The invasion of the United Kingdom: public controversy and official planning 1888-1918.

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CHAPTER VII: THE INVASION SCARE OF 1909 AND ITS AFTERMATH

While the C.I.D. had pursued its inquiry into the contingency of a German invasion, public clamour over the possibility had reached new heights. Once again, apprehension of sudden overseas attack had its roots in a tense international scene. On 25th September 1908 matters had taken a turn for the worse when the French had forcibly recaptured three German deserters from the French Foreign Legion, who were being assisted in their escape by the German consulate in Casablanca. The ensuing Casablanca Incident was not resolved until mid-November, when the Germans dropped their demands for an apology and accepted the French proposal for arbitration, and for a time it seemed that the two powers would go to war, with a good chance of British participation. The situation was not improved when Germany's ally, Austria, suddenly annexed two Turkish provinces in the Balkans. British public opinion favoured the new "Young Turk" regime in Constantinople, and the resulting Bosnian Crisis continued throughout the winter of 1908-1909.¹

By the late summer of 1908, invasion conjectures in the British press had reached epidemic proportions, several of which seemed to be based on Repington's hypothesis presented to the C.I.D. Maxse continued to print monthly warnings of German attack in the National Review, and Lt.-Col. R.S.S. Baden-Powell, the hero of Mafeking and founder of the Boy Scout movement, delivered an alarming speech which forecast a German descent on England during the August Bank Holiday Week-end. Questions regarding his speech were made in the House of Commons and Haldane was asked to pledge that "at such unreported, but virtually public, meetings officers of the

¹ A.J. Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Road to War 1904-1914. O.U.P., 1961, pp. 149-150.
Army shall not indulge in language calculated to set up unfriendly relations between this country and foreign Powers." Baden-Powell, however, was unchastened, and later published a book describing "Germany's Plan for Invading England." Invasion warnings were, in addition, coming from several sources, and from opposite ends of the political spectrum.

From July 30 to September 5 the high Tory Morning Post published a series of eight closely-reasoned articles by its naval correspondent, examining the prospects of German invasion. A lead editorial observed that the naval strategists had made themselves ridiculous by drawing conclusions from imaginary premises and assuming an attitude of papal infallibility. The Admiralty's "excessive optimism" would not suffice, for British military weakness would remain a temptation to militarily-powerful Continental Anglophobes: the only remedy was a stronger Navy and the institution of universal military service. Admiral F.A. Close wrote to the paper that the incidence of fogs and gales in the North Sea made a mobile army on shore an absolute necessity: "Years ago I was the first to hoist the danger signal in your columns, when I said 'we want another Portland harbour on the East Coast'; now I say we want another Aldershot on the East Coast." He raised the prospect of flat-bottom steamers coming directly from enemy harbours to British beaches, spewing out men, horses, and guns over a wide gangway as soon as they touched shore. At the same time, H.M. Hyndmann, the Marxist founder of the Social Democratic Federation, and

Federation, and Robert Blatchford, the socialist publicist, published in their Socialist weekly, the Clarion, a succession of alarming prophecies on almost identical lines, which attracted much attention.

Even the Admiralty, in spite of Fisher's brave front at the C.I.D., seemed to be entertaining secret reservations. The 1908 naval manoeuvres, held to test the fleet's ability to prevent a German force from landing, resulted in a small detachment of raiders coming ashore at Wick, in the extreme north of Scotland. The Times complained that "for reasons which have not been clearly explained, the Admiralty elected to cast a veil of secrecy over the operations." The lack of hard information from the naval authorities naturally encouraged rumours. Unconfirmed reports from Paris indicated that the naval defences had been found wanting, even though the exercises had involved a huge force of 270 British vessels, the largest fleet of warships Europe had yet seen. In December a report circulated that a large naval force had succeeded in evading the defending fleet and had landed 70,000 men. This was emphatically repudiated by McKenna, the First Lord, in the House of Commons.

No such incident ... occurred in the manoeuvres, nor did anything happen which could in the smallest degree give the slightest foundation for such a statement. I trust that with this information the public alarm which my hon. friend apprehended may be prevented.  


The War Office also was testing its arrangements against invasion, and specifically, the reaction-time of the Territorial Force. A dress rehearsal in early December established that it took the Territorials three hours from the first alarm to transport themselves and begin their deployment on the beach. This was the first occasion in which motor cars had been used for a test mobilization, and 120 men with full equipment were conveyed 14 miles, using two motor buses and a steam car.1

The activities of the military and naval authorities were paralleled by the efforts of various novelists and writers, who continued to exploit the invasion theme. One story, The Admiralty of the Atlantic, attracted attention in Germany as well as England, and prompted Prince Henry of Prussia, an Admiral in the German Fleet, to write to Sir John Fisher, assuring him that "he who tries to prove that Germany is, or will be, a menace to England, or that Germany intends to be aggressive, is certainly quite in the wrong and (pardon me) a lunatic!" Fisher, obviously mindful of the Tweedmouth letter incident of the month before, passed the letter on to the King without comment.2 Further communications from Berlin were not as reassuring. Colonel Trench, the British Military Attache, reported to his superiors on April 27, 1908 that a German novel, Die Offensiv-Invasion gegen England, also publicised the possibility of a surprise attack on the British fleet that would cripple it in its harbours. Although the book was "quite value-

less either as a strategic study or as an expression of intention", it was nonetheless "one of the numerous straws which show the direction of the wind" in German public opinion, and as "an expression of views and hopes which I believe to be those of no small number of persons."¹ Evidently invasion was being mooted with enthusiasm in Germany, while public dread in England increased. Even King Edward himself was reported to be anxious that

Wilhelm, as soon as he is ready for it, will throw a corps d'armée or two into England, making proclamation that he has come, not as an enemy to the King, but as grandson to Queen Victoria, to deliver him from the socialist gang which is ruining the country. He will then with the King dissolve Parliament, and re-establish the King's autocratic rule as feudatory of the German Empire.²

Invasion stories, in reality propaganda for various home defence programmes, proliferated throughout 1908. Sir Alan Hughes Burgoyne, Editor of the Navy League Annual, published a story in October in which he described a German attack on England as The War Inevitable, and called for a larger fleet and home army. A corresponding effort by "General Staff", ominously entitled "The Writing on the Wall, outlined the perilous consequences of failing to adopt conscription: ten German Army Corps are made to land and enter London, departing only after exacting a huge indemnity of £500 million.³ Similar stories were beginning to appear as serials in illustrated penny weeklies designed for the mass market.


Such was the state of British public opinion as the invasion inquiry drew to a close in October 1908. Roberts and Repington were hoping to take advantage of the public alarm and publish their various statements in evidence. As soon as they learned that the inquiry had completed its report, they began to exert pressure on the Government to make it public. Within a week of the acceptance of the sub-committee's report, they were planning to present their entire case for German invasion, in the form of a Resolution in the House of Lords to be moved by Roberts. They thereby hoped to force the Government to announce the findings of the inquiry. Balfour, however, advised them that a general statement could not be made now without bringing the naval and military relations of Germany and Great Britain into prominence; that I was convinced that the Government would think this highly inexpedient at the present moment; and that, personally, I was entirely of this opinion.

