fire fighting. The failure of water supplies at the height of the 10 May 1941 raid nearly proved fatal to the survival of much of central London's infrastructure so some means of ensuring a continuity of water supply for fire-fighting was considered essential. The solution was found in several measures that were rapidly introduced. These included the laying of substantial additional over ground water mains, to pump supplies from outside the city, and to duplicate the permanent distribution network which had been severely damaged by direct hits on 10 May. Powerful pumps were fitted on bridges to raise water from the river regardless of the state of the tide and, by January 1942, 41 such pumps had been installed on platforms on 22 Thames bridges. Finally, the LCC Engineer's Department undertook the provision of huge amounts of 'static water' by converting bombed site basements, of which there was a plentiful supply in inner London, into emergency water basins or tanks. Their success is shown in Table 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Static Water available in London Region</th>
<th>July 1941</th>
<th>September 1941</th>
<th>January 1942</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,000,000 galls</td>
<td>19,900,000 galls</td>
<td>88,700,000 galls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Reports in HO 186/952 and 2352

Table 19 - Static Water Availability in London Region

These new static water basins and tanks became a familiar in London (see *Punch* cartoons on pp.233) but they proved fatal to some children (16 deaths in 1942, 16 in 1943 and only

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15 HO186/1140 Ellen Wilkinson's manuscript annotation to Minute dated March 1943. Morrison's further annotation stated 'I do not follow the Par. Sec.'s. NHG [National Fire Guard] idea. Anyway it can hardly arise now. HM'
16 HO186/2352 Report for January 1942
ANOTHER CHANGED FACE
STATELY HOME

"I think—don't you?—that this fire-watching idea should be carried on after the war... in a modified form, of course."

Punch Comments on Emergency and Static Water Storage and the Unpopularity of Fire Watching Cartoons of 4 February 1942 and 10 March 1943
3 in 1944) and were covered to prevent children playing on/falling into them. The National Fire Service, now with its plentiful supply of mains, river and static water, together with the new Fire Guard Organisation, was far better prepared to deal with any new incendiary attacks but the continuation of the lull in enemy activity resulted in manpower cuts in the recently formed NFS. Meanwhile, the manpower situation in the rest of the CD Services continued to cause great concern as London awaited the expected renewal of the German attack.

The Civil Defence Manpower Problem

Although not new, the problems of manpower caused London Senior Regional Commissioner to report, in July 1941, that ‘Recruitment for all services is practically impossible at present.’ However, with the threat of renewed Luftwaffe raiding and the use of new weapons, Gowers had to maintain and improve the CD Services while increasing numbers of trained CD personnel were being removed to feed the demands of the armed forces and war industries. Three months later he reported:

Under the heading ‘Man-power’ come the things that are troubling me most at the present. They relate to the interlinked problems of making the best use of manpower and of keeping the Services contented and efficient while they have nothing to do.’

Back in April 1940, Sir John Anderson had appealed for an extra 250,000 part-time volunteers for the ARP Services. Competition for volunteers increased dramatically a month later when the government appealed for men to join the newly formed Local Defence Volunteers. By mid-July 1940, some 1,166,000 men had volunteered for this Home Guard and some 10% of trained male Civil Defence workers had left their Services. These losses resulted in the government ‘freezing’ Rescue and First Aid manpower i.e. trained full-time (paid) workers were not permitted to leave their Services unless authorised. Simultaneously, the ‘freezing’ of part-time volunteers was considered but rejected. However, two months

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17 HO186/2352 Report for First Quarter 1944
18 HO186/2352 Report for July 1941
19 HO186/2352 Report for October 1941
before the 'blitz' proper on London opened, the true 'volunteer' nature of the ARP/C1) Services started to change as the manpower pressures increased.

Herbert Morrison acknowledged manpower gaps in the ARP Services and, in October 1940, full-time (i.e. paid) ARP Wardens over the age of 30 were 'frozen' (i.e. not permitted to resign without authorisation of the Regional Commissioner) and by the end of the year, some full-time members of the ARP Services were compulsorily enrolled as an alternative to joining the armed forces. This move marked the end of the voluntary principle in recruitment but, on 26 March 1941, Morrison insisted that voluntarism had not failed and he maintained that 'the amazing success of civil defence on a voluntary basis was one of the greatest successes in history.' In January 1941, the Ministry of Home Security was given powers to compel men and women to perform civil defence duties for a maximum of 48 hours per month. Many of the younger, trained and experienced ARP workers were 'called up' to the forces or otherwise directed into industry. The Punch cartoon in May 1941 (p.236) illustrated the range of services eager to welcome new recruits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Full-time * (1000s)</th>
<th>Part-time * (1000s)</th>
<th>Total Full + Part-time * (1000s)</th>
<th>Part timers as % of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1940</td>
<td>123.6</td>
<td>856.3</td>
<td>979.9</td>
<td>87.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1941</td>
<td>126.9</td>
<td>907.5</td>
<td>1034.4</td>
<td>87.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1942</td>
<td>106.3</td>
<td>876.9</td>
<td>983.2</td>
<td>89.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1943</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>940.5</td>
<td>1018.7</td>
<td>92.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1944</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>1046.1</td>
<td>1113.0</td>
<td>94.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1945</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Calculated from Appendix X of O'Brien Civil Defence

* CD (General) Services, wardens, rescue and first aid parties, report and control centres & messengers

Table 20 - Full-time and Part-time Employees in UK ARP Services

The final step of freezing part time civil defence workers was taken in January 1942 when all ARP personnel were obliged to continue their duties until dispensed with by the authorities.

In a BBC broadcast, Herbert Morrison justified this move by assuring civil defence part-

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20 HofC Debs Vol.370 Cols. 603 670, 25 March 1941
"... and here are all the Services. Just state your preference."

David Langdon’s *Punch* Cartoon of 14 May 1941 illustrating the range of job opportunities awaiting recruits – the Services at the table are the three armed forces, Police, Wardens, Firemen, Fire Watchers, Rescue, First Aid Posts, Stretcher Party and Industry.
timers that they were ‘important in every area, you are the key factors in a great many, while in some you are the whole show. We were not prepared, whatever may happen, to run the risk of losing you.’²¹ By these means the numbers of ARP/CD Service workers were maintained, albeit at a lower manning level, through the rest of the war. The UK ARP manpower statistics are detailed in Table 20 (above) where it can be seen that, although the number of full-timers fell, the total numbers were maintained as the percentage of part-timers increased, eventually reaching 94% in June 1944.

Managing London’s CD Manpower

Faced with the need to operate effectively with reduced manpower, the London Regional Commissioners adopted strategies to minimise the impact of having fewer personnel in their CD Services. However, Gowers was eager to shed underemployed full-time CD workers and, in early 1942, he expressed:

concern at the deterioration of morale in the Civil Defence Services, which shows itself in restlessness, indiscipline and petty offences. This is an additional reason for releasing as many whole-time workers as quickly as possible, even at some risk.²²

Two months later, Gowers reported that reductions in the full-time establishments of London Region CD Services had included 15,000 in the Rescue Services, 9,000 in the Casualty Services, and nearly 9,000 in the First Aid and Ambulance Services.²³ In early 1943, London Region was asked to provide one half of the CD personnel to be released to industry and the reductions achieved in the ten months from February 1943 are shown in Table 21. In London, the increased reliance on part-timers was seen as their total numbers increased from 110,000 to 128,000, of which the Wardens’ Service received one half of the new part-timers, raising their numbers from 80,000 to 89,000.

²¹ Morrison, BBC talk 22 January 1942 quoted in O’Brien p.556
²² HO186/2352 Report for March 1942
²³ HO186/2352 Report for May 1942
In tackling the manpower problems, Gowers firstly negotiated with the Ministry of Labour to retain trained and experienced Wardens when the ministry called for all men under 35 to be released for military or war work. In September 1941, he offered up all men below 35 in the Stretcher and Rescue Parties but succeeding in retaining all Wardens between 35 and 41 in addition to some key men under 35 - thus retaining much vital experience in the London Region.

Secondly, in late 1941, the Commissioners rationalised the London CD Services by extensive cross-training of personnel thus making them more flexible in their employment. In particular the amalgamation into the (LCC controlled) Rescue Service of the (Borough controlled) Stretcher Parties. Thirdly, other services were trained in CD duties including members of the Home Guard, later joined by the NFS who were trained in rescue duties. In the build-up to Operation OVERLORD (the Allied invasion of the continent), full use was made of any available armed forces manpower including, as they became available, British, United States and continental servicemen stationed in and around London.

Fourthly, the London Region Group structure was modified when one of the five CD Groups in the Administrative County was abolished saving some 40 valuable staff of all grades. The constituent Boroughs of Group Two (which included Paddington, Hampstead, St Pancras and Islington) were divided between Groups One (Westminster etc.) and Three (City and East End). A similar move in the NFS in London was made in February 1944 when one of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>London CD Service Full timer</th>
<th>February 1943</th>
<th>December 1943</th>
<th>Saving in Ten Months</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wardens</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>10,700</td>
<td>2,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambulance</td>
<td>7,600</td>
<td>5,800</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light &amp; Heavy Rescue</td>
<td>19,600</td>
<td>17,500</td>
<td>2,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 21 - Numbers of Full-Time CD Workers in 1943

Source: Reports in HO186/2352

24 HO186/2352 Report for September 1941

238
Fire Force areas (Area 35 covering North Central London – similar, but not identical, to the former CD Group Two area) was abolished and its resources divided between neighbouring Fire Force Areas\(^\text{25}\) with consequent savings in control and HQ staff.

Finally, the major change at regional level was the formation of the Civil Defence Reserve to reinforce the several mobile columns that had been formed in 1941. The manpower for this reserve was taken from all regions, thus fewer resources were directly available to local ARP Controllers. They could call for reinforcements from their Group and Groups from the Region who could, in turn, call for reinforcements from other regions. Transfers of trained personnel from London Region to the CD Reserve took place in May 1943 when over 500 Rescue men were called for, to transfer to the Reserves in Southern England. Gowers reported that over 50\% of the men were volunteers and there was no opposition from their local authorities\(^\text{26}\) - the general advantage to the latter being that the overall training standards were raised as the secondments were on a rotational basis, so experience was shared with local personnel when those seconded returned to their home organisations. The disadvantage was that valuable specialists were often used for general duties, such as debris clearance labourers, rather than being employed in their CD specialty. As these mobile reserves eventually amounted to some third of total resources, they represented both a significant diminution of the resources available to the Borough ARP Controllers and a consequent growth in the Regional level of control of resources. Mobile reserves were deployed to other regions in the ‘Baedeker’ raids (the attack on historic towns such as Exeter, Bath and York) during early 1942 and the CD Reserve was sent to reinforce hard-hit areas such as Plymouth. Mobile Columns were also deployed in the build-up to the OVERLORD invasion when additional CD Services, particularly fire-fighters, were sent to the Southern ports and assembly areas. Meanwhile, during the early months of 1944, the smaller and more flexible London CD Services awaited

\(^{25}\) W.F. Hickin *Unified Against Fire - A Short History of the NFS* Privately Published by The Watchroom (1994) pp.21-24

\(^{26}\) HO186/2352 Quarterly Report April-June 1943
the renewal of the expected German attack, this time expected to include the feared new bombardment weapons.

Prepared for and Dealing with the New Weapons

**Background**

The effectiveness of London's CD Services needed to be maintained during the 'lull' lest the manned bomber returned however greater threats to London had to be prepared for. These were the new German weapons and the 'bigger and better' HE bombs which had been introduced in the later raids of the Blitz. The size and power of HE were seen to have increased when, during a raid on Hendon, a 2 ton bomb had caused much physical destruction. The effectiveness of incendiary bombs was also seen to have increased as they were dropped in canisters which concentrated their spread and some had explosive heads which deterred handling by fire prevention teams. Further, the authorities feared that the Luftwaffe would adopt the massive 'saturation' bombing raids practised by the Allied Air Forces. The London Regional History file records: 

In 1942 the RAF introduced Saturation raiding which simultaneously produced more incidents than the defences could handle and the Ministry of Home Security formed a committee on which London was represented by the Controller from Islington (W Eric Adams) and a member of the Operations Board. In London it was renamed 'crash raiding' and, in preparation for such attacks, a Regional Circular divided the region into 'areas' of ½ to 1 sq. mile. Area Officers, on the sounding of the alert, would move from depots to their (smaller) Area HQs.  

This dispersal of resources into smaller groupings, allowing CD Services to operate autonomously, was a prudent preparation for 'crash raiding' but it was the 'new weapons' that caused the British authorities more concern. These were the pilot-less pulse jet powered 'flying bomb' (known as H.Y and V1) and the Long Range Rocket (LRR, BIG BEN and V2). Some background is essential to understand the problems of the British authorities in planning

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27 See pp.183, 184
28 HO186/2955 History of Civil Defence - London Region u/d but circa 1945 p.26
to deal with these very different weapons on whose performance there was initially little precise intelligence - a topic beyond this thesis but well covered in the relevant volumes of the Official Histories. Essentially the V2 had been under development for some years and was progressed following the RAF fire raid on Lübeck which destroyed 200 acres of buildings and caused Hitler to order 'terror attacks of a retaliatory nature' on the UK. The initial German response was the Baedeker raids on historic English towns in April - June 1942 but a range of new weapon development was also authorised. In June 1942 the first LRR was tested and, four months later, a V2 test firing achieved 50 miles in height and travelled 120 miles along its predicted path. In late 1942 intelligence reports suggested that the Germans were developing a rocket to attack London but some confusion was introduced as later reports referred to a 'flying bomb' successfully fired on Christmas Eve 1942.

The Sandys Committee

By April 1943, the range of intelligence reporting caused the UK Chiefs of Staff to suggest to the Prime Minister that an investigation under one man should be established on the threat to the UK posed by 'large rockets' and that Churchill's son in law Duncan Sandys MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Supply, be appointed. This was accepted and Sandys soon produced a series of reports on the V2 and suggested a range of counter-measures to protect the UK - and London in particular. Sandys' reports could not be specific on such details as the warhead type and size and, by predicting a warhead of 8-10 tons, proved to be overly pessimistic. Further, an August 1943 report mentioned the development of at least two German missiles.

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30 Fuhrer HQ Signal 55 672/42 dated 14 April 1942 quoted in Basil Collier The Battle of the V Weapons Hodder & Stoughton (1964) p.15
31 Collier The Battle of the V Weapons p.180, 183
32 Collier p.157
Sandys' suggested countermeasures concentrated on recommending targets for photographic reconnaissance and subsequent bombing attack and he left CD countermeasures to the Ministry of Home Security (for reinforcement of CD Services and air raid shelters) and the Home Defence Executive, under Sir Findlater Stewart, who proposed plans for such matters as public warnings and the transfer out of London of government offices. Morrison was kept fully informed and his officials made the necessary preparations to modify policy in an attempt to cover the range of threats that existed, but the exact performance of the new weapons was unknown. Countermeasures included a renewed evacuation plan for London schoolchildren, many of whom had returned to London over the previous four years, and further improving shelter provision in the region. With more intelligence becoming available, the estimates of casualties were scaled down and the likely date of the opening of the V weapon attack receded so 'it was decided that these questions be confined to paper.' Nevertheless, in October 1943, another 100,000 Morrison (indoor) shelters were ordered and the bulk of Morrisons held in reserve across the country were moved to stores around London. In the first two months of 1944 some 29,000 Morrisons were distributed in the London Region. Additionally, the new Deep Shelters were finished but were not to be opened until directed by the Ministry. Finally the reorganisations of the smaller but more flexible CD Services, made in response to the threat of saturation attacks, were reviewed. As can be seen from the casualties listed in Table 17, the lull in enemy activity over the London Region had not been absolute. Raids were experienced although all were relatively minor incidents and treated so by the CD authorities who were, however, kept 'on their toes' by these infrequent reminders of the continuing threat. Some of these 'hit and run' raids did however cause many casualties when the bombs fell on crowded buildings - particularly the daylight

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33 CAB 101/130 The Crossbow Committee p 26
34 Due to steel shortages much of this order was not fulfilled.
35 See p.228
raid on 20 January 1943, when 39 people were killed and 74 injured in an LCC school, and the evening raid on 7 November 1943, when 74 people were killed in a dance hall in Putney.