Balfour, however, advised Asquith, that Roberts and Repington would be satisfied by the Government announcing 70,000 as the official estimate as to the size of a possible invading force, and did not demand an immediate general survey of the question. On the other hand, they had not concealed their intention of using any figures the Government might make public for their own purposes of propaganda. Repington anticipated that Asquith would announce the results of the inquiry in the course of his traditional Guildhall speech in early November. Instead, the Prime Minister delivered a series of generalities which, Repington bitterly observed, "practically ignores all our military interests" and "appears to hypothecate a Navy"

1. Balfour MSS. (49725) Roberts to Balfour, 2 July 1908; Roberts MSS. Vr. 62/51. Repington to Roberts, 6 June 1908. Case X20927. Box B.1
massed around our shores."¹ Later, Repington learned that Lord Crewe, the
Government spokesman in the House of Lords, had been directed to refuse
flatly to provide any information as to the results of the invasion inquiry.
Repington, writing to Roberts, contrasted this policy with that of the open
and public statement made by Balfour in 1905, and predicted that this would
"create a hostile mass of feeling by an attitude of mystification and
concealment."² He also wrote to Haldane, suggesting that if Lord Crewe
would

state definitely that we have to be prepared to meet an invasion
by 50,000 to 100,000 men, he, Lord R(oberts), will abandon the
debate ... I do not know whether the government will grant this
request. All I feel sure of is if the govt. do not see their
way to make such a statement the debate will come off...³

The Cabinet refused to be blackmailed, and Asquith requested the King to
speak to Lord Roberts, asking him to limit the scope of his remarks. His
Majesty complied, adjuring Roberts:

As your Sovereign, and with full concurrence of my Ministers and
the Leader of the Opposition, I must ask you, as a patriot, not
to raise the question of Germany or to refer to the decision of
the Committee of Defence.⁴

But Roberts was not to be deterred, even by Royal Command, for he evidently
felt that to warn of German invasion was a patriotic duty which transcended
all other considerations. Roberts remained so persistent on the topic of
German aggression that Grey, the Foreign Secretary, eventually wrote to the
War Office asking whether they could impose military discipline upon him.
It transpired that Roberts, as a Field-Marshall, was on the Army active list
for life, and that the War Office therefore had "complete power to stop

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3. Nicholas J. d'Oombrin. The Evolution of British Defence Strategy 1904-
Haldane, 20 November 1908.
21 November 1908.
Lord B. talking under the King's Regulations." Nothing came of the proposal, apparently because the Government was fearful of provoking embarrassing questions in the House.  

Roberts' speech, delivered in the House of Lords on 23 November 1908, spared no details, for it made specific reference to invasion from Germany, and called upon the Government to "state definitely the conclusions arrived at as the result of the recent inquiry by the Committee of Imperial Defence". Roberts stated his belief that there were 80,000 trained German soldiers already in the United Kingdom, some of them working at strategic railway stations. The inference was that they would serve as saboteurs and agents provocateurs in the event of a German landing in England. He also quoted von Schellendorf's Duties of a General Staff to the effect that to gain temporary command of the sea would be worth the sacrifice of the German fleet, and concluded with an appeal for a citizen home defence force of one million men. His fellow conspirator, Lord Lovat, immediately followed, pointing out that the case for invasion was by no means dependent upon the "bolt from the blue" hypothesis which had been presented to the C.I.D., and emphasizing that the Royal Navy had not a single safe anchorage in the North Sea at a time when the German army was openly practising amphibious embarkations on the Baltic coast nearby.  

As intended, the speeches of Roberts and Lovat had an electrifying effect on their audience. The galleries had been crowded in anticipation,
and Asquith and Haldane were in attendance as spectators. Roberts' motion, calling for "an Army so strong in numbers and so efficient in quality, that the most formidable foreign nation would hesitate to attempt a landing on these shores", was supported by speeches from Lord Middleton (formerly St. John Brodrick, Secretary of State for War, 1901 to 1903), Cawdor, Wemyss, and Milner. It was passed with a strong majority of 74 to 32, after Roberts agreed to withdraw his demand for an immediate Government statement on the invasion question in deference to the sensitivity of the international situation. The speeches were widely reported in the press the next day, and the Daily Mail described the sitting as "the most remarkable assembly this session." The Daily Express, Morning Post, Spectator, Saturday Review, and National Review also printed prominent articles and provided editorial support for Roberts. Even the Times, which Roberts believed was sold out to the Blue Water School, published a handsome leader hailing Roberts' "patriotic task of warning" and called upon the Government to provide at least a general statement regarding the invasion inquiry and official policy. Only a few Liberal papers were critical. The Westminster Gazette asserted that fear of invasion need never "fear our imagination, so long as we can rely on our naval strength", while The Star deplored "the tactless
indiscretion which appears to be the peculiar gift of retired generals."\(^1\)

Interest in Roberts' speech was not confined to England, and reaction to it was especially strong in Germany and Austria, where it was protested that invasion was impossible. Colonel Gadke of the Berliner Tageblatt thought that complete command of the sea and a force of 280,000 men were pre-requisites for the conquest of Britain, while Roberts' picture of German invasion was denounced in the Reichstag as a frivolous fantasy. But German denials only reinforced English apprehensions, and the very unanimity of German disclaimers gave rise to suspicions that they were inspired by an official central source.\(^2\) All the invasion publicity naturally redounded to the benefit of the National Service League.

Reedington assured Roberts that he felt "convinced that your shaft has gone home", and did all he could to feed the flames of controversy in the pages of the Times. He published a three-column special article supporting Roberts, arguing that Dreadnoughts might prove useless in the North Sea owing to the operations of German submarines, and endorsing the call for a million men for home defence. The "million man standard", he claimed, would end the nation's reliance on untested machinery for its defence, and instead give to British manhood a new and uplifting responsibility, which would force foreign military staffs to tear up their plans for the invasion of England. Predictably, a galaxy of naval authorities, including Admirals Richard Vesey Hamilton and Cyprian Bridge, were simultaneously attacking

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2. Times. 26 November 1908, p. 5; Daily Mail. 7 December 1908. p. 7. See also: Times. 25 November 1908, p. 7; 27 November 1908, p. 7.
Roberts and Repington, and reasserting the claims of the Senior Service in the Times correspondence columns. Haldane as well protested that Roberts' proposals would prove a rival to the Territorial scheme, which had not yet been granted a fair trial. But Lord Roberts gained a powerful ally early in December when Lord Rosebery, the former Liberal Prime Minister, delivered a speech in his support, stating that Britain could not afford to run the risk of invasion from a foreign foe. According to Rosebery, Continental military circles were full of plans for surprise attacks and apprehensions over German invasion were "well grounded" indeed, owing to the recent expansion of their fleet. He claimed that Balfour's 1905 statement on invasion was based upon "obsolete and untrustworthy" information, and asserted that no stable policy was possible "either at home or abroad, unless they were convinced that they were territorially free from invasion." Rosebery later repeated his allegations, which were widely circulated.