The threat of the new weapons naturally caused the government much concern. In a Minute dated 5 July 1943, London Region were advised that one rocket would destroy houses over an area of 240 acres and, with a London average of 37 people to the acre, each rocket would make homeless some 8,800 people, of whom 400 would be killed and many injured. After 5 days of attack i.e. after 120 rockets had fallen without overlap of their craters, some one million people would be homeless. Further, at a rate of one rocket per hour on the Region, after 30 days 150,000 people would be killed and a similar number injured. The official response was to plan for another mass evacuation by train of Londoners and to further increase the number of shelters available in the London Region. These estimates were based on the ten ton warhead assumed for the Rockets but experience of the flying bombs and better intelligence reports from the continent, from Prisoners of War and from photographic reconnaissance, caused the Research and Experiments Division of the MIIS to revise its assessments in August 1944. They now assumed that a 7 ton warhead with 5½ tons of aluminised explosive was likely to kill no more than 20 people per rocket, or up to 30 people if 25% of the population were out in the open.

At Cabinet level the threat and the necessary precautions on the home front, all to be made 'without materially affecting the war effort', were monitored by the 'Rocket Consequences Committee', a group of Ministers of the appropriate Departments under the chairmanship of Herbert Morrison 'to concert action and plans to meet the contingency of rocket attacks on the scale which seemed possible.' But this Committee did not meet frequently as the plans for

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36 HO186/2352 Report for January 1943 p.1
37 HO186/2352 October December 1943 p.1
38 HO186/2937 'The Threat of the Long Range Rocket' Memo dated 5 July 1943
39 The relevant file (CAB 98/39) is not of significance.
40 Report RA (44) 24 dated 5 September 1944 in CAB 121/214 [The CROSSBOW Committee papers]
mass evacuation had been made and subsequent assessments lowered the severity of the threat as more intelligence was received. An indication of the gravity with which the Committee had originally viewed the new threat was the inclusion in the new evacuation plan of a special scheme to issue citizens with coloured tickets for adults, at a flat rate of 5/- per head, for places on timed trains from certain stations, which gave no indication of the eventual destination. Destinations for each colour of ticket would be decided by the Ministries of Health and War Transport and the aim was to avoid ‘armies of voucher holders thronging stations all day.’

The threat of the V weapons was disclosed to the operational level of the CD Services in December 1943 - Cyril Demarne at the London Regional Fire HQ was called in by the Regional Fire Chief (Mr Delve) and told to expect attack by weapons with a ten ton warhead. Greater demolition of buildings could therefore be expected, possibly with a lower fire risk. The NFS in London prepared by building elevated Observation Posts (OPs) to report weapon impacts so that fire services could be rapidly sent to incidents with the newer and better equipment now available to them. The likely effects of the new weapons still unknown so all Services had to remain flexible and, hopefully, adapt to the weapons once they arrived. Churchill recorded:

nearly fifteen months passed between the minute which the Chiefs of Staff sent me in April 1943 and the actual arrival [of the V weapons] in June 1944. Not a day was wasted. No care was lacking. Preparations involving many months to perfect were set on foot on a large and costly scale in good time... the whole story may stand as an example of the efficiency of our governing machine, and of the foresight and vigilance of all connected with it.  

But before these new weapons were used, the final phase of the Luftwaffe manned bomber offensive had to be dealt with.

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41 Interview with Cyril Demarne OBE, in 1944 in the Regional Fire Inspectorate - 12 November 1999
42 W.S. Churchill The Second World War (1951) Vol.V. Closing the Ring Ch. XIII p.185
Performance of The CD Services 1944-1945

The Baby Blitz

Manned bomber raids in some force returned to London in the first four months of 1944 but only 12 raids were considered of any importance by Regional HQ. These reached their peak between 18-25 February when:

the enemy used new tactics for target indicating, but only on three occasions achieved anything like concentrations, and even those it would seem were not very accurately placed for the chosen target. The most successful concentration was centred on Fulham on the night of 20 February. ... the experience was worse than anything during the old Blitz ... the proportion of heavy bombs among the HE was higher than it used to be ... and the blast is obviously more powerful. Great devastation was caused ... The chief interest lies in the fact that the enemy has returned to the incendiary attack ... every sort of firebomb was used ... 42

During that first quarter of 1944 some 1,178 Londoners were killed in raids which gave the smaller CD Services and the NFS and Fire Guard their first real tests. The Regional Commissioner assessed performance:

the Fireguard did excellent work in putting out incipient fires. ... some 75% of all fires caused by enemy action have been extinguished by them without the assistance of the NFS ... the NFS are never stretched; Fireguards are often overwhelmed ... the right tactics are clearly to get the NFS at once to any place where incendiaries fall in concentration ... 43

The success of the Fire Guard in dealing with incendiaries was reflected in the Punch cartoon (below) which can be contrasted with the reservations citizens had whilst standing guard in the lull period. (p233) Gowers’ assessment of the Civil Defence Services in these shorter, more concentrated, air raids was that ‘they were never stretched, and they maintained a high standard of performance. This is also true of the post-raid services.’ While his views on the changed habits of shelterers was that:

few now spend the night in shelter, except for the permanent population of the Tubes, which rose from a low of about 3,000 to a peak of about 50,000 and at the end of the quarter stood at 20,000. “Andersons” are out of favour. The shelterer feels too much in the thick of the

42 HO186/2352 Quarterly Report January - March 1944
barrage. The same is true of the surface shelters. But there is a heavy demand for ‘Morrisons’. If people leave their houses at all for shelter they like to go somewhere where there is plenty of overhead cover and no noise.

Overall the CD Services appear to have coped well with the renewal of air raiding. This ‘Baby Blitz’ ended in April 1944 and there followed a six week lull during which the allied invasion forces completed their assembly in Southern England unhindered by serious attack by the Luftwaffe. The invasion opened on 6 June, D-DAY, meanwhile the feared V weapons had yet to be experienced so the Germans had missed the opportunity to use the new weapons against the invasion forces massed in the vulnerable assembly areas across southern England. No significant changes to CD policy had been made and the now smaller and more flexible CD forces in London stood ready to amend their tactics to meet the new offensive.

"But, to be quite honest, when incendiaries come down all we do is just go right ahead and put the fires out."  

Punch 5 April 1944

The Main V1 Offensive - June to August 1944

With the allied forces on the continent, much attention was paid to the V weapons launching sites by allied bomber forces and their photographic reconnaissance specialists who assessed that the opening of German attack was imminent - not least because any rapid allied advance
might threaten the V weapon bases. The public were aware that new 'secret weapons' were expected and the prospect was worrying but the ARP Wardens in Poplar, with their Cockney humour, maintained that 'It's all a____ yarn, and if it's not, it's been too quiet around here since 1940 anyway'.\footnote{44} On the night of 13 June, the first four V1 flying bombs were launched at the UK. All but one fell short of London and the other passed over Poplar and hit a railway bridge in Bethnal Green, killing six people and seriously damaging neighbouring houses. The attack proper began on 15 June when 40 V1 reached the London area. Next day Morrison told Parliament of the opening of the attack by 'pilot less aircraft'\footnote{45} which then continued in some force until late August. Gowers reported on the first three months of the V1 offensive which:

has gone on for day and night with intervals which sometimes lasted several hours. 14 hours was the longest lull ... as many as 15 have been known to land in the London Region almost simultaneously ... the largest number to fall in any 24 hours was 98 on 2/3 August ... not one of the 95 Local Authority areas in the Region has escaped ... As all the orthodox form of shelter afford excellent protection, fatal casualties at night have been surprisingly light and we have been lucky in having fewer casualties than might have been expected from the fall of HLY on crowded buildings or in busy streets... The worst disasters were at the Guards Chapel during morning service [119 killed] and a block of US Army flats in Chelsea [74 killed] ... Fires have been rare ... casualties (to 4 August) are 4,318 killed ... \footnote{46}

With their valuable experience gained during the Baby Blitz, the CD Services worked well, co-operating under the new onslaught. The NFS proved to be very competitive in using their high level OPs to report the arrival of V1s to their own control and to the ARP Control Rooms and often, the NFS arrived at an incident in strength before the local Wardens. The area of destruction of the V1, with its one ton HE warhead, was considerable and most of these large 'incidents' involved significant disruption of public utilities, destruction of many houses and consequent homelessness. The Chief Regional Fire Officer reported, on 10 July 1944, that:

\footnote{44} E.H. Smith GM (Chief Warden) Poplar Civil Defence Warden's Organisation Bulletin Issue No 67
\footnote{45} HoC Debs Vol.400 Cols. 2301 3 16 June 1944
\footnote{46} HO186/2352 April June 1944 p.1

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.. it was soon clear that the main effect of the new weapon was not fire but widespread demolition and extensive blast ... it was evident that there was much the NFS could do in incidents of this sort ... it was decided to place the full resources of the NFS at the disposal of local authorities and to assist the general public in any way possible ... action was taken to pass on to NFS personnel as much as possible of the accumulated experience of the CD authorities in dealing with incidents of this kind ... It was essential that some 'knitting' of the two services into one successful unit and much has been done in this direction ... It has also been evident that the NFS has something to contribute to the efficiency of the Civil Defence Organisation ...

Here the Fire Chief mentioned the provision of NFS floodlights, field telephones and the value of the elevated OPs connected to both NFS and CD Control to report V1 impacts. London was coping with the new onslaughts and, in his report covering the first part of the V1 offensive, Gowers confirmed that:

... the surface shelter has at last come into its own. It has stood up to the blast wonderfully, and is universally and deservedly popular. There is also a well justified [faith] in Andersons and Morrisons. Probably because there is no longer gunfire, and because the penetration of the missiles is so small, there seems to be no longer any great urge to get deep underground. Shelterers in the Tubes rose to a peak of 73,600 at the end of the first fortnight and have steadily fallen since (helped by the transfer of 5,400 to the new Deep Shelters) to little more than half that number.

The Deep Shelters were opened in July and the census figures for Tube usage are given in Table 22.

In his quarterly report covering the main V1 offensive, the Regional Commissioner expressed some concern about public morale when he reported that:

the public are standing up to their ordeal in a way which does them infinite credit ... but ... there is a real danger of it being broken by resentment at failure by the Government to tackle successfully the task of prompt alleviation of the miseries of homelessness. The key to maintaining morale is speed and efficiency in furniture salvage, first-aid repairs [to houses] and rehousing those whose homes have one. Already ugly signs of impatience are showing themselves faintly here and there. Homeless people in Stepney have been taking

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47 Regional Chief Fire Officer's report of The Work of the NFS in Connection with the Flying Bomb Attacks dated 10 July 1944 (Parker Papers)
48 AA Gun belt was moved to the south coast in July 1944.
49 HO186/2352 Quarterly Report April - June 1944 p.2
possession of unoccupied houses and there is talk in Poplar of mass demonstrations in Whitehall. If the attack goes on much longer there will be Boroughs in which so many houses have been totally destroyed that the problem of rehousing will no longer be capable of resolution, by first-aid repairs, however prompt, and some other expedient will have to be found, such as putting up some sort of temporary buildings on bombed sites. Poplar, for one, has already reached this stage. 50

This lengthy quotation is included as it was quite unprecedented for Sir Ernest Gowers to put such points to Morrison although he had, occasionally, showed his irritation with minor bureaucratic problems which the Ministry of Home Security seemed unable to handle. The inability to deal effectively with furniture recovered from bombed houses and stored at public expense until it could be collected by the owners, annoyed Gowers. The quotation also demonstrates that, although decisions on civil defence matters had effectively moved to Regional level, local authorities were still able to take local initiatives to relieve distress caused by the bombing.

Finally, one activity that again needed to be dealt with once bombing had restarted was the clearance of debris to allow transport to flow and to clear the bombed sites. In August 1944 the debris clearance force stood at 5,000 labourers and Gowers hoped to double that number.

Table 22 - Tube Station and Deep Shelter Usage 1944-1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Night of:</th>
<th>Tube Traffic Stations</th>
<th>Non Traffic Tube Stations</th>
<th>New Deep Shelters</th>
<th>Total Shelterers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/7 June 1944</td>
<td>9,780</td>
<td>2,142</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>11,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/14 June 1944</td>
<td>10,196</td>
<td>2,595</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>12,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/17 June 1944</td>
<td>49,264</td>
<td>3,725</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>52,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/20 June 1944</td>
<td>68,961</td>
<td>5,461</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>74,422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24/25 June 1944</td>
<td>66,730</td>
<td>5,540</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>72,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 June/1 July 1944</td>
<td>70,838</td>
<td>7,443</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>78,281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/8 July 1944</td>
<td>61,083</td>
<td>3,641</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>66,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/15 July 1944</td>
<td>48,015</td>
<td>3,124</td>
<td>Closed</td>
<td>55,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5 August 1944</td>
<td>38,398</td>
<td>4,678</td>
<td>10,502</td>
<td>53,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/19 January 1945</td>
<td>14,149</td>
<td>3,077</td>
<td>5,680</td>
<td>22,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/7 April 1945</td>
<td>7226</td>
<td>2172</td>
<td>3280</td>
<td>12,678</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Weekly census returns in HO207/226
Many labourers were housed in some of the 142 temporary camps erected in the Region. Several of these camps were handed over to the Ministry of Works to house the growing First Aid repair (to houses) force that was tackling the enormous repair task.

The V1 offensive was intense but its impact did not approach that of the Big Blitz. Different tactics and shift working were required to enable the CD Services to cope with these one ton warheads, which were not limited to night-time raids as the weapons arrived singly, or in groups, at any time throughout the 24 hour period. This required CD posts to be continuously manned rather than Wardens being on night duty. By the end of August, over 5,000 Londoners had been killed by V1 attacks and nearly three times that number injured - the casualties are detailed in Table 26. Before leaving the general consideration of the V1 offensive it is appropriate to refer to the serious suggestion that, to save Londoners’ lives, the Germans should be deceived into altering their aim point away from central London.

Morrison’s biographers described his annoyance at:

... a plan to deceive the Germans by feeding them false information indicating that their missiles were over shooting London. This deception was intended to lead them to shorten their range and so make the missiles fall short in open country of southern England. The scheme had some success, but also resulted in Morrison’s south London receiving some of the battering intended for smarter central areas and he angrily protested at this.

The biographers’ source for this quotation was an interview with Duncan Sandys so it must be seriously considered, however the relevant (TOP SECRET) file shows that the proposal was made by the Chiefs of Staff but that the Cabinet rejected it as:

... it would be a serious matter to assume any degree of direct responsibility for action which would affect the areas against which the flying bombs were aimed ... Agreed that the proposal not be accepted but do create confusion in the enemy mind and present him with an inaccurate picture.

51 See p. 259
52 B Donoughue and GW Jones Herbert Morrison, Portrait of a Politician (1973) p. 319
53 When this author wrote to Sandys in 1987 requesting an interview, a secretary replied that Lord Sandys was too ill to receive visitors - he died shortly afterwards.
54 WM (44) 98th Meeting 28 July 1944 - copy filed in CAB 121/214 dated 28 July 1944
ADOLF'S FAREWELL TO HIS STUNT

"The time may be at hand when we two must part; but it's been wonderful while it lasted."