Roberts' and Repington's campaign to publicise the perils of a German invasion also received valuable support from journalists and writers, who in the early months of 1909 produced six new invasion prophesies as an indication of the national alarm. Le Queux published Spies of the Kaiser, which described the elaborate efforts of German aliens in England to prepare for an impending German landing, including hidden wireless stations, elaborate reconnaissance procedures, and hidden ammunition dumps. Le Queux "revealed"

1. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Box R.1 R62/59. Repington to Roberts, 30 November 1908; "Lord Roberts and His Critics." Times. 2 December 1908, p.6; 25 November 1908, p.8; 27 November 1908, p.6; 30 November 1908, pp. 6, 12.
that German street bands often played to mask the sound of Germans working underground, mapping city water mains for the purpose of sabotage. Punch hailed Le Queux's "admirable partiality", which had "led both a German and a Russo-French army into the heart of his land."\(^1\)

Besides the productions of Le Queux and his imitators, the new mass-circulation illustrated penny weeklies vied with one another in publishing serials depicting German attack. Their enthusiastic exploitation of the invasion theme mirrored public opinion, and the greatest outpouring of invasion serials coincided with the climax of the agitation in the country at large during the month of March, 1909, as the Army and Navy Estimates were announced for the coming year. In that month Black \& White was presenting a story called "The Great Raid", in the hope that "the present outburst of public interest in the subject will lead to a general filling up of the ranks of the Territorial Army". "The Great Raid", which had included a double-page drawing of enemy troops marching in to take possession of London while the Union Jack was lowered in public buildings, was a commercial success, and was re-issued later in the year in book form. The rival Pearson's Weekly began another serial in mid-March, entitled "While England Slept - A Story That Will Stir England to Its Depths", extracts of which were also published in the Newnes weekly Titbits. Northcliffe was not to be outdone, and that same week a patriotic serial called "The Invaders - a Story of the 'Coming War!'", began in his periodical, Answers.\(^2\)


British youth was even more susceptible to invasion stories, for boys’ magazines were prone to indoctrinate their readership in the dangers of German attack. In March 1909, Chums was concluding a “Fine Patriotic Yarn” written by a retired navy captain entitled “The Vengeance of the Motherland.” One Sexton Blake in Union Jack was describing alternate German plans to sail up the Thames and capture London or to arrive “the unexpected way from the North.” The Boy’s Friend was introducing “The Peril to Come” as “a powerful new invasion story which will stir the heart of every British boy and patriot”, while the Boy’s Friend Library was advertising a book, Britain in Arms, describing a Franco-Russo-German attack on England, written by Hamilton Edwards, the paper’s editor.

Other stories employed violent xenophobic invective in denouncing Germany for anticipated war crimes in Britain. James Blyth’s The Swoop of the Vulture was a lurid and sensational account of future German aggression, which described the enemy as “brutalized braggarts”, “contemptible Teutonic abortions” and “jeering Prussian sausage munchers”, approving of the lynching of German aliens in the event of invasion. The invasion theme also inspired a poetic epic by Charles M. Doughty entitled The Clouds, which portrayed a German landing in England in blank verse with the usual political moralisms.

How is decoyed so great sea-faring nation thus?  
They’re governed now by loose-brained demagogues  
The dusty feet rule England, not the head  
All carries now the irrational Parliament vote,  
of a brain-addled crooked populace.

Other invasion stories, such as *When England Slept* and "An Eddy of War" described the perfidy of German waiters and the horrors of German occupation in more orthodox prose. Often the appeal of the paper invasions was largely neutralized by sensational language and improbable plot. In *The Invasion that Did Not Come Off*, the British Admiral who frustrates the invading flotilla is described as having "died gloriously on his quarter-deck; and was embalmed, and placed in a glass case in the British Museum, amid the tears of a grateful people."  

The excesses of the invasion stories continued to inspire parodies and satire. *Punch* published a couplet which mocked both Balfour's affection for golf and his insouciance in the face of threatened invasion:

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I was playing golf the day that the Germans landed  
All our troops had run away  
All our ships had stranded  
And the thought of England's shame  
Altogether spoiled my game.  
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Full-page cartoons appeared in The Sketch ridiculing the invasion prophecies and suggesting that Prussian troops could be captured by impaling their spiked helmets on huge blocks of wood. *Punch* presented an inversion of the German invasion theme describing a treacherous English descent on a peaceful and unsuspecting Berlin, in which Leo Maxse and Le Queux penetrate the Kaiser's palace and succeed in destroying the

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Kiel Canal and High Seas Fleet.¹ But the best satire of the invasion stories was P.G. Wodehouse’s *The Swoop*, which described the simultaneous landing of nine different enemy armies on British soil on the same day, unknown to each other. Chinese forces land in Wales while the Young Turks seize Scarborough, and the Mad Mullah of the Sudan storms ashore at Portsmouth. A horde of Moroccan brigands occupy Brighton, while the Swiss Navybombards Lyme Regis, and a pack of cannibals come ashore at Margate. However, the German and Russian armies take control of the situation, only to begin fighting among themselves at the instigation of a bespectacled Boy Scout. The Germans and Russians virtually annihilate each other, and the survivors are captured by a force of Boy Scouts wielding catapults. Wodehouse mocked the self-proclaimed patriotism of the invasion novelists and in a foreword protested that his story was also “written purely from a feeling of patriotism and duty” and that his publisher’s “sensitive soul will be jarred to its foundations if it is a financial success. So will mine.” Wodehouse’s satire was a welcome relief from the crudity and sensationalism of most of the invasion prophesies, and was favourably reviewed even by journals which took the question quite seriously, such as the *Times Literary Supplement* and *National Defence*, the monthly journal of the National Defence Association.²

It was inevitable that the flood of invasion novelettes, usually aimed at the mass audience, often inspired only by journalistic opportunism and devoid of literary merit, should come to alienate the more articulate and

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reflective section of the British public. Most of them were discreditable from both the political and literary points of view, owing to their improbable plots, extravagant language, lurid anticipation of German atrocities and massacres, and indiscriminate abuse of German and British public figures and policies; and after 1909 the genre rapidly declined. However, while the products of an irresponsible journalism began to undergo a well-merited criticism and ridicule, the invasion controversy was continued in serious journals of opinion with articles appearing in unprecedented quantities. Pamphlets continued to appear, giving various detailed technical arguments for the likelihood of a German attack, as well as tactical texts which outlined the progress of a future campaign fought in Britain. But the propaganda did not go unchallenged. J.A. Farrer published "Letters to a famous General from a mere civilian" in which he charged that the "ignominious panic of invasion" was being employed by the forces of Jingoism to erode ancient English liberties. Farrer accused the conscription enthusiasts of using invasion cynically as a propaganda device in order to build up a large British army, using the methods of continental militarism for the purposes of military agitation and adventurism.  


widely suspected of wishing to build up a large army in order to intervene in a European war, and of being insincere in their advocacy of home defence. But a study of Roberts' correspondence and the N.S.L. journal, A Nation in Arms, does not corroborate these charges. Roberts and his compatriots give every appearance of sincerity of their concern for British national security, and in many ways their proposals were in direct competition with the eventual plans of the War Office to place an Expeditionary Force at the side of France against Germany on the Continent.

British public apprehensions of German invasion were extensive enough to attract attention in Germany. Marine Rundschau, a semi-official monthly for German naval officers, published a long article analyzing British anxieties on this point. It concluded

> These numerous newspaper articles about invasion are becoming a regular curse; they are written chiefly by laymen, and, what is worse, they are written with the express intention of deceiving other laymen who do not know the facts. May these expert opinions penetrate England through and through, so that the imaginary danger of German espionage and German invasion may be entirely removed. Germany, with its 3½ times weaker fleet, does not dream of an invasion of England, her soldiers would be at too great a disadvantage in such an attempt ... Raids would burst like soap-bubbles pitted against the marvellous imperturbability of the British nation.1

Sir Edward Grey was prevailed upon to give advice to the British ambassador in Berlin on the subject. Grey explained that the British man in the street believed that

> with 21 of the most powerful aggressive vessels in the world concentrated at Wilhelmhaven and looking straight at our shores, there was a risk of invasion should there be any unfavourable

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turn in the relations between this country and Germany.
Invasion, for us, meant conquest. It was quite impossible
to avoid such apprehension on the part of the people in this
country; just as it would be impossible to avoid a scare in
Germany if one of her land-neighbours were to collect an Army
more powerful than the German Army.