Punch Cartoons of 26 July and 6 September 1944
Citizens' familiarity with V1s and the Expected End of that Campaign
The question was later considered in some detail by Michael Howard in his *Strategic Deception* volume of the *Official History of British Intelligence*. Howard concluded that 'the deception authorities had thus settled for a more cautious policy. Rather than persuade the enemy that he had got his aim wrong, they should try to reassure him that it was just about right.'\(^{55}\) Some slight modification to the Cabinet decision on deception was obtained for the deception authorities on 15 August 'to prevent the enemy from moving his aim towards the north-west' but this came too late to be put into effect as the sites were overrun by the end of the month. Thus Morrison appears to have been successful in preventing attempts to alter the V1 aiming point however Sandys' 1987 obituary stated that he 'is said to have blandly ignored the instruction, thereby saving much devastation in London'\(^{56}\). In 1978, Dr. R.V. Jones (formerly of 'Air Intelligence') recorded that he had initially ignored the Cabinet instruction, telling his MI5 contact that, as he had not attended the meeting at which Morison's 'incredible' decision was made, Jones would not believe it until he saw it writing.\(^{57}\) Howard surely resolves the matter by stating that German documents captured when the Vi launching sites were overrun on 1 September 1944 showed that, at no point did the Germans think it necessary to adjust V1 aiming points.\(^{58}\)

Within the London Region local authorities had, since the V1 offensive opened, successfully attempted to recall their Wardens who had been released to industry and many part-timers were taken on as temporary full-timers. The 'main accession to the strength' (Gowers' phrase) of the London Region CD Services were volunteers from other Regions. Over 1,000 Wardens (40% whole-timers) came to London and were allocated to the 43 authorities that requested assistance and Gowers assessed the scheme as 'an unqualified success'. In his quarterly report, he warned Morrison that 'If BIG BEN were to arrive Local Authorities would, of course, be in still more urgent need of help.'\(^{59}\) This comment referring to the V2 (which was classified TOP SECRET) was his only reference to that feared weapon as, not only

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\(^{55}\) Michael Howard *British Intelligence in the Second World War - Volume Five - Strategic Deception*. HMSO (1990) p.176  
\(^{56}\) *The Times* obituary for Duncan Sandys, 27 November 1987.  
\(^{57}\) R.V. Jones *Most Secret War* Hamish Hamilton (1978) p.422  
\(^{58}\) Howard p.177
were the public not told of its existence and development, but no reference was made to it in Gowers’ regular SECRET reports to Morrison until November 1944.

The Later V1 and the V2 Offensive - September 1944 to May 1945

By late July 1944 the Rocket Consequences Committee noted that:

... with the emergence of the flying bomb, plans for dealing with the Long Range Rockets were put on one side, but last week we were informed by the War Cabinet that 1,000 LRR were in an advanced state of preparation with 7 ton warheads. 60

The plans were reviewed but the advance of the Allied armies through Northern France suggested that the launch sites would be soon overrun. Public morale was boosted temporarily on 7 September when, advised by the Chiefs of Staff, who considered that the advance of the Allies had pushed the V weapons sites out of range for further attacks on London, Duncan Sandys issued an overconfident press statement. He reassured Londoners that 'except possibly for a few last shots, the Battle of London is over.'61 The Air Staff had considered that they, or their Junior Minister Harold Balfour, rather than Sandys, should make this statement to the press but Sandys appealed to his father-in-law. Churchill wrote a personal Minute to his staff stating 'I forbid the slightest change in the arrangements ... you will make this perfectly clear to the Air Ministry and that is an order.' 62

Sandy’s statement appeared in the press next morning then, and to his embarrassment, at 1840 that evening, the first of 517 V2s landed in the London Region - at Chiswick killing three people. Another landed 16 seconds later in Epping so the V2 campaign had opened while many were digesting Sandys’ overconfident reassurance and the cartoon in that week’s Punch showing Hitler’s farewell to the V1 (p.251).

60 CAB121/214 Memo by the Home Secretary (Morrison), 26 July 1944.
62 CAB 121/214 Churchill’s Minute, 4 September 1944
"Just my wretched luck—they put me down for fire-guard that night."

"Let's see whether I've got this right, now: 'Downstairs, Mr. and Mrs. Morrison go out to the Andersons; upstairs, Mr. and Mrs. Anderson come downstairs to the Morrison.'"

"Hark—a buzz bomb."
"I can't bear a thing."
"Then it must be a rocket."

A selection of 'home front' citizens' concern (or lack of concern) as shown in *Punch* 30 August and 6 September 1944 and 17 January 1945.
The offensive developed but the public were not told of the existence of the V2 until 8 November when the Germans themselves announced that the V2 offensive against London had begun. Two days later the Winston Churchill confirmed to Parliament that long-range rockets had indeed been launched at the UK. In spite of the Government's secrecy about the new weapons the Wardens in Poplar had realised that something unusual was happening when the impacts were reported as 'gas main explosions.' On 14 September, when one of these mysterious 'gas explosions' was reported in Walthamstow, 'several Poplar Wardens drove north to inspect the crater and the secret was out' recorded their Chief Warden. The arrival of these new weapons, again with a one ton warhead, required no change in tactics or operational techniques on the part of the CD Services. Some V2s air burst which increased the area of destruction but lessened the size of the crater and thus fewer utilities were damaged. As with the V1, it became standard practice to send all services in strength to V2 incidents ('the basic rule "all out on an incident" needs no change') then withdraw those not required by the Incident Control Officer on the spot. The NFS provided flood-lights and field telephones and again, in the absence of significant fire threat, manpower to supplement rescue and immediate debris and road clearance and crowd control. Certain things were changing with the improving war situation - the black out was relaxed to a 'grey out' although the public tended to value the safety they thought the lack of light provided.

An essential difference for the public and the CD Services in dealing with the V2 was that, unlike all previous weapons, no warning of its approach was possible as the V2 was a ballistic missile descending on the metropolis from over 50 miles up. The result was that, with no alert warning, people did not have the opportunity to take cover in shelters and the first sign of the weapons was the massive explosion. As with the V1, the V2 offensive continued as a series of single attacks throughout the 24 hour period so, with no warning, there was little incentive to

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63 Collier The Defence of the United Kingdom p.413
64 E.H. Smith Poplar Civil Defence Warden's Organisation Bulletin Issue No.67 'Victory Issue' dated 28 June 1945
65 The phrase from the Poplar Bulletin (Ref 61)
take shelter for the night as the raids continued through the 24 hour period. Some people did, of course, continue to use shelters and Table 22 shows shelter usage through the V weapons attacks while Table 23 shows the usage of the new deep shelters, most of which remained open during the V weapon offensive although some were retained for military use.

While the V2 offensive was still in full spate, the end of the war was seen to be imminent and further manpower reductions were desirable, not least because the massive amount of house repair and building demanded all the manpower that could be released from other tasks. In December 1944, it was decided to reduce by 50% the number of full-time members of Rescue, Warden, Ambulance, First Aid Post and Messenger Services. In the London Region, the whole-time paid establishment in October 1944 was 41,411 and the paid strength was 34,890. The 50% cut would have released many thousands but it was thought advisable to make some concession in the most exposed areas. These were Groups 4 and 7 - to the East and South East of Inner London where the majority of the V weapons fell and a reduction of only 25% was imposed in those areas. Consequently, at the end of February 1945, in London there were 24,153 paid members of the London Region Civil Defence Services so nearly 11,000 had been released. Of these some 1,500 skilled men in the Rescue services had been

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approx. Capacity</th>
<th>Clapham South</th>
<th>Clapham North</th>
<th>Stockwell</th>
<th>Camden Town</th>
<th>Belsize Park</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/5 August 1944</td>
<td>1488</td>
<td>1240</td>
<td>3298</td>
<td>2836</td>
<td>1640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/19 January 1945</td>
<td>1487</td>
<td>Nil *</td>
<td>2209</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Nil *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/7 April 1945</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>Nil *</td>
<td>1227</td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>Nil *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Shelter tickets current on 7 April 1945</td>
<td>1747</td>
<td>Nil *</td>
<td>1799</td>
<td>2181</td>
<td>Nil *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Weekly Shelter Usage Returns in HO207/226

* These Deep Shelters were used by the military and thus closed to the public

# Dates from CAB 121/214 dated 26 July 1944

Table 23 - New Deep Shelters - Opening Dates and Usage - July 1944

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transferred to urgent house repair work and those men withdrawn to local authority work were directed into reconstruction work. Although the average number of fatalities per new weapon (2 killed per V1 and 5 per V2) was much less than expected, the amount of physical damage caused by the one ton HE warheads was dramatic. The result was that London had a major housing repair problem as the winter of 1944 approached. Resources within the region were not sufficient to deal with the problem and the government took steps to ensure that both labour and material supply were co-ordinated to maximise efficiency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metropolitan or County Borough</th>
<th>Area (acres)</th>
<th>Population 1944 (000s)</th>
<th>V1 Hits</th>
<th>V1 hits per 1000 acres</th>
<th>V1 hits per 10,000 of 1944 popln</th>
<th>V2 Hits</th>
<th>V2 hits per 1000 Acres</th>
<th>V2 hits per 10,000 of 1944 popln</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Croydon (CB)</td>
<td>12672</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finsbury</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulham</td>
<td>1706</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hackney</td>
<td>3287</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammersmith</td>
<td>2287</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampstead</td>
<td>2265</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islington</td>
<td>3092</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lambeth</td>
<td>4083</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddington</td>
<td>1357</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poplar</td>
<td>2331</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Marylebone</td>
<td>1473</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Pancras</td>
<td>2694</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepney</td>
<td>1766</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Ham (CB)</td>
<td>4689</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westminster</td>
<td>2305</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Calculated using Norman Longmate The Doodlebugs (1981) and Hitler’s Rockets (1985)

Table 24 - Density of V1 Hits in Selected Boroughs 13 June to 1 September 1944 and Total V2 Hits

Accordingly in mid September 1944, within days of the opening of the V2 offensive, a 'London Repair Executive' under the chairmanship of Sir Malcolm Trustram Eve KC was formed by the Ministry of Health to co-ordinate repairs across the Region. Local authority 'Repair Officers' met regularly and the situation was monitored by Trustram Eve and his specialists. It is perhaps significant that the Executive was a Ministry of Health organ not one under the London Regional Organisation as, by this time, Henry Willink had been promoted

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66 HO186/2352 Quarterly Report, January - March 1945 p.2
67 Trustram Eve had been involved in the administration of War Damage matters since 1941 and subsequently led the Local Government Boundary Commission 1945-49.
Table 25 - Density of V Weapon Hits in 15 Boroughs, County and Region

from Special Regional Commissioner for the Homeless (and not replaced) to be the Minister of Health. He was not in favour of further extending Regional responsibilities at this late stage in the war. The continuing steady attack by V2s was supplemented by the occasional V1, now launched by aircraft based in Holland and which eventually had to withdraw to Northern Germany. Other V1s were fired from sites in Holland before the allies overran the area, but the main civilian casualties in London after September 1944 were caused by the V2 offensive. The V2 produced some very severe incidents when the point of impact was a particularly heavily populated area or a busy commercial site. Of particular concern were the V2 incidents at the Woolworth's store in New Cross on 25 November 1944 when 160 died, at Smithfield Market on 8 March 1945 when 129 people died and at Hughes Mansions, a large block of flats in Stepney on the morning of 27 March when over 130 were killed. The final V2 landed at Orpington, Kent later that day. In all, 517 V2 rockets had hit the London Region but the advance of the allied armies was such that the final launch sites within range of firing on the UK were overrun by 28 March 1945. From Table 24 it can be seen that the boroughs to the south and the east of the centre of London received a greater density of V1 attacks while the

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68 See p.257
density of V2 attacks were centred on central London but the spread was wide. Nevertheless in the final seven months of V weapon attacks, nearly 3,000 Londoners were killed and twice that number injured— the statistics for the whole V weapon offensive are detailed in Table 26.

As the danger from the V weapons declined with the advance of the allied armies across the Rhine and into Germany, the London Services were rapidly reduced then closed down. The Fire Guard regulations had been relaxed on 7 September 1944 and part-time members of the NFS were stood down on 1 February 1945. Orders were issued on 26 April that the CD organisation across the UK should be wound down and, soon, the ‘appointed day’ of 2 May

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casualties For</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Injured</th>
<th>Total Casualties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Flying Bomb Attack June 1944 - August 1944</td>
<td>5,126</td>
<td>14,712</td>
<td>19,836</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Casualties for Rocket and Flying Bomb Attack September 1944 - May 1945</th>
<th>Killed</th>
<th>Injured</th>
<th>Total Casualties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,862</td>
<td>6,192</td>
<td>9,054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Figures as Table 17 in Parker Papers (a/d but circa May 1945)

Table 26 - London Region Casualties During V Weapon Offensives

1945 was announced. On 31 May, the functions of the Ministry of Home Security were transferred to the Home Office and the final act was a farewell parade in Hyde Park, reviewed and addressed by HM the King George on 10 June 1945. The rapid pace at which the CD Services had been dispensed with caused comment, and even resentment, from people, some of whom had been serving the ARP/CD Services as volunteers for six years. When, in 1953, the head of the Home Office Civil Defence Department read the final draft of Major Terence O’Brien’s Official History Civil Defence he commented that he was:

... constantly coming across the complaint that at the end of the war the CD Services were dismissed with scant ceremony and this excuse is sometimes given to justify the refusal to join any of the new Services today. The facts are extremely different and I think they are
worth stating so as to get the record right and be useful for future reference. The passage might end with a few words looking forward to the re-establishment of CD in 1948.  

Re-establishment was necessary as the arrival of the atom bomb in 1945 brought a new threat to world security. Although the UK civil defences had been stood down in 1945, the British government had, just three years later, to create a range of CD Services to protect the British public against this new form of aerial bombardment. The 1948 organisation again utilised a regional system but neither the wartime Coalition government nor its Labour successor would countenance any continuation of the undoubtedly successful but inevitably undemocratic (i.e. unelected) wartime regional system of government. The next section reviews the successful working of the London regional organisation through the final four years of the war.

The Regional System in London and its Legacy

Established at the time of Munich to co-ordinate local authority ARP schemes and Services, the Regional Organisation performed a great service during the 'phony war' by bringing London ARP to a high pitch of readiness through constant contact with the Borough authorities and by supervising frequent operational exercises. During the Blitz, the Regional Organisation again proved its value as it became the vehicle for encouraging, then imposing, co-ordination between the nine CD Groups in the London Region and for co-ordinating inter Group and inter-Region reinforcements. It was also Regional HQ that was the vehicle for making effective changes to the CD organisation rather than creating new organisations such as the 'Greater London Authority' called for by Ritchie Calder in 1940 and by Dr W.A. Robson over many years. In late September 1940, it was 'Special Commissioners' that were appointed to the London Region to deal with the problems exposed by the Blitz. The appointments of H.U. Willink and Sir Warren Fisher were successful and proved to be a useful precedent when Charles Key was made Special Commissioner for Shelters in January 1941. At the level of Senior Commissioner, a major advance was made when the unfortunate

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49 CAB103/388 Memo from Head of Home Office CD Department dated 26 October 1953
Euan Wallace MP resigned ('sacked' recalled Mr K.A.L. Parker)\(^{70}\) and Sir Ernest Gowers was appointed. Gowers rapidly inaugurated better information reporting systems both down to Groups and Boroughs and up to his Minister and the Cabinet. He also established an Intelligence Department at Regional HQ which analysed bombing results, made damage assessments and produced a range of statistical information useful to both operational officers and planners. The high regard in which Gowers was held by Ministers and his staff is reflected in the Ministry of Home Security's selection of Gowers to be the subject of an official portrait by war artist Meredith Frampton. Now in the Imperial War Museum (and reproduced on page 262) the portrait is a triple one as, typically, Gowers:

> thought it would look rather absurd for him to appear to be operating the Control Room on his own ... so he suggested to Lt Col Child and me (KAL Parker) that we might be posed as what might be described as support players\(^{71}\)

In practice, the regional organisation in London worked very well. The Blitz certainly produced some difficult administrative problems for the Regional Commissioners but these were dealt with by firm executive action in the case of Stepney while similar action was threatened in West Ham. There were occasional other minor problems with local authorities in the London Region but, in general, the authorities co-operated well with the Regional Commissioners and the performance of the ARP/CD Services throughout the region proved to be most creditable.

There had been several instances of Gowers, the experienced senior civil servant and public administrator, disagreeing with Ministerial directions. Gowers was reluctant to contribute reports to other Regional Commissioners on London matters as he did not see them as the business of others\(^{72}\) and he considered reports 'a waste of time.' Matters came to a head when the Ministry of Home Security decided to set up the Fire Guard as a Service separate from

\(^{70}\) Interview with Mr K.A.L. Parker CB, 19 January 1988

\(^{71}\) Richard Morphet Meredith Frampton Tate Gallery Catalogue (1982) p.74

\(^{72}\) 'Sir E Gowers has always been reluctant to send in any report from London Region and his reports have always been very brief ... he describes them as a waste of time.' HO186/ 2729 Minute dated 7 December 1943
Meredith Frampton RA (1894-1984)
Sir Ernest Gowers KCB KBE, Senior Regional Commissioner for London, Mr K.A.L. Parker, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, and Lt Col A.J. Child OBE MC, Director of Operations and Intelligence, in the London Regional Civil Defence Control Room, 1943
[Subject order corrected by this author]  
Imperial War Museum
local ARP Warden Services across the Region. Morrison had allowed Commissioners an element of discretion in applying the directions to individual local authority organisations, but Gowers took a stand writing that ‘I find very little that I like in it’ and made his case for London to be an exception under the Minister’s discretionary allowance. The ability of local authorities not to change their Fire Guard organisation appeared in the national press but Morrison took a firm line instructing his Permanent Secretary (Harold Scott, formerly of London Regional HQ) to:

> close this correspondence ... I am sure whilst preserving to the right minded the duty of officers of whatever grade to minute honest views... you, as permanent secretary, will put your foot down and stop it ... London and other regions are welcome to their generous measures of discretion I am glad to give them, but we all belong to the same Ministry and no Regional Commissioner can be an absolute Monarch. Please inform Sir E Gowers that I do not accept his view. This Ministry [is] to be consulted before Regional Commissioners reverse my policies when I had only agreed to modifications on merits in particular municipal areas. HIM

Generally, Gowers continued implementing Anderson’s philosophy of ‘a maximum of contact and a minimum of interference’ which proved its worth through the war and Gowers handled the potentially difficult relations with local authorities with success. By co-opting capable senior staff from the local authorities into the Regional Organisation, much confidence was engendered and, once the enemy attacks started, there were no serious objections to the workings of the regional system across London.

Such was the success of local authorities operating successfully under the co-ordination of the Regional Commissioners that there were calls for the regional system to be continued after the war. But insistent demands for the restoration of the status quo ante came from all of the

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73 The Times 26 March 1943
74 HO186/1140 ‘Fire Prevention - London Region’ Manuscript annotations by Morrison dated 9 and 16 April 1943
75 See p 136
local authority associations. They were supported by senior politicians including, significantly, Herbert Morrison and Henry Willink who was, by 1944, the Minister of Health. The experiment in Regional Government thus ended with the hostilities and the reform of London government was delayed until 1964 when the Greater London Council was created with an area very similar to the of No 5 (London) Civil Defence Region. Writing in 1944, Herbert Morrison, with the benefit of being both poacher (at the LCC and negotiating for the AMC) and gamekeeper (as Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security 1940-45) addressed the regional experience. He was then satisfied:

that the London Regional Commissioners won the respect of all of the authorities in their Region and that the happiest relations were established between their officers and those at County Hall and the Town Halls. They exercised their delegated functions on behalf of government thus checking undue centralisation and gave support to the local authorities. 77

It is now appropriate to assess the implementation of policy and draw some conclusions on the CD in London during the final years of the war.

Assessment of Policy Implementation from the Opening of the Blitz

When the Blitz opened in September 1940, the time for planning and training had passed and it was then the ARP authorities' performance and ability to rapidly rectify any organisational shortcomings that mattered. Nevertheless, the organisation and administration of ARP/CD policies still required successfully implementation and this section continues the brief assessment of such implementation.78

Almost all aspects of everyday life in London were affected by the Blitz and most were subject to Government regulation. The national objective became survival although some of

78 See pp.137-140
the more detailed aspects of ARP/CD policy, such as the 'blackout' lighting restrictions resulting in the doubling of road deaths, were questioned. Matters of detail, such as the best way of achieving agreed objectives, were sometimes disputed although, in a coalition government with a large Conservative majority, the nationalisation of the fire services in August 1941 and the increasing role of the unelected regional level of government caused little objection as survival demanded the best use being made of limited resources. However, the need to repeatedly strengthen and widen the various Fire Watching/Fire Guard Orders certainly met with criticisms on their complexity and imprecision although they were implemented to improve fire prevention. Two apparent inconsistencies in higher policy during the Blitz were those concerning deep shelter policy and the post-raid services for the homeless. Anderson insisted at Cabinet that Morrison's initiative in constructing some deep shelters under Tube stations was merely a development of policy, but it was a change of policy from that of no deep shelters to one of a few deep shelters. In the care of the homeless, the necessary regional co-ordination of aid provided once the problem was recognised, almost represented a change of policy but the policy did remain intact and it was the scale of homelessness that caused concern.

Wartime CD policies were not significantly questioned and modifications were introduced to rectify the obvious shortcomings seen in the Big Blitz. However, all the ARP Services performed well and were truly stretched and some were occasionally overwhelmed. The lack of standardisation and varying levels of proficiency shown by many of the smaller fire brigades demanded reform and nationalisation followed. Modifications were made to air raid shelter policies, but these amendments were peripheral to most citizens as the shelters provided good protection for most Londoners. Occasional direct hits caused fatalities in Anderson and brick surface shelters but both types undoubtedly saved many lives. Even more lives might have been saved if Londoners had made greater use of those shelters provided - Regional HQ noted the apathy that had entered Londoners' minds, with fatal results, when heavy raids were experienced on 16 and 19 April and 10 May 1941.
Although the nationalisation of the fire service required primary legislation, the myriad Orders covering most CD matters were issued by the Ministry, and its Regional Commissioners, as delegated legislation. The two legal shortcomings seen during the Blitz were the unsatisfactory original Fire Watchers Orders (which were insufficiently drawn or enforced) and the inadequate Defence Regulations (particularly DR 29B) when the Ministry took over the ARP responsibilities of Stepney Council.

Generally, the ARP/CD interest groups were totally aligned to achieving the aim of protecting the public, although there were Parliamentarians and others demanding deep shelters and a different way of administering the ARP and post-raid services. Criticism of government policies during the Blitz came from several including the campaigning journalist Ritchie Calder (who was later recruited as Head of Campaigns and Plans in the Political Warfare Executive) and J.B.S. Haldane and other members of the Communist Party. Haldane and his ARP Co-ordinating Committee were articulate but not particularly influential and they became even less so when the fatalities of the occasional 'deep shelter' (tube station) disasters became public. Once the end of war was in sight, critics of CD policy did not detract from the implementation of policy. The social disruption caused by evacuation or homelessness did not to break public morale, rather it tended to strengthen Londoners' belief that they could 'take it' and this spirit was revived during the V weapon attacks. The organisational changes in post-raid services were considerable but these were successfully designed to increase the chances of success and survival. The significant fall in London's population during the war also altered the environment, however, other than exacerbating the CD and Fire Guard manpower problems, it had little effect on policy implementation.

During the Blitz, local authorities became increasingly dependent on central government and

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79 The Fire Services (Emergency Provisions) Act (1941)
they inevitably accepted a more compliant role as central government funded more protection and services. The one London authority that did not comply, Stepney, had its Civil Defence responsibilities taken over by the Ministry of Home Security. This action, although not ideal as administrative and operational problems continued, had a salutary effect on other potentially uncooperative local authorities. From the Blitz through to the end of the war any barriers to successful policy implementation were minimal as the general public mood was that of solidarity for survival and victory.

Chapter 8 draws conclusions on Civil Defence in London 1935-45, assesses the correctness of the policies implemented and claims that this thesis has gone some way towards filling some of the gaps in the literature of the subject.
Chapter Eight
Assessments and Conclusions

Introduction

This thesis has traced the development and implementation of policy and the performance of ARP/CD in London from 1935-1945. This final chapter primarily analyses the achievements and shortcomings of that ARP/CD policy having firstly reviewed the existing gaps in the literature and, secondly, having set the analysis of ARP/CD policies into their inter-war and wartime context. The implementation of those policies will then be assessed and the policies evaluated to consider if they were appropriate for the task and general lessons learned will be highlighted. The legacies of CD policies will then be highlighted while the final section vindicates the approach and method used and claims that the aims of the thesis have been achieved although, in doing so, further areas of research were identified.

The Literature of ARP/CD

The thesis aimed to fill gaps in the literature, namely the omission, intentional or otherwise, from the Official Histories and other post-war works, of any in-depth study of the administration and operation of ARP in London. Secondly the successful operation of the regional system in the metropolis remains unacknowledged. Thirdly, the literature omits any detail of the outright administrative failures of the local authorities in Stepney and West Ham. These omissions need to rectified if a balanced assessment of the performance of London local authorities through the period is to be achieved. Finally, some events in the London Blitz have assumed the status of folk lore as, in spite of contrary evidence being available in the archives, erroneous accounts of some wartime incidents continue to be retold by otherwise reputable authors.
Administration, Organisation and Performance of London ARP

There is no in-depth study of the establishment, administration, organisation and performance of ARP/CD in London during the decade from 1935. The official histories are necessarily nation-wide studies and the lack of any proper study of the unique ARP/CD situation across the metropolis is apparent. Such a study must consider the evolution and implementation of policy and some details of the performance of the system under fire. This thesis partially fills that gap in the literature as, although the major topics have been addressed, many aspects of the subject have been given only very brief treatment while others have been intentionally excluded to limit the scope of the thesis to that which can be achieved in 100,000 word thesis.

The Achievements of the Regional System in London

The success of the operation of the Regional system of government for London from 1938-45 remains unacknowledged in the standard works and received only cursory treatment in the Official Histories. Although the civil defence regional system was essentially a wartime organisation, not least because it was necessarily an unelected body, it served London well from its inception in 1938 but it was promptly abolished in 1945 when the status quo ante was restored. Under the stress of heavy bombing, it was the Regional Commissioners that were used to deal with the shortcomings exposed in central and local government preparations. Once it was obvious that London had survived the blitz, pressure was brought on the Government by local politicians, their officers and by the range of local government organisations to ensure that the regional level of government was not continued after the war. They were supported by the majority of Parliamentarians, including Herbert Morrison and Henry Willink who had been Special Regional Commissioner for the Homeless and was, from late 1943, Minister of Health with responsibility for local government matters. Most local and national politicians had been against the regional system from its establishment but

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accepted it as a wartime necessity. Nevertheless, the system served the people of London, and its local authorities, very well yet little has been published on the topic. This thesis goes some way to fill that gap in the literature.

The Failures in Stepney and West Ham

The published works omit any details of the outright failure of local administration in Stepney or the removal of ARP/CD responsibilities from that Borough Council. The imposition of a Regional Officer as Controller in the Borough followed the removal of the Council Labour Leader, then of the Town Clerk, as ARP Controller – both major events in central/local government relations, but the subject does not feature in the literature. T.H. O’Brien’s Official History Civil Defence (1955) totally avoids mentioning Stepney’s failures while R.M. Titmuss’ Problems of Social Policy (1950) obfuscates the incident by avoiding any real detail of the nature and extent of the problems or of the actions taken. As to the reason for these omissions, it would be charitable to suggest that such local failures were best forgotten when the official histories were published ten and five years after the end of the war. Another possible reason may have been that it was politically convenient to forget about such local difficulties with local councils. An Official Historian himself, Emeritus Professor D.C. Watt has suggested 2 that, as Official Historians were always warned to avoid any risk of libel action in their work, perhaps O’Brien and Titmuss felt they were too close to the events to detail particular failures. Wartime publications can be excused for omitting references to Stepney’s troubles. Former Stepney Mayor Frank Lewey’s Cockney Campaign totally omitted any mention of any ARP Controller, of the Borough’s administrative failures or its subsequent uncooperative attitude to the Ministry appointed officials. The Stepney Council Minutes fail to record anything of what actually took place regarding ARP Control in the Borough and even The Times, which reported the imposition on a borough of a ‘dictator,’ itself failed to explain just why the action was taken. Regarding West Ham, the standard

2 Discussion with Prof. Donald Cameron Watt after a seminar at Senate House on 1 February 2000.
works mention the administrative troubles in the County Borough but, again, no details are given. Action similar to that taken in Stepney was considered for West Ham but a partial solution was found by appointing an effective local clergyman as ARP Controller. Neighbouring Poplar suffered bombing to the same extent yet its local political leaders maintained control of local ARP/CD Services. Indeed, the leadership of Poplar's Alderman Charles Key MP so impressed Herbert Morrison that he appointed Key as Regional Commissioner for Shelters in January 1941 and Key went on to ministerial office in the 1945 Labour administration.

This thesis cannot claim to present the complete story of these matters in Stepney and West Ham but some detail has been given of the nature and cause of the failures and of the unprecedented measures imposed by central government.

**Wartime Folk Lore**

Finally, and very much as a matter of peripheral detail, the post-war literature has generally avoided correcting certain newspaper reports of incidents which subsequently proved to be quite untrue. The leading example of the propensity of post-war authors to consult the secondary, rather than original, sources concerns the bombing of the South Hallsville School in West Ham in September 1940. Ritchie Calder's *Daily Herald* reports included the allegation that some 450 died in 'this tragedy [which] was one of the first and grimmest lessons of London.' His reports caused national concern and came to the attention of the Cabinet. In fact only around 73 people died in the incident but the allegations were not corrected when the facts came to light in 1941 and were still being quoted, unchallenged, 44 years later. Surprisingly the incident is not mentioned in Angus Calder's comprehensive and now standard work *The People's War, Britain 1939-45* although he stated that his father (then

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3 Ritchie Calder *The Lesson of London* p. 20
Lord Ritchie Calder (5) has criticised my chapters on the blitz. (5) A more balanced view was taken in the authoritative *The Blitz Then and Now* series, published in 1988, where the lower number of fatalities was correctly quoted. (6) Nevertheless, when Philip Ziegler published his *London at War 1939-1945* in 1995, he retold the story of South Hallsville School repeating that 'more than 450 were killed.' (7) While this thesis has researched this incident, other incidents, such as the alleged public storming of locked tube stations for shelter in September 1940, are more difficult to resolve. The allegation might be dismissed as Communist inspired propaganda as no real evidence of such activity can be found in the relevant archives. It is possible that, like the occupation of the Savoy Hotel air raid shelter by members of the Communist Party, (8) the story of the rushing of the tubes was exploited by that Party. The occupation of the Savoy did happen and was discussed in Cabinet (9) but this thesis is reluctant to accept the claimed 'rushing of the tubes' which may well have become a folk myth built on perceptions of one or more wartime incidents.

**Civil Defence in the Inter-War and Wartime Context**

Before attempting to analyse the successes and failures of the air raid precautions policies of the late 1930s, it is first necessary to consider the inter-war and wartime contexts. In the mid-1930s, the general mood of the British people was to avoid another 'war to end all wars' and many thought that the taking of any precautions encouraged a war mentality. Politicians led and reflected the general mood for disarmament, even after the 1935 *First Circular* to local authorities had been issued. The taking of ARP measures just 20 years after the end of the Great War was a formidable task, but the enormity of the threat called for unprecedented measures. Responsibility was allocated to local authorities but the lack of a decision on

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5 Angus Calder *The People's War* p.18
8 The occupation of The Savoy Hotel was led by Phil Piratin, the Stepney Councillor who was the sole Communist Party representative on any Metropolitan Borough Council in 1940. He was elected to Parliament in 1945 representing the Communist Party – see p.202
9 See p.161

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funding ARP led to a 2½ year delay in the taking of ARP measures. Central government accepted the bulk of ARP expenditure, on block grant rules, to get the essential ARP Bill through Parliament in December 1937.

Secondly, implementation was greatly aided by the growing national consensus on the need for ARP which developed from mid-1938. Support grew dramatically during the Munich crisis and again once bombing was experienced when people saw that it was possible to survive aerial attack. There was thus a massive majority in favour of taking effective Air Raid Precautions, which included senior members of the Communist Party after Germany had attacked Russia in 1941. There were, however, many arguments as to what were the most appropriate and effective measures that should be undertaken.

Thirdly, when another war seemed increasingly probable, the taking of ARP measures called for political leadership of a high order and this was eventually provided by some politicians and officials at all levels. At Cabinet level Sir John Anderson and Herbert Morrison were in the right posts at the right time - Anderson co-ordinating nation-wide ARP preparations and Morrison, the poacher turned gamekeeper, the ideal man to lead, first the LCC ARP Committee then the country as Minister of Home Security. Officials at all levels played their part with distinction. Hodsoll at the Home Office, Harold Scott at London Region HQ and the leading Town Clerks mentioned in this thesis, all rose to the challenge and served with great credit. Most local political leaders successfully led their authorities through these unprecedented activities. Finally, the millions of members of the local ARP Services, the majority of whom were unpaid volunteers, performed well and successfully under fire.