Grey's analysis of public opinion was undoubtedly correct, for fear of German
naval power in relation to the British fleet was the basis of English
anxieties.

But the invasion scare entered a new dimension when it became known
that Rudolf Martin, author of *Der Weltkrieg in den Luf ten* and President of
the German Airship Navigation League, had outlined a plan for the conquest
of England using a fleet of airships. In a series of articles and lectures,
Martin called upon the German government to construct 10,000 Zeppelins, each
capable of carrying 20 soldiers, as well as artillery and cavalry. Martin's
speeches caused great trepidation in England, for it now appeared that German
airpower could conceivably bypass the defensive bulwark of the fleet. The
British inventor and experimenter Sir Hiram Maxim propounded the theory that
England could be invaded in the course of a single night by an aerial armada,
declaring that "100,000 men may be transported by a kind of aerial ferry of
5,000 aeroplanes between sunset and sunrise. Each aeroplane is to carry six
men and to make four trips in, say, 12 hours." Skeptics argued that no
plane existing carried more than two people, and that there was much more
involved in such an invasion than the personnel: "The utmost 5,000 planes
could do would be to sprinkle driblets of five or six men with rifles but

Lascelles, 3 February 1909.
2. "Invasion by Airship." Daily Mail. 9 October 1908, p.5; Times. 23
December 1908, p.7.
without supplies at various intervals in the midst of a dense and hostile population." Night landings would also present insuperable problems. But conjecture regarding invasion from the air did not cease. A writer in the Nineteenth Century asked

What valid reason is there why, within a few years' time, a foreign nation should not be able to despatch a fleet of a thousand aerial machines, each carrying two or three armed men and able to come across to our shores and land, not necessarily on the coast, but at any desired inland place? The majority of these men could be landed while the flyers could be sent back for further supplies. No defence seems possible against invasion by such a fleet, since, like a swarm of locusts, its destination cannot be guessed, and, after settling, it may rise again and swoop down on some fresh place, while an hour later it may have returned to its base ... 10,000 such machines would probably not cost more than one modern battleship.

A correspondent to the Times pointed out, however, that invasion involved the landing of a large and fully equipped armed force, complete with cavalry and artillery. Yet the largest dirigible then built had a lifting capacity of only a few tons, and was too cramped to convey even a single horse or field gun. Until carrying capacities were improved, it was obvious that airships would be limited in application to raids and demonstrations. Range was another factor, for overseas expeditions still severely taxed the capabilities of the best available airships, and the troublesome winds of the North Sea and Channel could prove disastrous. The conjectures contained in the serials of the illustrated magazines were in fact visionary. An army captain estimated that such an invasion of 100,000 would require at least a thousand ships, each carrying 100 men. Even if such huge ships could

be constructed, they would prove extremely difficult to manoeuvre and it would be almost impossible to manufacture the immense quantities of gas required to fill them. In December 1908 the Admiralty considered the possibility that Germany might use their aerial fleet to bomb the British fleet as a preliminary to invasion, but it was decided that this was technically impossible, although the situation required watching. Although it was obvious that invasion by air would be technically impossible for some years, the first air crossing of the channel by Louis Bleriot on July 25, 1909, served notice that the question could not be ignored and, as Esher noted, marked "the beginning of a new era." Perceptive Englishmen were beginning to realize that air power, rather than sea power, would eventually become the ultimate deterrent against invasion attempts, and that the fleet's role as the nation's first line of defence would ultimately be displaced. But this was still a matter for the future.

Invasion by sea and air had been prophesied in prose and poetry; on January 27, 1909 it ascended the stage as well. Guy du Maurier, a Major in the Royal Fusiliers, had written a play called "An Englishman's Home, which adapted the themes of the invasion novelists for the purpose of patriotic melodrama. In dramatizing the invasion of England by "Nearerlanders" led by the "Emperor of the North", du Maurier employed the clichés of Le Queux and his imitators: the sudden and overwhelming landing in Essex, the perfidy of resident aliens, acting as spies and saboteurs, and the incompetence of the ill-prepared and poorly-led Volunteer defenders. The middle-class home

owner of the title quotes the conventional homilies that the fleet will prevent invasion, and that the various home defence organizations are a form of militarism and slavery. As the enemy nears, however, he takes up his rifle to defend his home, and is caught and shot by the invaders as a franc-tireur. The plot was certainly ordinary, if not devoid of dramatic merit; but in the charged atmosphere of the time, the play came to enjoy an unprecedented success.

Much of its popularity was due to the fact that it was immediately adopted by the County of London Territorial Force, led by Lord Beaverbrook, who was impressed by its theme after attending on opening night. A second powerful ally appeared in the form of the Harmsworth Press, which mobilized its considerable resources to publicise the play in order to stimulate recruiting for the Territorials. Within a week after it had opened, An Englishman's Home was sold out for a month in advance, and the theatre manager was quoted as saying that the demand for seats was unprecedented.

The Daily Mail published a series of articles by Colonel Lonsdale Hale, calling attention to the play, and to the parlous condition of the home defences, while a leader called upon the Government to strengthen the Territorial Force. The paper warned that in real life no British army would arrive to save the situation as it had on stage.

There would be nothing but mere mobs of unarmed young men and helpless old men to confront Prince Yoland's perfectly organized invaders. The play would close with the dishonour of a national catastrophe imposed upon the horror of desolated homes and civilians shot for daring to use arms in England's defence. With the statesmen it rests to speak out and prevent


such a national tragedy from being enacted.¹

The paper published a condensation of "The Play All London is discussing", complete with photographs of various scenes, in the hope that it would "revolutionize the national attitude to defence." The Spectator observed that "at the present moment the country, or at any rate a large part of it, is in a state of wild excitement" over the dramatization of "the physical horrors of invasion", and referred to the many articles in the press discussing the play's social and political significance. Although the Spectator was critical of this "crude and sensational method" of calling attention to the consequences of invasion, it was grateful for this argument for adequate defensive preparation which would in the future make invasion panics obsolete. The National Review praised this "Play With A Purpose" and predicted that the National Service League as well as the Territorial Force would receive converts and recruits as a result of du Maurier's drama.²

The Drama critic of the Times was more perceptive, describing it as "crude and amateurish" and a "grotesque, rather squalid farce." He rather saw its true significance as a mirror of contemporary anxiety over German invasion, noting that An Englishman's Home was "not a good play in itself, hardly, indeed, a work of art, but of real importance as a fact, as a 'sign of the times'."³ By fortuitous timing, this mediocre melodrama appeared at a time when the British public mind was

worked up over invasion as it had not been since 1900 and would not be again until the outbreak of war in 1914. For a number of years the National Service League and the National Defence Association had been pointing to the parlous condition of the nation's defences on land. Now these organizations were joined by the Imperial Maritime Association and the Navy League, who were beginning to suspect that German naval expansion was proceeding with a hitherto unsuspected speed. By the winter of 1908-1909 both the N.S.L. and the N.D.A. were exploiting the invasion issue as never before. Until this time their propaganda had been moderated by the traditional faith in British naval supremacy. But during the winter the Cabinet, and eventually the public, learned that German naval construction promised to surpass Britain's within five years. The ensuing naval panic and the agitation to embark on the construction of eight new Dreadnoughts was a powerful factor contributing to the invasion scare of 1909.\(^1\) Although the promoters of the navy scare did not explicitly refer to invasion, their argument that British sea supremacy was gravely threatened implied that invasion was more likely, if not inevitable.