The Analysis of ARP/CD Achievements and its Shortcomings

This thesis has identified eight major themes in the achievements and shortcomings of ARP/CD policy in the decade from 1935. Both successes and failures will be considered by summarising the themes detailed in the previous chapters.
The first theme was the success with which, from a zero base and in a five year period, an unprecedented, wide-ranging and effective ARP system for London was created. The lack of any viable alternative resulted in the allocation of responsibility for the ARP organisation at local level being given to the local authorities. In London, responsibilities were divided between the two existing levels of local administration, but were co-ordinated by a new regional level of (devolved central) government. The slow start to the drawing up of local ARP schemes was due to the delay in deciding the finance question and the resulting gross unpreparedness shown up during the Munich crisis accelerated both volunteering for the ARP Services and the procurement of equipment. Much improvisation was needed to overcome the lack of resources: taxis were converted to auxiliary fire tenders and motor coaches became auxiliary ambulances while ARP volunteers ‘made do’ with armbands and badges rather than uniforms. By such measures, and with much training, a reasonable state of preparedness existed in the London Region on the outbreak of war.

The second theme was the excessive time taken by successive governments before they encouraged an informed public discussion of the bombing threat and the need for adequate ARP. Politicians were reluctant to accept that disarmament policies had failed and that war had to be prepared for. This was compounded by the refusal of the government, until late 1937, to accept that bulk of ARP expenditure should be the responsibility of the national exchequer rather than of local ratepayers. This thesis has noted the disadvantages of the UK’s reluctance to start ARP preparations but has also acknowledged the problems faced by politicians (particularly Baldwin at the 1935 General Election) who were reluctant to risk public disapproval by suggesting that the nation prepare for another war less than two decades after the end of the Great War.

The third theme identified was the ‘salvation’ provided to London by the Munich crisis of September 1938. The shock to the politicians and the public which the crisis generated provided the impetus to tackle the many problems exposed in the metropolis. The
appointment of, and the subsequent vital role played by, Sir John Anderson as Lord Privy Seal / Minister of Civil Defence has been detailed. His particular successes were in encouraging local authorities to draw up and operate ARP Schemes and in the provision of air raid shelters, particularly for the vulnerable population of London. Anderson's recurring problem of obtaining sufficient volunteers for London's ARP Services has not been previously presented in the literature.

Britain unpreparedness for war in September 1938 and both the year to the outbreak of war and the invaluable extra year of ARP preparation and training provided by the 'phony war' was the fourth theme of this thesis. New insights into the good use made of the phoney war period have been drawn from authoritative unpublished sources, particularly the expert view that 'When the actual bombing started, the Services were able to go into action like veterans as training situations corresponded closely with the actual results of the attacks.'

The fifth theme was the continuing debate about, and the demand for, effective protection against high explosive bombs. Initially no public shelters were provided but public dissatisfaction with the trench shelters excavated at the time of Munich caused Sir John Anderson to set about providing corrugated steel 'Anderson' shelters in householders' gardens and surface brick shelters for those without gardens. He also set up the Hailey Conference to explore the feasibility of deep shelters but Hailey's findings, that the universal provision of deep shelters was beyond the resources available to the nation, supported government policy. But the deep shelter controversy rumbled on and, when the intensity of the Blitz resurrected the controversy, Morrison obtained Cabinet approval to construct a few deep tube shelters. This was the sole element of ARP Policy that was changed, and then only marginally, once heavy bombing had been experienced. This thesis has explored the politics

10 W Eric Adams OBE 'Islington at War' unpublished memoir (c.1945) in Islington Archives
and practicalities of the deep shelter controversy by presenting a brief and balanced analysis of the question.

The major shortcomings in ARP preparations in London that were exposed by the Blitz constitute the sixth major theme of the thesis. In particular, the care of those made homeless by bombing, the clearance of debris and the further provision of shelters caused the government much embarrassment when the severe bombing demonstrated the lack of adequate provision and planning. But these shortcomings were quickly acknowledged and effectively dealt with by using the Regional level of government. It has been shown that the rapid appointment of Special Regional Commissioners to co-ordinate resources across the region rapidly improved the post-raid services. Some extra resources were brought in but, taking the work of Special Commissioner Willink in rehousing the homeless in particular, the job was more to co-ordinate and drive local authority work rather than to interfere with their local efforts. The number of houses likely to be destroyed and the numbers of citizens likely to be made homeless by HE bombs had been grossly underestimated as was the problems presented by the large numbers of UXBs.

The huge amount of debris resulting from the large numbers of bombed properties was also underestimated and had to be cleared to improve public morale, to enable the traffic to flow and for life and war work to continue. This clearance task was directed by the Special Commissioner, Sir Warren Fisher and employed thousands of servicemen and civilian labourers. Salvaged bricks were used to strengthen shelters but other debris was dumped in London, much in the Royal Parks - the level of the northern end of Regent’s Park was raised (and remains raised) by many feet. Once the requirement for hardcore to build new airfields for the USAAF emerged, debris was delivered outside the London Region to new airfield sites. The final appointment of a Regional Commissioner for a special task was Morrison’s selection of Alderman Key MP to take responsibility for improvements in shelter construction and welfare. Key worked tirelessly across the London Region so that, by the return of the
German offensive, the main problem was not the supply of air raid shelters but the reluctance of Londoners to use those provided. Using these three examples this thesis has shown the nature and extent of the planning shortcomings and has summarised the extent of recovery coordinated and led by the Regional Commissioners.

The seventh major theme was the overall success of the local authorities in the London Region, although this thesis may well have given the impression that the emphasis was on highlighting the very occasional failures. The failures in Stepney and West Ham were explored as they were necessary to fill the gaps in the literature and the failures were striking because they were exceptions to the general high level of co-operation, control and management of ARP/CD Services. The performance of individuals and teams within the ARP/CD Services across the region was of a high standard, even in West Ham and Stepney, and it was the two named local Councils that failed to adequately support their Services and their populations.

Finally, the eighth theme of the thesis was the successful maintenance of the CD Services after the Blitz following the drastic changes in civil defence organisation made during the long lull in enemy activity. The lull which followed the Blitz was a 2½ year period of increasing manpower pressures as saturation attacks were prepared for and preparations made for the attacks of the feared V weapons whose firepower was unknown. The effective performance of the smaller, more flexible, CD Services, reinforced by reserves from outside London, was amply demonstrated during the V weapon offensives from June 1944 to March 1945. But these CD Services were very different from those that had tackled the 1940-41 Blitz on London. Building on the shortcomings in fire prevention and fire-fighting seen in the massive fire bomb raids of 29 December 1940 and 10 May 1941, major reorganisations were undertaken. The National Fire Service was established in August 1941 to ensure standardised procedures and equipment and to make optimum use of the leadership skills of the more experienced officers. A more effective fire prevention organisation was formed when, after

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considerable administrative efforts by local authorities, some 5,000,000 civilians across the country were enrolled into the Fire Guard Organisation then trained and and deployed to extinguish incendiary bombs before major fires developed. Further, manpower pressures increased and the smaller ARP/CD Services were cross-trained to provide more flexible teams to deal with the new threats. This thesis has explored the three years of operation which followed the Blitz, not least because the official histories understandably concentrate on the operation of the Services during the eight months of the Big Blitz.

By the time the Services were preparing for the V weapon offensives, the principle of truly voluntary recruitment had been dropped as elements of compulsion were introduced. Also local authority control of local CD Services had been dramatically reduced as the power of the Regional Government necessarily increased. With these eight main themes reviewed the implementation of ARP/CD policies will be assessed and the effectiveness of those policies in protecting the civilian population of London will be addressed.

The Implementation and Effectiveness of ARP/CD Policies

The interim assessments of policy implementation in Chapters Four and Seven \textsuperscript{11} need not be repeated in this concluding chapter but a brief overall assessment of implementation will be attempted to serve as an introduction to the more important assessment of the effectiveness of ARP/CD policies. It has been stressed that Joanna Spear's seven considerations for implementation\textsuperscript{12} were developed for a quite different policy environment but they have been used in this thesis, not as a model, but as a useful tool when reading relevant official papers of the period to identify significant information. This thesis has therefore employed a new approach to certain events of the period to assess ARP policy implementation.

\textsuperscript{11} See pp.137-140 and 264-266.
\textsuperscript{12} See p.33.
It has been shown that the aim of ARP policy was clear in that the public needed to be protected against the effects of aerial bombardment by gas, high explosive and incendiary bombs. Although that general aim was clear, the lack of clarity of details of some peripheral measures hindered implementation when confusing detailed measures were published. The early (and ineffective) fire prevention orders were confusing and, although the need for a 'blackout' was accepted, there was a significant rise in road deaths. In general, Londoners growing support for ARP greatly aided implementation. It was agreed that there was no absolute defence against aerial bombardment but measures were taken to provide a reasonable level of protection. Shortcomings in provision were exposed by the Blitz and subsequent remedial action proved successful. ARP policies were (eventually) backed by appropriate primary or delegated legislation but the absence of legislation before the ARP Act (1937) delayed implementation for 2½ years. Awareness of, and volunteering for, the ARP Services was aided, from the summer of 1938, by the formation of supportive interest groups and more general public support for ARP was assured during and following following the Munich crisis. The two Central Anti Gas Schools trained instructors and the skill of ARP officials at all levels increased rapidly once bombing had been experienced and when the ARP Services were seen to work effectively.

There was no steady state in which to implement ARP policy but conscription, evacuation planning and other changes in the social environment all contributed positively to successful ARP implementation once the public demanded protection. Finally, local authorities became increasingly vulnerable to central government direction once London's unpreparedness had been exposed by the Munich crisis and detailed policies, to centrally funded, were announced. Thereafter policies were generally successfully implemented. The extent to which these were the correct policies is now considered by discussing their major components.
The Effectiveness of ARP/CD Policies

The Allocation of Responsibility to the Local Authorities Under Regional Commissioners

By early 1935, the government had accepted that there probably was no economic alternative to the allocation of ARP responsibility to the local authorities. In practice, local authorities in the Greater London area generally worked well on ARP but the many authorities needed the co-ordination and direction provided by the regional level of (devolved central) government. When the pressure on resources increased during and after the Blitz, there was a major expansion in the role of the regional authorities at the expense of local authorities. By 1942, London local authorities were virtually under the direction of the Regional Commissioners and their agencies but their role was not seen to be 'dictatorial' by the general population who recognised the need for the optimum use of scarce resources in wartime. The London Regional organisation worked not least because the Commissioners co-opted onto a range of regional committees and advisory panels, many elected Councillors and officers (Town Clerks and Borough Engineers etc.) from the constituent local authorities. Also the majority of middle-ranking Regional and Group HQ staff were seconded LCC officers. Additionally, the Commissioners continued using the philosophy stated by Anderson in 1938 of 'the maximum of contact and the minimum of interference'. Under the pressures of war, the Regional system worked very successfully and it was only when the end of the war approached that the demand to end the undemocratic regional authorities was accepted by government and the status quo ante was restored. There can be little doubt that the policy of local authority responsibility for ARP within a regional organisation was appropriate for the situation.

The Reliance on Volunteers to Man the Local ARP Services

London local authorities lagged behind the rest of the country in recruiting volunteers but, by employing a number of whole-time (paid) members, the London services were manned to an

\[13 \text{ See p.136}\]
acceptable level by the outbreak of war. Manpower was a scarce resource and there was no alternative to relying on civilian volunteers for the essential ARP Services. Once the manpower demands of industry and the armed forces dominated in 1942, elements of compulsion (‘freezing’ and direction) became necessary to maintain ARP manpower. Herbert Morrison later justifiably applauded both the voluntary basis of ARP/CD recruiting and the success of the regional system of government.14

The Dispersal Principle

The major decision not initially to provide air raid shelters for the public resulted from the adoption of the ‘dispersal principle’ by which citizens were urged to provide themselves with refuges in their homes rather than seek refuge in large shelters where a direct hit would result in heavier casualties. Following the Munich crisis, the massive provision of blast proof shelters (mostly at public expense) was surely correct once the construction of deep shelters had been rejected. The policy of dispersal into small blast-proof (‘Anderson’ and brick surface) shelters appeared correct as, other than in direct hits, they generally provided very good protection. The refusal to construct deep shelters (only slightly modified by deciding on the ten ‘new shelters’ in October 1940) was undoubtedly justified as the universal provision of deep shelters was beyond the labour and material resources available. Furthermore, any deep shelter programme would probably have to had been started at least a year before Munich, when it would surely have been politically unacceptable to the majority of citizens.

Other Contingent ARP/CD Policies

The range of threats posed by aerial bombardment went beyond the high explosive threat and included those posed by the use of poison gas and incendiary bombs. The poison gas threat was covered by the production and universal distribution of gas masks, the formation of local Gas Identification teams and Decontamination Squads. Whether these provisions would have provided adequate protection against gas attacks was, fortunately, never tested.

14 Herbert Morrison How London is Governed People’s University Press (1949) p. 119
tested to the full were the fire fighting resources as the incendiary threat had been underestimated and the fire fighting services were occasionally overwhelmed. The National Fire Service proved to be the solution. Furthermore, until the blitz was experienced, no effective fire prevention force was deployed. Thereafter, the government had problems implementing adequate fire prevention forces until the Fire Guard was raised by mid 1943. The enrolment, training and management of these five million volunteers across the country proved to be a major, onerous but essential, task for local authorities.

The Leadership Requirement

From the preceding chapters, it is apparent that better, more unequivocal, political leadership and support for ARP should have been provided earlier by the main political parties. The major barrier for national leaders calling for preparations for war were memories of the horrors of the Great War in the minds of the British public in the 1930s - a point stressed to the author by Lord Deedes. As explained in Chapters 2 and 3, the shock of Munich changed many minds and the 'right men and women' were eventually appointed to appropriate posts. These national and metropolitan figures provided leadership and demonstrated their competence - in particular those mentioned have included Anderson, Morrison, Gowers, Evans, Willink, Warren Fisher, Key and Harold Scott. at the senior levels. Skilled and dedicated ARP officials at all levels were headed by Wing Commander (later Sir John) Hodsoll at the CID, in the ARP Department then as Inspector General of ARP. At Borough level, the competence of many London Town Clerks/ARP Controllers has been mentioned and these officers included Dr Tee (Hackney), W Eric Adams (Islington and Stepney), H.E. Dennis (Poplar) and Sir Parker Morris (Westminster) who all rightly deserved the honours accorded them.

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15 See p.41
16 This phrase includes the 'right women' who often get forgotten e.g. Lady Reading, the founder of the Womens Voluntary Service for Air Raid Precautions' (now the WRVS), Mrs Creswick Atkinson, Shelter Welfare Officer for the London Region and Ellen Wilkinson MP, one of Morrison's Parliamentary Secretaries at the Ministry of Home Security.
Relativities in Assessments

In assessing the effectiveness of ARP/CD policies it is important to acknowledge that questions of relative effectiveness (whether more casualties could have been saved by implementing alternative policies) are almost impossible to answer satisfactorily. Three points need to be considered. Firstly, in the 1930s, there were no reasonable alternatives to the nature and type of measures taken. However, more shelters should have been made available earlier - but many citizens were reluctant to co-operate even by accepting a blast-proof shelter. Furthermore, would Londoners, most of whom who were reluctant to leave their homes, have used them? Londoners probably would have used more shelters, but only if the intensity of attack was sustained at an intense level. The popular image of Londoners sheltering in the Tube Stations and large Communal shelters are valid but those shelterers were a very small percentage (below 3%) of London’s population.

Secondly, and after 60 years, it is impossible to assess how the Services would have coped if the scale of German attack had approached that of the Allies on German cities. London firefighters and fire watchers were overwhelmed on 29 December 1940 and 10 May 1941 when even heroism could not make up for inadequate provision. It is reasonable to assume that other London ARP/CD Services would themselves have been overwhelmed under a much heavier, or more geographically concentrated, onslaught.

Thirdly 29,890 civilians died in the London Region as a result of enemy action of which 18,695 were within the LCC area. It is impossible to estimate just how many lives were saved by the ARP measures undertaken, or how many more might have been saved if more, or different, protection had been provided, or had the facilities provided been used to a greater extent. Table 27 details selected statistics and death rates from various causes for the LCC area 1938-46 inclusive. In assessing the scale of losses due to bombing, it may be noted that, even when the Blitz was at its height, the death rate in the LCC area increased from 12.0 to only 18.6 per 1,000 of the population. The Table also shows that the death rates due to such
natural causes as cancer or tuberculosis generally far exceeded that due to enemy action. Drawing attention to the relatively low death rates due to enemy activity in no way detracts from the human cost of the aerial bombardment or the relative success of the ARP measures implemented to protect London's civilian population. Table 27 used LCC statistics and the above points regarding those statistics intentionally avoid any comment on the political context and perceptions of acceptable or unacceptable causes of death. Before drawing any conclusions from the statistics, it should be realised that the civilian population of wartime London tended to be somewhat older than in peacetime as many younger (and inevitably generally fitter and more healthy) citizens were out of London as a result of evacuation, conscription and war work.

The Lessons That Might Be Learned from the ARP/CD Experience

It is difficult to draw valid lessons some 60 years after the events described in this thesis. ARP/CD was both politically contentious and completely unprecedented, however, some general lessons can be discerned. Firstly, in the formation of policy it is apparent that more
accurate assessments of the threat and more open appraisals of ARP requirements would have been desirable. Secondly, better national and local political leadership supporting ARP might have encouraged more citizens to volunteer for ARP duties. Thirdly, in times of acute national danger, some of the traditional features of British society, such as the traditional democratic basis of local authorities, may have to be modified, if not sacrificed, in the interests of more effective control of valuable limited resources. The final basic lesson is that the practice of not openly discussing a national threat and of not planning or taking precautionary measures until it was nearly too late, was apparently sufficient as London survived the offensives. But London survived only at a considerable human and physical cost. Delay and compromise, followed by haste, improvisation and innovation did allow the metropolis to survive the manned bomber and the V weapon offensives, but this precedent is hardly a prudent emergency planning and disaster prevention philosophy.

The Legacies of Civil Defence in London

London's experience of and ten years of ARP/CD, including six years of war, left a number of legacies in 1945 that had both advantages and disadvantages for the Londoners who survived the war and for their descendants. Firstly, the physical scars and other dreary reminders of war comprised both acres of bombed sites and numerous, now disused, air raid shelters. Shelters were quickly removed free of charge by local authorities and the bombed sites were slowly replaced by new buildings. However economic constraints and political pressures meant that the grand wartime reconstruction plans were, perhaps fortunately, never fully carried out. Meanwhile, although the CD Organisation in London had been rapidly stood down, then disbanded in the summer of 1945, the new nuclear weapons threat rapidly assumed such proportions that the CD organisation was re-formed by the CD Act (1948). The 1945 Labour Government pushed ahead secretly with the development of British atomic weapons; however the ideally parallel CD arrangements were again afforded a low priority.

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17 The *County of London Plan* (1943), *Reconstruction in the City of London* (1944) and the *Greater London Plan 1944* (1945)
The post-war CD debate of the late 1940s centred on the utility or futility of attempting to take passive defence measures against the new, now atomic, bombing threat. This again polarised British public opinion. Many returning servicemen had witnessed the devastation recently inflicted on German and other cities while Londoners remembered the Blitz and the V weapon offensives. Both sides of the CD debate used the same basic arguments that had been deployed a decade earlier. It was now protection against the new (atomic) weapons that was considered by some to be futile - the same point made having been made a decade earlier when the threat was from HE bombs. The debate was fired by the enormity of the new weapons but some felt that, with their recent experience, Londoners could muddle through if preparations really had to be undertaken.

Secondly, one positive legacy of the war was the improvement in the fire-fighting services across the country but London did not benefit as much as other areas as the pre-nationalisation London Fire Brigade had been the paradigm fire-fighting service in the UK. As promised when the fire services were nationalised in 1941, the Fire Services Act (1947) returned fire services to local authorities. But the benefits of larger brigades having been learned, fire fighters were not necessarily returned to the authorities from which they had been nationalised. Rather than some 1,600 pre-war brigades, the NFS was handed back to 136 larger Brigades, mostly County and County Boroughs. Further reforms in 1974 saw a reduction to only 54 Brigades, mostly covering the former NFS Fire Force areas.

Thirdly, the lasting legacy of the wartime experience was the success with which London local authorities had co-operated and performed under fire, albeit under the increasing control, if not direction, of London Regional HQ. The wartime regional system had shown the benefits of larger areas of administration for planning and the optimum use of resources but, at the end of the war, the status quo ante was restored as successive governments refused to radically reform London government. Local government politicians and their officers re-established their local fiefdoms so the legacy of wartime success was that the reform of
London government was delayed for two decades. The London Government Act (1963) was long overdue, but when it came, it did establish a Greater London Council covering an area almost identical to that of the London CD Region.

**Vindication of the Approach and Future Research**

This thesis has succeeded in going some way to filling gaps in the literature and, by using official and other material not previously presented, has given a more balanced view on London's ARP/CD Services and their organisation performance, although much more (potentially rewarding) work needs to be done on some topics.

**An Assessment of the Utility of the Methodology.**

The method used in this thesis was to read the published literature on the subject as background then research original central and local government archive material as the basis of the information presented in this thesis. Much of this material has not been previously used in any in-depth study. With many thousands of files in the relevant PRO Home Office series, research was necessarily selective and targeted. Not all questions were found to be answerable using original documents as, not only were many things during the blitz not committed to paper but others, during the Blitz, were 'sacrificed on the altar of practical necessity.'

Some incidents in the popular accounts, such as the alleged mass storming of the gates of closed underground stations by the public seeking shelter, appear not to be properly recorded while the occasional wartime 'incident' has probably reached the status of myth. Nevertheless original documents have produced substantial evidence for the points presented in this thesis.

Personal reminiscence of great events and exciting times are both attractive and useful but, by 2001, there were few survivors who had held prominent positions during the period of study.

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18 CAB102/31 Shelter History (May 1949)
Fortunately, some do survive and the opportunity to talk to Lord Deedes, Lord Allen and Baroness Castle proved useful both for information provided and as a means of setting decisions and events into their proper context. Further, the author’s 1988 discussions with Mr K.A.L. Parker CB, formerly of the Home Secretary’s private office then Deputy Chief Administrative Officer at London Region HQ 1938-45, proved most useful. Subsequent access to some of Mr Parker’s official papers\(^{19}\) from the London Regional HQ proved both invaluable in providing the authoritative London Regional view and useful to the PRO who took copies of some of those they did not hold.

Finally, Joanna Spear’s seven ‘considerations’ for successful implementation were used, not as a model, but as a means of exploring the archives by asking appropriate questions. This proved useful as was their use as a structure for analysing the evidence produced.

**Scope for Further Research**

With a subject as vast as ARP/Civil Defence inevitably many stones have been left unturned and it is obvious that more research is required both on topics covered and on the many topics only briefly mentioned, or intentionally excluded, from this thesis. Standing out as needing more research are the workings of the London Regional organisation and its relations with central and local government. Of the topics briefly mentioned but meriting further research are the politics and workings of fire fighting and fire prevention in London and the evolution, implementation and administration of the evacuation schemes in London. Topics intentionally omitted from this thesis and which suggest that research might well add to a useful knowledge of the period include the whole subject of industrial and commercial ARP policy and its implementation. This topic involved the interplay between business leaders, local and central government authorities and the many employees who had ARP responsibilities at their homes.

\(^{19}\) At Mr Parker’s request, destined for the Churchill Archive
as well as at their workplaces. In national planning for future emergencies,²⁰ whether man-made or natural, the co-option of volunteer manpower and the vital role of local authorities would seem inevitable. Also the way in which ARP volunteers were motivated, recruited, trained and managed would repay further analysis. Finally, the whole subject of the bureaucratic politics and questionable accuracy of the official Air Staff threat assessments deserve research and analysis as does the use made of these assessments.

Conclusion
The threat of the aerial bombardment of the civil population of London was eventually acknowledged and appropriate preparations were made so that reasonably effective protection and post-raid services were in place by the outbreak of war. Some of these preparations proved to have severe shortcomings that required drastic action but, overall, the people of London successfully survived unprecedented attacks due to the measures taken by the central, regional and local authorities.

This thesis has shown that ARP policy, equipment and manpower served London well. Firstly, the organisation of the CD Services remained basically that planned pre-Munich although both the fire-fighting and the fire prevention organisations were radically improved following the Big Blitz when one aspect of shelter policy was also modified. All ARP/CD Services gained much valuable experience during the Big Blitz and this was built on during the lull in enemy activity by making the smaller Services more flexible by cross training. The London Regional organisation proved to be a most useful vehicle for marshalling and deploying limited CD resources. Within the London Region, the Group system proved useful in co-ordinating the activities of CD Services across neighbouring Boroughs while the Boroughs themselves proved to be effective local organisations controlling local resources.

²⁰ The Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Unit is currently (September 2001) consulting on the form and content of future legislation on ‘Emergency Planning in England and Wales’ as the government consider that the Civil Defence Act (1948) is no longer appropriate. Inevitably such ‘man-made’ disasters to be planned for will include the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States.
Once the Big Blitz had been experienced, local authorities invariably co-operated with the regional authorities and even Stepney’s CD responsibilities were eventually returned to the Council’s control.

Secondly, the CD equipment available for London’s civilian population was much improved over time, particularly once the Big Blitz had been experienced. Fortunately the gas respirators never had to be used in anger but the fire-fighting devices used by the NFS, which were improved and standardised as a result of experience, were used to great effect. The final year of the war did not involve a significant incendiary threat so the NFS and Fire Guard was not fully tested but their capabilities, including equipment issued to street parties and the Fire Guard organisation, was much better than that available during 1940. When the new offensives opened in 1944, the Rescue Services were equipped with better equipment while the NFS attended all incidents and provided flood lights and field telephone systems. The item of CD equipment most familiar to Londoners were the air raid shelters and the extra numbers and strengthening programmes made in surface shelters after the Blitz proved their value in the 1944-45 attacks. The new Deep Shelters were not opened to the public until July 1944 but the counter-measures adopted once the development of the V weapons was acknowledged meant that many more indoor Morrison shelters were manufactured and issued in the London Region in time for the Baby Blitz and the subsequent V1 and V2 attacks. It is undoubtedly true that more lives would have been saved if the public has used their shelters to a greater extent but by 1944 most Londoners were reluctant to take refuge, even when the V1 attacks were at their height.

Thirdly, London CD personnel, most of them volunteers, served the people well and proved to be a far more effective body than post-war comedies portray. With the national manpower situation at full stretch by 1942, much reliance was placed on the part-time

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21 The pompous ARP Chief Warden, ‘that awful man Hodges the greengrocer’, in the BBC TV series Dad’s Army was a figure of fun and his true role as ARP Warden role was never shown.
members of the CD Services and they responded well when the offensive reopened in 1944. Although the long lull in enemy activity caused morale problems within the CD organisation, they all responded well when the offensive resumed. The smooth working of the ‘front line’ Services were well managed, controlled by the Regional and Borough authorities while the essential wartime leadership was generally of a high order. The appointment of Special Commissioners Willink, Warren Fisher and Key to co-ordinate the care of the homeless, the clearance of debris and the supervision of shelters were undoubtedly successful measures and these problems they tackled never recurred when the offensive was resumed in 1944. There is no doubt that leadership on the Home Front, in particular in Civil Defence matters, contributed greatly to the success with which the various levels of the organisation operated. From the very top, the leadership provided by Herbert Morrison, his Regional Commissioners in London and their staffs inspired the confidence of the ‘troops’ at the lower levels of the organisation. Perhaps leadership was easier when the organisation was again under fire during the V weapon offensives but Morrison, Gowers, Admiral Evans and the Special Commissioners led their staffs through the difficult periods of lull and inactivity when effectiveness and spirits had to be maintained pending the return of the attack. Leadership was vital when the CD Services were in action during the offensives - this was particularly true in fighting large scale fires as the lack of experienced senior fire officers capable of dealing with major incidents was one of the reasons for nationalising the fire services in 1941. However, once the attack reopened, the intensity of the Baby Blitz and the V weapon offensives 1944-45 never matched that of the Big Blitz of 1940-41 but the performance of the smaller, more flexible but better co-ordinated CD Services earned the praise of all who saw them deal with the more powerful V weapons. By 1944, the CD Services had much better equipment to handle incidents - mobile cranes from America and bigger and better ‘plant’ was available at Group and Regional level and these resources were applied in force to incidents requiring it.

Finally, both at the higher management and at the ‘shop floor’ level, the performance of individuals in the various CD Services was universally praised by all who saw them in
operation during the V weapon attacks. But by 1944 the ARP/CD Services were very experienced in their operational duties. Their morale was boosted by both having survived the Blitz and by the parallel success of the Allied armies advancing across Western Europe. During the V weapon offensives, the lower intensity of the attacks allowed a maximum of resources to be applied to all V1 and V2 incidents. Neither the NFS nor the Fire Guard were fully tested by the introduction of new weapons by the Germans as the incendiary threat was minimal and thus allowed the better equipped NFS to fully support the CD Services in both the rapid reporting of V weapon incidents and in attending those incidents in strength. There can be little substantial criticism of the measures used by London Region to make better use of the reduced personnel available by cross training personnel as this increased their flexibility and utility in any incident. Gowers’ negotiations with the Ministry of Labour, and the compromises reached, retained experienced Wardens in London. and, with this and other strategies, the smaller but more flexible CD Services, when their test under fire came in 1944-45, performed well. Similarly, the virtual abolition of the voluntary nature of the Civil Defences Services with the ‘freezing’ of posts, then some resort to direction and conscription, was not a decision that was susceptible to refinement of policy as the manpower was either recruited by such means or the CD Services would have been unacceptably understaffed. Also, if the policy of adequately protecting the public was to be followed economically and efficiently then matters had to be dealt with at a Regional level regardless of occasional complaints about undemocratic action by an unrepresentative body - it was wartime and survival required executive action.

Nevertheless some 29,890 Londoners died as a result of enemy action. In spite of these fatalities and extensive physical destruction, London survived the German attacks over nearly five years even though it primarily relied on voluntary manning of its ARP Services. These were raised, trained and controlled by local authorities who, before the war, generally did not stand high in the general public’s esteem. In fact, the London local authorities generally discharged their ARP responsibilities with great credit although a very few authorities did not
perform so well. Throughout the London Region the personnel of the ARP/CD Services
displayed heroism and professionalism built up by training and their experience through the
Blitz. Ritchie Calder’s comment in 1940 that ‘Giving the task of ARP to local authorities was
like giving to the Mayor of Dunkirk the task of evacuating the BEF’ was clever, however
the long-serving Inspector General of ARP (Hodsoll) more correctly summarised the situation
in his memoirs by stating that:

The English local government system was a most unsuitable machine to meet the needs of
an all-out war against the civilian population but, thanks to the British genius for innovation
and improvisation, these [air raid precautions] arrangements worked.  

This thesis has already covered a very wide field but did not consider what might have
happened if the onslaught had approached either the intensity of the Allied bomber offensive
on Germany or the levels officially predicted by the Air Staff in the late 1930. It has,
however, provided a more detailed and more balanced view of many of organisational and
administrative aspects of civil defence in London than has previously been presented.

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22 Ritchie Calder The Lesson of London p. 37
23 Hodsoll Papers 6/2 p 121
Statement made by Sir Ernest Gowers to a meeting of Members of Parliament for constituencies in the London Region at the House of Commons on the 6th February 1941.

I expect that members would sooner ask my colleagues and me questions than hear us making statements. But perhaps it would be as well if I were to open with a sketch of the nature of the aerial attack on London and the extent to which the preparations made to meet it have stood the test.