The Liberal Westminster Gazette, a strong supporter of the Government, suspected a possible alliance of "conscriptionists" and the Big Navy party. Its leader of February 5th observed that "there are symptoms, in London certainly, of a revival of military agitation" and pronounced that

\(^1\) The best account of the 1909 naval scare is to be found in A.J. Marder's *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, pp. 151-170.
it is a chief part of the duty of the present Government to stand firm against this delusion and the military agitation which is behind it ... At the present moment the promoters of the conscriptionist movement are waiting their opportunity to join hands with the party which is promoting a scare about the Navy. It is, of course, impossible to satisfy fanatics, either naval or military, but no possible excuse must be given to ordinary sober-judging people for joining the militarists in a panic about the Navy.¹

There was a third body promoting the invasion scare to which the newspaper did not refer, for Haldane and the War Office were deeply involved in using An Englishman’s Home as a form of publicity for the Territorial Force. A booth had been set up in the theatre, complete with forms and recruiting sergeant, with great success. Although the implications of these activities escaped the Westminster Gazette, they were not lost on Members of the Opposition in the House of Commons. Haldane, in presenting the Army Estimates on March 4, acknowledged that the publicity of the Daily Mail and "modern methods of recruiting" had produced "a great boom" in the Territorial Forces since the beginning of the year. From January 1 to February 23, 30,000 recruits had joined the Force, and the London area, formerly backward, was leading all other districts. But the Secretary of State for War was strongly criticised on both sides of the House for his methods. In his last speech in the Commons, Arnold-Forster deplored "the dragging in of the drama".² Liberal Members criticised this instigation of "spurious enthusiasm" in which "the stalls were firmly convinced that the pit and the gallery should immediately join the Territorial Army,"³ and termed it "one of the most unscrupulous agitations ever initiated in this country."⁴ Misgivings over the semi-official sponsorship of the play were reinforced when the Lord Chamberlain informed a London theatre management that

3. Ibid. 8 March 1909. cols. 105-106.
4. Ibid. col. 104.
"no skit on An Englishman's Home will be licensed for representation."

Further controversy followed the Government's use of censorship to repress ridicule of its invasion recruiting propaganda. 1 Esher, Chairman of the London Territorial Association, hoped "the ferment will do good," although Haldane in a later speech, disavowed himself by observing that "one heard and one saw on the stage a good deal of gloomy apprehension" directed towards Britain's powers of defence against invasion.2

Du Maurier's patriotic melodrama illustrates the characteristic ambivalence of the invasion propaganda. Although various special interest groups all publicized the dangers of invasion, they differed strongly on the means to meet it. The appropriation of An Englishman's Home by the War Office on behalf of the Territorial Force put the N.D.A. and the N.S.L., with their own competitive panaceas for home defence, in a somewhat embarrassing position. The N.D.A., although it welcomed the alarm produced by the play, described it as "a melodramatic, highly satirical, and somewhat exaggerated presentation" and regarded its success with envy in its journal National Defence.

What speeches by soldiers and statesmen, backed by an almost unanimous Press, have failed to do, what powerful organizations like the National Service League have striven after for seven long years and almost in vain, the mimic shells at Wyndham Theatre have done roused the Londoner from self complacency and lethargy and set him asking what he ought to do.3

Yet the only result was that they were joining the Territorials, which

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the playwright had argued were useless in real war. National Defence suspected that the play was in reality a satire, poking fun at the entire nation, and confessed perplexity as to its real message. The Earl of Errol in a later issue attacked Haldane and Esher for indulging in "hysterical recruiting", asserting that the Territorial goal of 300,000 partly trained military amateurs out of a nation of 40 million hardly represented Haldane's professed ideal of a "Nation in Arms".

What we want is not a fleeting and hysterical rush to arms due to press advertisement and a play that has 'caught on', but a deep and lasting public opinion based on the principle that it is the duty of every adult Englishman to fit himself for the defence of his country.

Errol recommended a different, and more realistic, dénouement to the drama, which would have presented Britain occupied, groaning under a heavy indemnity, and with enemy troops billeted in households and her industry ruined.

The National Service League was even more embarrassed by Du Maurier's success. When the play first appeared, A Nation in Arms represented that it presented the ideas of the League, even though the N.S.L. had not had a part in its production, and commended it to the public. But once it had become obvious that An Englishman's Home had been appropriated as a recruiting vehicle by the War Office, the N.S.L. restricted itself to sardonic criticism of this "Recruiting Extraordinary" and the opportunism of Haldane. Lord Roberts expressed his agreement with the theme of the play, although he added that his flesh did not necessarily creep at the sight of a German waiter. Eventually the League attempted to counteract the success of the

play, by producing its own version of a future invasion in four acts, entitled *A Nation In Arms*. Where *An Englishman's Home* was used to bolster the Territorials, *A Nation In Arms* ridiculed them. It was obviously produced to correct the erroneous impressions given by the earlier play, and its introduction honestly admitted that it was "a deliberate attempt to present on the stage certain arguments for the introduction of national military training." Lord Roberts in a preface wrote

I can confidently assert that the scenes in the play are by no means an exaggerated picture of the scenes which would occur in England - more especially in the great commercial and industrial centres - were an invading army to effect a landing on our shores. The hopeless inefficiency of our gallant and patriotic but inadequately trained Territorials against fully-trained soldiers is only too truly portrayed.

Under the patronage of the League, the play toured Lancashire and Yorkshire, the locale of its supposed campaign scenes, proclaiming the gospel of universal military service. Unlike the optimistic ending of its archetype, *A Nation In Arms* ended with a British defeat and the invaders advancing South towards London.  

The *Westminster Gazette*, highly critical of the invasion agitation, expressed its puzzlement over the divided counsels of the home defence enthusiasts. Lord Esher encouraged men to join the Territorials, while Colonel Hale attacked the Force as a sham, and advocated the two years' training programme of the R.S.L. The General Staff were believed to be of this opinion also, although the Cabinet were committed to the voluntary principle. There was an immense division of opinion as to what must be done, and the producers of *An Englishman's Home* had made the confusion worse.

confronted. Du Maurier, it transpired, had originally written the melodrama as a home defence morality play, but it had been converted into a near-farce in rehearsal by substituting its originally tragic ending for one which would "bring a little hope in the end." This attempt to please the public turned the homily into a satire which ridiculed the invasion panic. The Gazette therefore deemed it best to look beyond the home defence enthusiasts for a solution of the question, noting that "if we confine our study of the military problem to ... zealous military cranks, it does seem to be rather a chaos."

The public at large found it equally difficult to take the play seriously for long. A witness of the March 25 performance complained that the audience burst into laughter at its most solemn moments, even when the home-owner of the title was taken out to be shot by the invaders.

Enthusiastic parodies quickly appeared in spite of the Lord Chamberlain's ban, which applied only to theatres, and music-halls were free to present semi-satirical "patriotic interludes". One sketch represented "England Invaded - As It Would Be And As It Ought To Be." The first scene featured the sudden appearance of a foreign army on an English golf course, followed by the execution of the defenceless golfers and the "rough handling of women by barberous officers got up to represent militarists who are one half Cossack and one half Imperial Bodyguard!" The second version had the harmless golfers change into Territorial uniforms and extract rifles from their golf-bags, defeating the intruders. Another music-hall skit portrayed

a Lord Roberts-type figure drilling the cooks, gardeners, and footmen on his estate with the aid of bugle calls. These were routed by the appearance of a German officer brandishing his sword, who in turn was captured by a squad of disguised Boy Scouts. Not all Englishmen took the invasion scare as seriously as Lord Roberts and Repington.