It is now almost exactly five months since the attack began. There had already been some precision daylight attacks on aerodromes and factories in the Region, and a little desultory and trifling bombing of the suburbs by night, but September 5th is when the real attempt to dislocate the life of London by promiscuous and sustained night bombing began. From that day to the 3rd November, a period of sixty days, there was a raid every night. During the remaining twenty-seven nights of November there were only three that were free from them. In December, however, the enemy only attacked on seventeen nights and in January only on thirteen. Daylight attacks during the same period were negligible by comparison, though there were a few nasty episodes, including hits on Buckingham Palace, the War Office, Charing Cross Underground Station, and Tower Bridge and the plastering of an area of residential property in Haling by a badly aimed formation attack on Northolt aerodrome.

It is impossible to trace the steady pursuit of any tactical plan in the night attacks. The early ones disclosed the aim of starting fires by daylight and bombing them through the night. The results on the night of September 7th were disastrously effective. Then came a period when the main form of attack was the haphazard dropping of heavy high explosive, including large numbers of parachute bombs, interspersed promiscuously with incendiaries. This had its greatest success on the night of October 15th. Then there was a rather futile interlude during which small high explosives was dropped in large quantities, sometimes as many as fifty bombs together. This was no doubt very terrifying to the people who happened to be there, but did less damage to persons and property than smaller quantities of larger bombs. Latterly there has been a reversion to the original tactic of starting fires first and then bombing them, with these differences; that parachute flares instead of daylight are now used to open the proceedings, that the incendiary bombs are vastly more numerous, and that the subsequent bombing with high explosive has not up to now been pressed home to anything like the extent that it was at the beginning. In the first half of the period aeroplanes often came over from dusk to dawn; in the second half the raids have rarely lasted much after midnight and many have finished well before. In the most destructive attack of the last phase the last bomb fell at nine o'clock. This was the night of December 29th, when what the London Fire Brigade have always called the "danger area" of the City was almost wholly destroyed.

The number of people killed was 214 in August, 5,750 in September, 5,090 in October, 1,976 in November, 827 in December and 639 in January, making 14,378 in all. The total number of dwelling houses damaged is over 700,000; of these nearly 41,000 were irreparably destroyed. The largest number of separate fires (1,724) was on the 9th December; the most devastating conflagrations were on the 7th September and 9th December.

On the question how far the plans made in advance have stood the test, I expect it will be more interesting if I concern myself with our unexpected difficulties rather than what has gone according to plan. But I should like first to interpolate a word on a subject where things have gone well. That is the subject of the Civil Defence Services - the extent to which the general planning of them has justified itself and the way in which the members of them have done their duty. It is beyond question that the general lay-out of the Civil Defence Services reflects the greatest possible credit on the foresight and energy of those pioneers, Wing-Commander Hodson and others, who were
building the foundations long before any of us three came on the scene. It is no less beyond question that no praise could be too high for the courage, devotion and resourcefulness of the men and women in these Services. I do not want to waste our time on laudation, but before passing from this subject I must pay two special tributes. One is to those who, well before the war, planned the expansion of the Fire Brigades. It was done with real imagination and big thinking; the personnel was increased from 4,300 to over 35,000, the number of pumps from 300 to 2,750, the length of hose from 150 miles to 1,160 miles, and two great water mains, solely for fire fighting, were laid across London from the Grand Union Canal to the Thames, with a pumping station at each end. I do not like to think what would have happened if smaller minds had had the task of planning this. The other special tribute I want to pay is to the Wardens' Service. I find it difficult to speak of their work in terms that do not appear fulsome, They alone of the Civil Defence Services are at work all the time, When they are not in action they have innumerable other duties - organising fire parties, inspecting gas masks, finding out who is living in each house in their sectors and where they are likely to have been if a bomb destroys it, and a host of other matters. The Wardens' Post has become the centre of advice and help to those within its area on all sorts of things. When the call to action comes, it is first on the scene, and first on the work of all the other Services - fire brigade, stretcher parties and rescue parties - until the services arrive. It is impossible to speak too highly of the magnificent way in which these very ordinary men and women have risen to their responsibilities. And it is characteristic of them - as of the other Services - that we have the utmost difficulty in getting details to support recommendations for gallantry awards for the heroic things that are done every night. We are met on every side with the attitude: "They were only doing their jobs and don't want a song and dance made about it."

I now come to our unexpected difficulties.

The most important may, I think, be enumerated under five labels as follows: - the problem of the homeless, the problem of the unexploded bomb, the problem of gas and water mains, the problem of the incendiary bomb, and the problem of dormitory shelter.

It was our over-insurance against damage to the person and under-insurance against damage to homes that early presented us with the grave problem of looking after the unwounded people who had lost their homes and the lesser problem of repairing those homes. The homeless reached a peak figure of about 26,000 on the 26th September. This put a breaking strain on the plans for dealing with them, the consequences of which have already been frankly discussed in the House, and I do not propose to say anything about them now. As you all know, it was thought wise to appoint a Special Commissioner to give his whole time to this question. He has thoroughly overhauled the machine; indeed, he has created a new one, which we hope will be able to take any strain put upon it in the future. He is here to-day and will himself be able to answer any questions about it. The lesser problem of repairing damaged homes has not gone too badly. Of the 625,000 houses capable of what we call "first-aid" repairs, nearly 629,000 have had them, and this figure does not include houses repaired by their owners.

Next about the delayed-action bomb. They were of course expected, but not in such large quantities. There was a time when the embarrassment that they caused, especially in paralysing the railway services and in swelling the problem of the homeless, was disgusting. It was caused by the real delayed-action bombs, but also by the almost equally large numbers of imaginary ones. The latter difficulty has been overcome by training police, wardens and railway officials in the art of diagnosing them; the former by increasing the bomb disposal parties. At the beginning of the attack we had 320 officers and men available for this purpose; in December we had about 3,000. They have dealt with 5,600 bombs and, I regret to say, 9 officers and 43 other ranks have lost their lives in doing so. /The
The next of the problems I enumerated was that of the damage to gas and water mains. The gas position in particular was at one time very serious. Little damage has been done to production plant. The worst was the bombing of Blackton on the 7th September, which stopped production altogether for a fortnight and left a very large area in the East of the Region without gas. But the real trouble has been with the mains. There have been 7,579 fractures of them. At one time, in mid-October, 20% of gas consumers were without a supply. Water has not been quite as bad as this, not because water mains proved less vulnerable, (there have been 5,171 fractures) but because the interconnection of mains generally makes supply by another route possible when one is broken. But it was pretty bad at one time. I do not think there was any general failure of the water and gas concerns to make reasonable provision for these events, or that they can be blamed for not foreseeing the scale of their troubles. But there was one failure: the number of water turnocks was quite inadequate. Much water has been wasted and damage done by valves not being closed quickly enough, and the gas problem was intensified by avoidable flooding of the gas mains. The Metropolitan Water Board are now in process of trebling the number of their turnocks. In this matter also, as in the matter of the homeless, the possibilities in October seemed to us so grave as to justify the appointment of a Special Commissioner to give his whole time supervising, coordinating and stimulating repairs to public utility services and roads, as well as to the allied subject of clearing debris. I have no time to describe Sir Warren Fisher’s organisation except to mention that his achievements include the extraction from the Army of 600 skilled men for repairs to mains, the purchase, mostly from America, of a fleet of much needed travelling cranes, and the continuous employment of a force now amounting to 16,000 civilians and 10,000 military pioneers on the clearance of bombed sites and blocked roads, as well as the use of 3,000 Royal Engineers to assist in road repairs. The work of the Royal Engineers in throwing a bridge over the Bank Station crater in less than three weeks was a fine performance.

Turning next to the problem of dealing with incendiary bombs, I think it important to draw a distinction between the general duties of the Civil Defence Services in this matter and the particular duty of the occupier of the property to safeguard it. There has been no failure in the Civil Defence Services. On the contrary, London was a pioneer in the formation of voluntary fire fighting squads for dealing with incendiary bombs in the localities in which the members reside. Even before recent events emphasised the importance of this, our voluntary fire fighting parties, supplementary to the Civil Defence services proper, comprised nearly 200,000 people, and the numbers have since been nearly doubled. To them must go much of the credit for the fact that, except for the City fire on the 29th December, where the circumstances were exceptional, there have been comparatively few really serious fires in London since mid-September. Where the failure has been is in the neglect of owners and occupiers of shops, factories and warehouses to look after their own property. Nor can it be denied that the Order made last summer, requiring them to do so, was neither bold enough in conception nor strictly enough enforced. The recent Orders are a very different matter. The cardinal feature of them is that they require the owners of all business premises to make adequate arrangements for detecting and extinguishing incendiary bombs, they place an obligation on employees on those premises to take a part in this duty, they require arrangements made to be reported within a fortnight to a responsible authority, and they contain provisions for further compulsory service if these measures should not prove enough. There is ample evidence that they have been taken very seriously. Indeed, the raids that have taken place in January have made it clear that the lessons of December 29th have already been learned.

There remains the problem of shelter. This can be stated very simply. The plans made by the Government were based on a policy of dispersal - of shelter at the home - and public shelter was only intended for those who might be caught in the street during a raid and unable to get home. Partly because the programmes of domestic shelter was incomplete, and many Anderson shelters were unusable owing to water, but more because they preferred to get away from solitude in the noise of battle into company where they could not hear it, many people took to spending the night in the tubes and public shelters. It thus became necessary to convert into dormitories places which had never been meant to be used for that
purposo. It was a colossal task, and it is not surprising that the doing of it presented ample scope for criticism. It is now largely accomplished, thanks in no small measure to the drive put into it by my colleague, Admiral Evans. The consolidation and completion of the work are now in the hands of my colleague, Mr. Key, who is here to answer any questions about it. I only want to add one thing, and I think it is a thing which is too often forgotten. Important as this question is, it is easy to exaggerate its magnitude. At its highest point the number of people who spent the night in public shelters, including the tubes, was round about three quarters of a million. The present population of the Region is about 7½ million. I do not know how many people now spend the night in public shelters; we take a census once a month, and the February figure is not yet available. But the tube figures are taken every night, and if we may assume that the total has fallen, in the same proportion as the tube figure has fallen, it is now not much more than 200,000. The peak figure of tube shelter population was 197,000; it is now 68,000. The problem therefore never affected more than about ten per cent of the population of the Region and now affects little more than three per cent. The policy followed by the Regional Commissioners in this matter has been consistently the same, namely, that although it is imperatively necessary to see that people who want to sleep in public shelter can do so in tolerable conditions, yet the policy of dispersed shelter retains the right one, and the primary need is to provide sufficient dispersed shelter and to attract people back to it.

May I end by touching, in a haphazard way, on some of the things that stick out as I look back over the last five months, If we weigh our unpleasant surprises against our relief from unpleasant fears the balance is easily on the right side. On the human side, we feared appalling casualties and mass panic. The casualties, though deplorable enough, are far below our fears, and the steadfastness of the people has been superb. On the material side the balance is the same way. Serious damage to important factories has been extraordinarily small, though I fear I cannot say the same of warehouses and their contents. Bridges, again, especially Thames bridges, were always one of the things we were particularly anxious about. An expensive testimony to our anxiety can be seen from that window, between Westminster and Hungerford Bridges. Lambeth and Blackfriars Bridges have been hit, but the bombs merely passed through the roadway and exploded in the river, doing no damage to the structure. Tower Bridge had to be closed for a few days, but it was not because it was hit, but because the hydraulic main which operates the bascules was broken. Traffic through Blackwall Tunnel was interfered with on two occasions by high explosives on the approaches, and a bomb went down one of the ventilating shafts of Rotherhithe Tunnel and exploded on the roadway, doing little damage. No cross-river communication has been put out of action for any length of time, except Woolwich pedestrian tunnel. This was fractured and flooded but it is now open again. The invaluable railway bridges of London have also got off lightly. Telephones have suffered rather severely; apart from damage to exchanges, some of it serious, there have been 7,185 cases of severed cables, one of them involving the re-making of 56,064 separate connections. Fears of serious interference with electrical supply have also proved groundless. There have been several hits on one or other of the five giant pumping stations on which London mainly relies, but no serious damage was done except to Fulham. This was out of action for several weeks, but was generating its full load again before Christmas. The sewage system has been less fortunate. Here the night of September 7th was a particularly unlucky one. Both the Northern and Southern outfall systems were hit. On the Southern outfall only one of the sewers was fractured and the sewage could be diverted through the others. Here the Chief Engineer of the L.C.C. must have been seen in the early hours of the morning working with his own hands, among the falling bombs, the valves which saved the neighbourhood from being flooded by the sewage already flowing freely down Woolwich High Street. On the Northern outfall a remarkably lucky hit fractured all the six sewers - five of 9 feet 9 inches and one of 11 feet 6 inches - where they are carried in the open across the L.N.E. Railway, and for several weeks the sewage of North London had to be discharged untreated into the River Lee. No one seems to have been any the worse for it. On the same night there was a direct hit on Abbe Mills pumping station, where the bulk of the sewage of North London is raised to the Northern outfall. All the three pumping engines were simultaneously put out of action, two as the
result of the bomb and the third by the failure of gas owing to the damage to Beconton. Fortunately damage can stand for a few days except in very wet weather, and it was possible to get one of the pumping engines working again within this time. We had another fright some time later when an enormous bomb fell beside Abbey Mills and embedded itself without exploding. But this was successfully removed by the Royal Engineers within twelve hours. Another chance hit which caused us some anxiety was one on Teddington Weir, for London's water supply is largely dependent on the level of the water behind the weirs being maintained. We have taken this lesson to heart and now have supplies of material ready to hand against a similar occurrence. Another awkward hit was by a bomb which fell in a garden at Enfield fracturing all three great mains through which the New River is there piped on its way to serve as the chief water supply for a considerable section of London, including the City. But we were able to avoid the worst consequences of this by diverting the New River through the half mile of its old course which the piping had replaced. The old course had been filled in, but we had 3,000 soldiers out there at daybreak, and the channel was dug out before nightfall. We have been lucky so far in escaping any of the many possibilities that exist of serious flooding owing to bomb damage. Our most fortunate escape was in the disaster to Sloane Square Station. One of our acute anxieties has always been the highly vulnerable great pipe which carries the River Westbourne over the Station. But when the bomb fell there this pipe by a miracle escaped damage. If it had not been so, the disaster, bad as it was, would have been immeasurably increased by the water of the Westbourne pouring down on the wrecked train and flooding the Underground the whole way to Charing Cross. On the other hand, the penetrative power of heavy bombs has been an unpleasant surprise. Three times the Tube Railway has been damaged forty feet below the surface, by bombs penetrating through solid ground, once with a lamentable loss of life to those sheltering there.

But in reckoning up our blessings and our misfortunes, there is one crowning blessing that overshadows all else. That is that just at the moment when things were beginning to look really nasty, when at least a fifth of London was without gas, when considerable parts of it were getting water from water carts, when traffic on the Southern Railway was chaos and traffic on the roads in Central London hardly less so - just at this time the weight of attack slackened off and has never yet been resumed on anything like the original scale. I have no doubt, of course, that London would have been kept going all right, even against an attack of undiminished force, though a great many people would have suffered a great deal of inconvenience and hardship. But we were spared that test. We have been given time to repair the damage, to revise our preparations in the light of experience, and to get ready for whatever may be in store for us in the future.

The original of the above typescript, with the manuscript amendments as shown and reduced from foolscap, was included in 'The Parker Papers' destined for The Churchill Archive, Churchill College, Cambridge. Mr Kenneth A.L. Parker C.B. joined the staff of London Region HQ in 1938, becoming Deputy Chief Administrative Officer in 1943 and remaining until closing down the HQ in 1945.
ANNEX B

Summary of the Contemporary and Subsequent References to the Loss of Life at the South Hallsville School, Agate Road, West Ham on the Evening of Tuesday 10 September 1940

Introduction
In Chapter Five (pp.154-5) the question was raised of the exact loss of life suffered when the South Hallsville School, Agate Road, (Canning Town) in West Ham was bombed on the night of 10/11 September 1940. The school was being used as a Rest Centre and the incident, particularly the loss of life involved, was publicised by Ritchie Calder in the *Daily Herald* and was discussed in Cabinet. The tragedy has been referred to in many books both during the war and in subsequent surveys of the Blitz. The incident and its historiography are summarised below with sources together with comments made some 60 years after the events. The sources consulted were the local and national press of the time, the various books on the Blitz published since 1940, relevant papers in the Public Record Office and material available from the County Borough of West Ham now held in the Newham Local History Department, Stratford. There can be no final answer to the questions raised but the authorities, local and central, came to some conclusions late in 1940 which question the figures quoted by Calder and repeated by some subsequent authors.