The Government, however, could not afford the appearance of neglecting the nation's defences. Haldane, in announcing the Army Estimates, proposed that home defence mobilization should be tested by using motorcars to despatch regular troops to the coast. The exercise took place on March 17, when 286 motorcars conveyed a battalion of Guards to Hastings, a distance of 54 miles, in 3½ hours. Government spokesmen proclaimed the trial a great success, which testified to the speed and reliability of cars as alternative transport if the railways were destroyed by saboteurs. The exercise also had the incidental advantage of conferring a great deal of publicity upon Haldane's efforts to reform the home defences: crowds lined the route from London to Hastings, and local villages were hung with bunting as the troops were "rushed" to the coast. The National Service League published a peevish report of the proceedings, which intimated that the experiment was "more interesting than dependable" and had been planned for the purposes of publicity rather than defence.

Although Haldane continued to protest that invasion was unlikely, he announced additional measures in the House of Commons which indicated that the Government was not negligent. The coast was being surveyed and sub-

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divided into 100 yard units which would be assigned to Territorial formations. More important, the War Office was busy organizing a Central Force, made up of Regulars and selected Territorials, which would provide a mobile force as the backbone of home defence. Haldane also created a stir, and appeased the home defence lobby, by stating that the principle of universal liability to serve in home defence rested on a strong historical precedent, as well as "on the common law of the land." He predicted that

> Were the national in deadly peril, everybody would come forward, and not only so, but nobody would be concerned to dispute that if this country were invaded, it would be the legal as well as the moral duty of every man to bear arms and repel the invader.  

In coming to terms with the invasion scare, Haldane was criticised for encouraging the panic. Mr. Wyndham, a former Conservative Under-Secretary of War, accused him of making alarmist pronouncements.

> the trend of his speeches in the country, the trend of the preparation he is making; his experiments in conducting troops rapidly to the coast in motor cars - what does all that mean, unless he believes it necessary to make some provision against a real imminent national danger, against the attempt he thinks would be made to strike at the heart of the Empire.  

Similar suspicions were expressed by a Liberal member, Mr. Harold Cox, who inferred that Haldane was exploiting invasion as an issue to build up recruitment in the Territorials. Mr. G.H. Roberts, of the Labour party, rejoiced that Haldane was being censored by members of his own party, and denounced any "demand for a large increase in our Army, based upon the danger, or assumed danger, of foreign invasion, which emanates entirely from Army sources", and would eventually lead to conscription. He asserted that

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1. Hansard. (Commons) 4 March 1909, col. 1625, 1615.
2. Ibid. 8 March 1909, cols. 48-49.
3. Ibid. col. 79, see also 83-84.
"the ferocity of the jingoism" which currently prevailed obscured the dominant role of the fleet in national defence.¹ Arthur Lee, Balfour's assistant in defence questions, feared that public opinion might prevent the Expeditionary Force from leaving Britain in time of emergency, if the invasion question was not clarified, and successfully prevailed upon Asquith to set aside time for a debate on home defence.²

A new storm broke on March 16, when the long-smouldering controversy over increased German ship-building facilities, which had absorbed the attention of the Cabinet all during the previous winter, finally broke out into the open. McKenna and Asquith both made grave speeches in the House of Commons which indicated that Germany might be able to build as fast as England and could, within four years, possess a naval strength perilously close to that of Great Britain. The sudden awareness that England might lose the command of the sea brought a renewed urgency to the invasion controversy. This was to be expected, for the experts of the Blue Water School had for twenty years successfully contended that the Fleet was the first line of defence against invasion. Now for the first time in nearly a generation, the efficacy of that defence was in doubt. The Navy scare and the invasion scare thus mutually reinforced one another, and the public clamour reached a new pitch. Newspapers and journals were flooded with articles and letters. Women were urged to join the National Service League and the London Chamber of Commerce held a public meeting to discuss national defences, while Lords Cawdor and Curzon delivered speeches expressing anxiety over the nation's security.³ The Prime Minister intervened in

¹. Hansard (Commons) 8 March 1909. col.102-104.
². Ibid. cols. 207-208.
³. (see next page).
the naval debate in the Commons on March 22 to condemn in uncharacteristically strong language

the absurd and mischievous legends, to which currency is being given at this moment, as to the supposed naval unpreparedness of this country. A more unpatriotic, a more unscrupulous, misrepresentation ... I have never experienced.¹

The Times published a three-column letter from Frederick Harrison, the celebrated Positivist philosopher, which asserted that Britain's policy of depending on a predominant fleet would eventually break down. The two power standard was already being challenged by more populous nations, such as Germany and the United States. Either a great expansion of the Territorial Force or the institution of conscription was necessary to secure Britain from catastrophe, for it was notorious that she possessed the smallest standing army in Europe. Harrison's letter was later published and circulated by the National Service League as conscription propaganda.²

Harrison was refuted the next day by John Knox Laughton, Professor of History at King's College, London and a close collaborator of the Colombs, who pointed out the fallacies in his argument. David Hannay, a naval propagandist, cried out, not for more Territorials, but a larger fleet. Lord Rosebery and Alfred Austin, the Poet Laureate, called for an enlargement of the Territorials. Repington, for his part, contributed a special article which proclaimed that British naval supremacy was now for the first time a matter of grave doubt, and that Blue Water pedagogues had been revealed as drowning

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1. Hansard (Commons) 22 March 1909. col. 1504.

doctrinaire who clutch at the straws of an exploded heresy." He argued that "to ruin England an enemy must land in England and subdue her. So long as no enemy can occupy with his land forces, every defeat can be retrieved and naval resurrection is always possible." The present naval crisis showed more than ever the need for Lord Roberts' "Million Man Standard": England had only five years' grace to create a true "Nation in Arms" on the basis of the Territorial Force. 1

The National Service League was also quick to capitalize on the navy scare, and sent an official communication to the *Times* which declared that the only argument against compulsory service had been the security of the fleet. Now it appeared that this security would be gone in four years' time. Sir John Colomb caustically replied that this was an argument better fit for a lunatic asylum: if the fleet was not sufficient, make it so. 2 But the N.S.L. doubtlessly gained recruits as a result of the public's shaken faith in sea supremacy. Lord Roberts tried to take advantage of the situation and wrote a 10-page letter to Balfour, asking him to take the leadership in "this time of national awakening" to bring home to the people the supreme importance of securing the safety of the country without delay, for the present panic showed the folly of relying solely on the fleet. Roberts announced that he would soon introduce a bill for conscription in the House of Lords, and asked Balfour to assume the leadership of the movement for universal military training. 3 Balfour declined this honour, but Roberts

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2. Ibid. 26 March 1909, p.4; 29 March 1909, p.9.
gained an important convert and powerful ally on April 10, when Strachey
published a leading article in the Spectator which announced espousal of
conscription. Repington wrote to Roberts, rejoicing that the "cause of
national Training has received an unexpected fillip by the revelations made
by government speakers on the naval estimates."

There has been a pretty hullabaloo, and I have driven the lesson
home as well as I could, and am now engaged in combats with the
extreme navalists who are attacking me with all their customary
venom and inaccuracy ... It was all very well for the navalists
to talk when they boasted a supreme navy, but now they admit that
the Navy may not be supreme and will oppose national Training!

But Repington was disappointed in the Times, which had "joined the Navy mono-
maniacs and can think of nothing but Dreadnoughts."2

The N.S.L. campaign gathered momentum during May. The alarm spread to
the House of Commons, where Sir George Doughty asked McKenna whether the
Admiralty knew of a recent German invasion practice:

that two large steamers were suddenly commandeered at Hamburg
and a number of soldiers were marched on board; that these
steamers at once set out across the North Sea, steamed into
the River Humber, and returned again to Hamburg; this manoeuvre
was carried out completely without being observed by any British
guardship or other authority?

McKenna replied that the Admiralty would be grateful for any details of this
operation.3 A Liberal M.P., Captain Kincaid-Smith, resigned his seat to run as
a conscription candidate in opposition to Government policy, and Lord Milner
delivered a powerful speech in support of the League.4 On May 17th, Lord
Wemyss introduced another Resolution into the House of Lords to the effect
that the Territorials were an insufficient deterrent to foreign invasion.

2. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Box R.1 662/60. Repington to Roberts, 26 March
3. Hansard (Commons) 12 May 1909. col. 1805.
calling upon the Government to make additional steps for the defence of the country on land. Wemyss read a letter from Roberts, who represented that we have no Army to speak of ... if the expeditionary force, or even the first four divisions of that force, were sent abroad, our land forces are, in my judgment, in such a deplorable condition that we should be at the mercy of any invader who could land any number approaching to 100,000 men on these shores.¹

This opinion, Roberts asserted, was shared by all British Field-Marshal, as well as by every soldier of note in the country. In the debate which followed all the old criticisms formerly applied to the Volunteers were transferred to the Territorials: they were insufficient in organization and numbers and were not equal to picked Continental troops. The one new contention was that the command of the sea was in question, which had not been true even during the crisis of 1900. But Lord Lucas, the Government spokesman, pointed out that a new mobilization scheme for home defence was being worked out by the War Office, and that the entire question was being studied "in a far more minute and thoroughgoing manner than ever before in the history of the British Army." Wemyss' Resolution was narrowly defeated, 28 to 24.²

The conscriptionists were not discouraged, however, and the next day, the Lords considered an inquiry into the Army Special Reserve, in which Lord Roberts played a prominent part. As previously, he bore down heavily on the consequences for home defence, once four divisions of the expeditionary force had left the country.³ The day following (May 19), the National Service (Training and Home Defence) Bill was introduced into the Lords.⁴

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1. Hansard (Lords) 17 May 1909. cols. 897-98; 901.
2. Ibid. cols. 903, 908, 905, 916, 922.
3. Ibid. 18 May 1909. col. 997.
4. Ibid. 19 May 1909. col. 1054.
and the invasion peril was frequently invoked in the major debate on the bill which followed on July 12, Roberts stressed that such an attack was possible on "a far larger scale than has usually been assumed", and declared that 315,000 partially-trained and widely dispersed Territorials could hardly "withstand the concentrated onset of possibly 150,000 of the most highly-trained and best organized troops in the world." At the time of Trafalgar, when the population had been a third of that of 1909, Britain had had almost twice as many men under arms. Roberts had powerful support for the Bill from the Duke of Bedford and Lords Lovat, Milner, and Curzon, who agreed with Roberts that "the real pivot of this debate is the question of invasion." Curzon went beyond the usual prophesies to forecast that a German landing would unchain "the forces of crime and disorder" and lead to "not only the destruction of all our material resources but the crumbling and collapse of society itself ... the utter subversion of the old order of things to which we are accustomed." In spite of such counsels, the Bill was eventually defeated after two days of debate, by 123 to 103, on the grounds that it was not consistent with the policy of the Cabinet and the House of Commons. The division was along party lines: 98 Tories, 4 Liberals, and the Bishop of Oxford supported Roberts. This crude attempt to legislate conscription alienated several important people. Ewart, the Director of Military Operations wondered:

What is the use of an Army which can only be used on the assumption that the Germans have defeated our Navy and gained a footing in this country ... 'Home Defence' is the

2. Ibid. 13 July 1909. col. 460.
most poisonous strategical fallacy ever propounded by man. The only true defence is offence ... Lord Roberts and his henchman are out of date. The ideal of the future is Imperial Cooperation by land and sea.¹

Repington published a sharp rebuke in the Times, contending that there was not "one single military opinion of value ... in favour of the thesis expounded by Lord Roberts and the band of disappointed ex-Militia Colonels in the Lords." They had represented that the army had been a sham; in fact, it had never been stronger: the first and second lines were better than ever before, and the Establishment of 100,000 for the new mobile Central Force would certainly suffice to defeat 100,000 invaders. Roberts was disheartened by the loss of his former ally, and wrote to a friend that "Repington bewilders me with his figures, and it would be useless to answer him I suppose."

It was not necessary to accept Haldane's word for it that only 70,000 to 100,000 invaders need be expected. Roberts said: why not double that number? The Regulars would almost certainly be out of the country and no trained troops would be on hand.³ The involved arguments of the C.I.D. regarding the physical problems of invasion, and the danger of naval interception, had completely gone over the Field-Marshal's head. Roberts wrote an eight page letter to Esher asking for his support, but the latter replied that British supremacy would be the first casualty of conscription.

3. Amery MSS. Box C. 41. Roberts to Amery, 1 June 1909.
Besides encouraging the conscriptionists, the invasion scare also fostered a widespread suspicion that German aliens in England might serve as a "fifth column" of saboteurs in the event of an attack by that country. Following Le Queux's sensational "revelations" in such works as Spies of the Kaiser, the press was full of letters from agitated readers reporting the "espionage" activities of resident foreigners. Ewart, the Director of Military Operations, believed the Germans were "systematically reconnoitering the United Kingdom" and was convinced that "the country is full of undesirables and suspicious aliens who might be a real danger in War."¹ Similar premonitions existed in the House of Commons, where Haldane was asked whether he has any information showing that there are 66,000 trained German soldiers in England, or that there are, in a cellar within a quarter of a mile of Charing Cross, 50,000 stands of Mauser rifles and 7½ millions of Mauser cartridges, that is, 150 rounds per rifle?

Although Haldane expressed his gratitude that this story had been exposed to the ridicule it deserved,² official circles were in reality disturbed over the question of espionage. On July 24, the C.I.D. considered the report of a sub-committee which had investigated the problem of foreign espionage, and learned through a map of known German agents in England that "the attention of these agents is being mainly confined to those portions of the United Kingdom which would be of special interest to Germany in the event of her having in contemplation the invasion of this country." The General Staff expressed concern over the increased amount of German espionage, and advocated that a Secret Service Bureau be established to counter their activities. It was also recommended that strategic points such as dockyards and magazines be made secure against possible attacks by "disaffected

¹ Cab 3/2/1/ 47A "Report of a sub-Committee ... appointed ... to consider the question of foreign espionage in the United Kingdom." 24 July 1909. Cab 2/2/1 Minutes of 103rd Meeting, C.I.D. 24 July 1909; "Ewart Diary 24 July 1909.
² Vanera. (Commons) 24 May 1909. col. 812.
By the summer of 1909 the invasion scare had run its full course. Lloyd George's introduction of the "People's Budget" on April 29 and the enterprising activities of the Suffragettes were notable distractions. At the same time the Anglo-German tension of the previous winter had abated. Asquith judged that conditions were propitious for an announcement of the invasion inquiry conclusions of the previous year, which he divulged in the House of Commons on July 29. He was much more circumspect than Balfour had been in 1905 and his speech, in fact, was more notable for what it omitted than what it contained. It contained not a single reference to the ease of invasion from Germany as compared with one from France, although this had been the original reason for convening the inquiry. Asquith explained that his reticence was due to the "highly confidential nature" of the report; he was also unwilling to "import any element of controversy into the debate."\(^2\) The Prime Minister had obviously been impressed by the force of the invasion scare, and wished to avoid aggravating public fears and anti-German feeling.