The Incident
The school was used as a Rest Centre from the beginning of the Blitz on the East End which opened on 7 September. The raids on the area initially continued each day and night and the slow speed with which refugees were being re-housed by the authorities resulted in the number of people taking refuge in the Rest Centre increasing with each raid. Arrangements were made to send coaches to collect them on the afternoon of Monday 9 September but, due to some confusion, the coaches never arrived but allegedly went to the wrong rendezvous point. The coaches were reordered for Tuesday 10 September. When they arrived that afternoon, an air raid was in progress so it was decided not to load the homeless and the coaches left the area empty. That night a bomb hit the school which was now crowded with refugees and there was a large number of fatalities. The subsequent reports and activities are given below.
Contemporary Accounts and References

Ritchie Calder was a frequent visitor to the East End and he visited the newly bombed site early on 11 September where he viewed the scene in the company of the local Presbyterian Minister Rev W.W. Paton. Calder's piece in that next morning's *Daily Herald* included:

**THIS MUST NOT HAPPEN AGAIN**  The bomb fell yesterday ... Who is to be held responsible for this appalling tragedy in which whole families from wrecked homes in the worst raided area of East London were left by official neglect to die in a bombed refuge centre? ... wiped out while waiting for transport which never came. Who is responsible for these coaches which did not arrive? I asked the Mayor. 'I wish I knew' he said. 'We have been badgered from pillar to post. We have been trying to get them through the Ministry of Home Security, through the Regional Commissioner and the Civil Defence authorities.' The tragedy demands an immediate inquiry. I went back again yesterday. There was a crater, another crater which was their grave.  

Later on same day, 11 September, the Cabinet CD Committee, with the Home Secretary Sir John Anderson in the Chair, discussed the incident:

..... Assistance for Homeless Persons. The Minister of Health outlined arrangements which had been made for Food and Rest Centres continue to accommodate people temporarily rendered homeless - the total was 16,000 scattered over the whole of the London area but the majority were in the East End districts. ..... Reference was made to the attack in that morning's *Daily Herald* which alleged that people had been killed as a result of delays in moving them from a Rest Centre. The Minister of Health said that these attacks appeared to refer to a case in which 300 people had been collected in a Food and Rest Centre on Sunday night. On the following afternoon when arrangements had been made for their transfer to Essex, it had been decided not to move them owing to an air raid alarm. The Centre had been struck by a bomb that night and some casualties had occurred. The Minister said that he proposed to see Mr Ritchie Calder, the author of the article, and discuss the question with him. If the organisation had been at fault in any respect, the matter must be investigated.

The Committee took note that the Minister of Health was enquiring into the recent loss of life as a result of the bombing of a Food and Rest Centre.  

The next day's *Daily Herald* carried Calder's follow up report:

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1 *Daily Herald* 11 September
2 CAB/73 Cabinet Minutes, 33rd Meeting, Wednesday 11 September 1940
INQUIRY WILL FIX BLAME FOR REFUGE DEATHS The Air Ministry/Ministry of Home Security admitted that most of the 400 killed in Monday night's air raids were homeless people sheltering in an East End school. An inquiry was begun yesterday. The LCC was not involved in any way in the tragedy it was outside its jurisdiction.

Two days later the local weekly paper carried the report:

EAST END'S TERRIBLE ORDEAL. London and South Essex experienced its greatest air raid of the war - the buildings hit included a school sheltering refugees from previous bombings and a heavy death toll resulted.

GREAT RIVERSIDE FIRES - BIG DEATH TOLL. Bombed School tragedy, wrecked by a direct hit during Monday night - there were between 400 to 600 men, women and children refugees. The school sited is in a densely populated district, one of the newer in the Borough, and had been taken over by the local authorities temporarily to billet refugees rendered homeless by Saturday evening's raid on the riverside district. They were sheltering in the basement of the building which was cut in half and the main portion of the school collapsed upon the victims.

The South Hallsville School 'A catastrophe which was to have long lasting repercussions a controversy lasting even to this day' from The Blitz Then and Now, Vol. II p.77

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3 Daily Herald 12 September
4 Ibid.
No references have been found in the PRO files to any formal official inquiry on the incident but Calder, in the Daily Herald on Tuesday 17 September stated 'The inquiry has revealed tragic blunders....' Two days later the paper carried veteran journalist Hannan Swaffer's account of the circumstances of Calder's investigations in West Ham:

... the Police Superintendent told Calder 'You've been told to get out. Get out of here double quick - we've got work to do ... With his Mol pass and his Scotland Yard permit Calder became insistent on completing his inquiries. ... he has reported [the facts] to the Newspaper Proprietors' Association as 'deliberate attempt to prevent me from learning the facts of how refugees were left for two days and nights for coaches, and how they were killed because of official neglect.'

Ritchie Calder's influential report 'The War in East London' in the New Statesman movingly described the events at the South Hallsville School but no figures was given for those killed. Calder attacked the inability of the Public Assistance authorities to make the Rest Centre into a safe shelter or to properly equip it ... 'the PAC had no power to make schools safe - no power to equip them with beds and bedding.'

Subsequent Wartime Material
The Home Office file 'ARP Incidents in West Ham' includes the results of an official enquiry into the incident some three months after the incident. It includes a hand-written Memo, dated 7 December, from Mr Stent, Senior Regional Officer, No 7 Group (whose area included covering East and West Ham) to Harold Scott (Chief Officer of the London CD Region) which reported that:

A Miss Hornby of the Ministry of Information rang me up today to say that a mischievous rumour was going about in "an East End borough" to the effect that a bomb had fallen on a school where refugees were sheltering and killed 500 people; that many of the bodies were under a concrete floor which had collapsed on them and that the borough authorities had just left them there. She asked if she could have the true facts as she proposed through the Ministry of Information's agents to have the rumour contradicted by word of mouth. This story evidently relates to the West Ham school calamity. As I could not find any information about this at RHQ I obtained particulars through Group 7 from west Ham. Their report is below.

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3 Daily Herald 19 September
6 New Statesman 21 September
7 Public Record Office HO186/241
I may add that the author of this rumour is said to be a Borough official or Councillor (I have my suspicions)!

[manuscript annotation] Mr Scott agreed. 'Work as below (letter to Miss Hornby)' ... i.e. 46 treated by the Casualty Services and a record of 73 dead bodies ... Rescue work continued 10 to 26 September - some known to have escaped and left the Borough leaving no address

The Rumour gave a grossly exaggerated account and should be contradicted.

**Covering Letter dated 7 December to Mr Sient at London Region HQ from the Group Co-ordinating Officer, 7 Group**

I have taken up this matter with the County Borough of West Ham and in consequence I received the attached letter dated 5 December 1940. Further contact was made with the Town Clerk and he has replied giving further information.

**Letter dated 5 December 1940 from Mr Charles Cranfield, Town Clerk of West Ham to 7 Group:**

I have looked into the question of the unfortunate occurrence at South Hallsville School, Agate Street ... on Tuesday 10 September. The Warden’s report stated there were 300 casualties so far as was then known, but ... that figure was substantially in excess of the correct number. Unfortunately some of the papers relating to the population in the school were lost but the official in charge of the mortuary informed me that he had received 73 bodies and I have made enquiries of the Casualty Services and the number officially treated was 46. Rescue parties were sent on several occasions and all possible work has been carried out on the site.

**Further Letter from Town Clerk to 7 Group dated 6 December**

I have interviewed the Officer in charge of the Rescue Parties ..... (there is) not the slightest ground for the rumour that people are buried under the concrete floor - all proper steps were taken to deal with the unfortunate occurrence. 6

February 1941 saw the publication of Ritchie Calder’s *The Lesson of London* (Secker & Warburg) which was essentially a collection of his newspaper and journal articles on the Blitz. On page 19 he refers to the South Hallsville School incident: ‘This tragedy was one of the worst and grimmest lessons of London. About 450 homeless lost their lives in that school ..... It was the needlessness of the tragedy which made it so terrible.’ Calder repeated the figure of 450 killed in his reported in the *Daily Herald* on 2 April 1941:
THE GUV'NOR KEEPS A BLITZ VOW - The Guv'nor [Rev W.W. Paton] is now Controller of West Ham's Civil Defence - with the approval of the Regional Commissioner. And so the Guv'nor can fulfil that vow he made as we stood together on the lip of the crater in which some 450 people had perished when the school was bombed - he would never rest until amends had been made. 8

West Ham Council Matters

A month later in West Ham Council Alderman Wooder JP, the previous Mayor of West Ham who had been ARP Controller in September 1940, appears to have questioned the Town Clerk (Charles Cranfield) about the South Hallsville School incident for, on 5 May, Cranfield copied to Wooder the correspondence he had sent to 7 Group HQ in December 1940 i.e. the letters dated 5 and 6 December above. Cranfield also included a copy of the questions on the layout and construction of the school and the damage suffered. The rumour reported by the Ministry of Information in December 1940 apparently alleged that the victims were buried under a concrete floor and that this and the bodies had been left in place. The answers indicated that the victims were found under the collapsed concrete roof of the first floor. Rescue work carried on continuously from 10 to 21 September and the whole site was cleared.

Alderman Wooder raised the subject of the 'Enemy Air Raid - South Hallsville School' at the meeting of West Ham Council on 24 May 1941. The Council Minutes record that:

Alderman Wooder said he wished to refer to the malicious and untrue statements which continued to be circulated with regard to the number of casualties at the South Hallsville School incident ... and in view of the persistence with which these rumours were perpetuated, he had with the utmost care, again examined the whole of the evidence and reports, and he was perfectly satisfied, as he was when ARP Controller the occurrence was dealt with by him at the time, that the number of people killed on that occasion was 73, and not over 400 as rumoured. Alderman Wooder said, being absolutely convinced of the truth of the matter, he desired in the strongest possible terms, to repudiate the gross mis-statements made by ill-disposed persons, whose reprehensible conduct in spreading unfounded rumours was calculated to damage the credit of the Council and cast base reflections on the integrity of the officers and workpeople of the Corporation. 9

8 Daily Herald 2 April 1941
9 West Ham Council Minutes - Meeting 24 May 1941.
One further reference is the PRO file *Care of the Homeless in West Ham* includes a report of an interview, dated 20 October 1942, with Mr C.J. Wood, the London Region Ministry of Health officer who had been sent down to West Ham on 7/8 September 1940. Wood had found that the:

administration in West Ham had gone to pieces ... Regarding the Hallsville Road School, (sic) Ritchie Calder made great play at the time and subsequently that 500 had lost their lives. ... 60 bodies only were found in the ruins ...  

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**Postwar References and Comment**

Constantine FitzGibbon’s book *The Blitz* (1950) quotes extensively (pp. 74-77) from Ritchie Calder’s *Lesson of London* and includes the figure of 450 fatalities. Some 19 years later Calder’s son Angus, in his *The People’s War - Britain 1939-45* (1969), does not specifically mention the incident although he states in his Forward: ‘My father Lord Ritchie-Calder ... has criticised my chapters on the blitz ...’ It is surely unusual that Ritchie Calder, who had made so much of the South Hallsville School incident in 1940 and 1941, did not appear to have advised his son to mention this major incident in 1969.

Leonard Mosley’s *Backs to the Wall - London Under Fire 1940-1945* (1971) repeats the story (pp. 128-130) quoting a senior police officer (Supt. Reginald Smith, Metropolitan police, K Division covering Silvertown) learning from his secretary of 450 people killed at the school.

In 1985 the London Weekend Television book which accompanied a TV series repeated the high figure for fatalities in the incident. In *The Making of Modern London, London at War 1939-1945* by Joanna Mack and Steve Humphries (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1985) on p.50...

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10 CAB102/72620 October 1942
appears a photograph with the caption 'The remains of South Hallsville Road (sic) school, West Ham. On the night of 10 September 1940 around 400 people - many of them mothers and children, - perished when a bomb scored a direct hit on the school. The families were waiting to be evacuated. It was the biggest civilian disaster of the war. The text (p. 50) notes that 'the school suffered a direct hit which killed almost everyone inside.'

More recently Philip Ziegler in London at War 1939-45 (1995) on p.119 repeats Calder's figures and boosts the number sheltering in the school as follows: 'The worst came when over a thousand homeless were crowded into a disused school ... for two days they awaited rescue; the second night the school was hit and more than 450 killed.'

A more balanced view was taken in 1980 by a former senior West Ham fireman who recalled that a fireman who attended the disaster had described the scene to him by saying:

It was a time for rumour and the number of casualties said to have occurred at the incident increased with each telling. People spoke of 450 dead, some even more. The official casualty list, compiled shortly after the calamity, named 78 dead; others probably succumbed to their injuries in hospital... 11

The well illustrated The Blitz Then and Now Volume II (1990) shows two photographs of the ruined school and the caption explains 'It is not known precisely how many died. Ritchie Calder, who visited the school on the Tuesday morning and who later wrote of the disaster in The Lesson of London put it at 450. The Council's official figure was 73'. Finally a locally produced booklet in West Ham has a photograph (p.99) with a caption 'The remains of South Hallsville School in September 1940. Probably the worst air raid disaster in wartime West Ham. Several hundred people "bombed out" of their homes were gathered there awaiting transport to a safer area.'
More Recent Investigations

The Newham Local Studies Centre holds two boxes of cuttings and other papers on the incident - mostly repetitions of the two sets of figures for the incident. This material comprises, in addition to photocopies of relevant Council minutes, copies of correspondence in 1990 between the archivist and the local MP who was provided with copies of the 1940/41 letters and Council Minutes. The archivist also mentioned a 'thesis by Nick Richards' relating to the South Hallsville School. My enquires showed that Nick Richards produced results of some research on the subject whilst a member of a Department of the University of East London. After further research, that institution assured me that no thesis or similar on that or any other subject is held in their library or their departments and they have no record of work by Nick Richards.

Conclusions

Such evidence as is available suggests that the South Hallsville School incident resulted in something over 72 fatalities - the exact number should include the unknown number who died in hospital as a result of their wounds. The original ARP Warden's report of the incident stated that there were some 300 casualties in the school but this appears to have been inflated to 450 fatalities by Rev Paton and Ritchie Calder who were on site. The mortuary records list 72 deaths but others may have died having been removed to hospitals away from the locality.

Calder's press articles, written as the dust settled on a major incident with the usual haste of a journalist meeting a deadline, and his subsequent 1941 book mention 450 dead but this figure was neither confirmed nor retracted. Once published by the leading commentator on the Blitz in the East End, the figure seems to have been accepted by subsequent authors although the Ministry of Home Security and the West Ham Council Minutes record a much lower figure.

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The incident occurred some 56 hours after the opening of the Blitz on East London, a time when the administration of post-raid services in the County Borough was over-stretched due mainly to the intensity of the bombing offensive. It is not known just who started and fostered the rumours in 1940-41 or why the rumours have had such currency and persistence.

At a seminar held on 7 September 2000 at the PRO, to mark the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Blitz, the speaker from the Imperial War Museum did not mention the South Hallsville School incident. A lady in the audience who had grown up in West Ham then complained that the speaker had forgotten 'the worst tragedy of the Blitz when many hundreds died'. When this author pointed out that the official enquiry clearly stated that less than 80 people died in the incident, the lady said that the East End always believed that the truth had never been officially admitted.
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The printed minutes of the former Metropolitan and County Boroughs are held in the archives of the following London Boroughs:
Camden:  St Pancras, Hampstead
Croydon:  County Borough of Croydon,
Hackney:  Hackney
Hammersmith and Fulham:  Fulham, Hammersmith
Islington:  Finsbury, Islington
Lambeth:  Lambeth
Newham:  County Borough of West Ham
Tower Hamlets:  Poplar, Stepney
Westminster:  Paddington, St Marylebone, City of Westminster

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