Balfour, immediately following the Prime Minister, stated that he was in complete agreement with him on the invasion question, thus insuring that it would not become a political issue between the two main parties. His further comments were more enlightening than those of Asquith, for he admitted that the conclusions of 1908 were "in a sense somewhat less satisfactory" and "more anxious" than those of 1903. The 70,000 man scale of

1. Cab 3/2/1. p. 3.
attack would greatly aid the War Office planners, but it remained a point of contention between the two parties "whether either the Fleet or the Home Defence Army is up to the standard which the Prime Minister and the Committee of Defence think necessary". Sir Charles Dilke, in the debate which followed, did make reference to the relative prospects of a French and German invasion, declaring that the danger was less because the Germans, unlike the French, could not cross in one night. Dilke condemned Haldane's recent increase of the Territorial establishment to 40,000 men, and charged that it was extravagant to appropriate funds on this scale for "this most unlikely and most improbable bare possibility." Instead of being expanded, the Force should be reduced. Another Liberal M.P., Hilaire Belloc, agreed that invasion was impossible, while Caryllon Bellairs, one of Beresford's chief disciples, proclaimed that the C.I.D. had been "hypnotised" by invasion and asked that the money appropriated for the Territorials should go instead to the Navy.

Press reaction to Asquith's speech was more favourable. The Times first leader congratulated the Prime Minister on having "certainly advanced considerably beyond the point at which MR. BALFOUR left the subject in 1905" and welcomed the committee's main conclusion: that home defence was an interservice responsibility.

It is not on the Navy alone, nor on the Army alone, that we must rest for the security of these shores against invasion, but on the due co-ordination of both forces, each discharging its proper and characteristic function and sufficiently strong and adequately equipped for the purpose ... as a result of the investigations of the Committee of Defence, conducted without interruption or

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2. Ibid. cols. 1396-1400.
3. Ibid. cols. 1414-15.
4. Ibid. cols. 1406-07.
diacorCance under two successive Governments, the responsible leaders of both parties are now substantially agreed not only as to the general standard at which our defensive forces are to be maintained, but as to the correlation of function to be henceforth established between them.  

Other leading London papers agreed. The Morning Post saluted this "return to sound doctrine", which rejected the idea of an Admiralty monopoly in home defence, while the Westminster Gazette congratulated Asquith on this new policy. The Daily Express, however, warned that no political rhetoric would convince the nation that invasion was impracticable, for the Government could give no assurance that the fleet was adequate in strength. It called upon every able-bodied man to join the army. 

Until the outbreak of war in 1914, invasion never again attracted public attention as it had during the winter of 1908-1909. In the years following, other domestic controversies — such as the rejection of the "People's Budget", the General Elections of 1910 and 1911, the House of Lords contention which led to the Parliament Act of 1911, the growing Suffragette agitation, and the question of Irish Home Rule — absorbed the attention of the general public. But the question of national defence remained a source of concern to the policy-makers and the Agadir Crisis of July-November 1911, involving a further Franco-German quarrel in Morocco, brought about a general tuning up of defence measures by both services and the C.I.D. But for three years, from mid-1909 to mid-1912, public discussion of the invasion question receded to the small competing coteries of "experts" who carried on their running debate in the service periodicals and various correspondence.

Invasion persisted as a theme in British fiction and magazine serials, though not in the quantities that had persisted from 1906 to 1909. Efforts such as *The German Invasion of England* (1910) and *The Shadow of Glory*... *The Great War of 1910-1911* (1910) followed the well-worn pattern, while Charles M. Doughty's epic poem *The Clouds* was his second attempt to employ invasion as the subject for a blank verse patriotic saga, in which pagan gods and Christian saints jostled together in patriotic allegory. It predicted that soon:

> A people of harsh speech, our Adversaries,
Shall mount up glittering, from Thy blood-stained shore;
And thence, like to vast folding Wave, begin
To Whelm on Thy fair Plain, O unready Britain.

Another indication of the spirit of the time was J.T. Moate's *The Doom of Britain: A Divine Warning, The German Conquest of England Foretold in the Scriptures*, which described a future German invasion in 543 closely-printed pages, using the exotic apocalyptic imagery of the Book of Revelation. England was interpreted as the Great Whore of Babylon, while the Kaiser appeared as the Beast of the Last Days.

Not all the immediately prewar invasion novels were so extravagant in character. In 1912 Edgar Wallace, a former writer for the Harmsworth press, adopted the theme of a campaign in Britain from the viewpoint of a private soldier. In the next year "Saki" (R.H. Monro) produced easily the best of the genre, *When William Came*, which adopted a German conquest of England as a means of social criticism. Monro's story began with the battles already over, the British Crown removed to Delhi, with carpet-baggers moving on.

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in, and collaboration beginning between the British and their conquerors. His description of life in German London, with "the alterations on stamps and coinage, the intrusive Teutonic element, the alien uniforms cropping up everywhere, the new orientation of social life" was in fact an indictment of the contemporary "decadence" of national life. Monro's gloomy chronicle of life in occupied England ended, however, on a hopeful note as British youth, assiduously cultivated by the German authorities, boycotted a highly-publicized review before the Kaiser. Although this generation of Englishmen had lost the martial arts, the coming generation, by refusing to become German Janissaries, contained a promise for the future.1

V.D. Newton's 1914 story War represented another subtle modification of the invasion theme, which avoided the usual home defence homily and instead attempted to counter the prevailing romanticization of war. Newton transposed to a British locale all the sordid horrors of modern total war—barbed-wire, trench warfare, poisoning of water supplies, and refugee-choked roads, which were soon to become a reality on the Continent. His horrifying descriptions of guerrilla warfare in Great Britain, with the occupying power hunting down and torturing to death British irregular bands, were far removed in spirit from the naive and enthusiastic conjectures of German invasion of a few years before.2 But the implications of modern war had not yet penetrated to the boy's magazines, which continued to publish invasion serials such as "Britain Invaded", "The Flying Armada", "Peril of the Motherland", "Britain At Bay", and "The Swoop of the Eagle".


with monotonous regularity. 1

The relative decline of the invasion theme in fiction in the last years before the war was paralleled by a wave of pamphlets, articles, and books debunking the picture of invasion presented in the novels and home defence propaganda. Hilaire Belloc, the Liberal M.P. and author, produced a skeptical study of Warfare In England, which emphasized that England had not been invaded since the eleventh century, and had always enjoyed a reasonable immunity from attack by organized armies. Belloc pointed out that London was now too large in extent ever to be successfully besieged. F.W. Hirst, the Editor of The Economist, mocked the "invasion-mongers" in Six Panics and Other Essays (1913) which drew parallels between the invasion scare of 1909 and its ancestors of the preceding century. The Contemporary Review and the English Review both published articles analysing the epidemic of invasion novels and plays, attacking their crudity of conception and charging that

the pernicious publications referred to, as well as the vamped-up and unscrupulous spy sensations of our Yellow Press, constitute acts of criminal levity against the peace of two kindred nations—a poisoning of the wells of public truth.

"The Islander" (who was probably Lord Esher) published a series of onslaughts against Lord Roberts, describing the N.S.L.'s exploitation of the invasion issue as a "hollow sham" and a conspiracy to frighten the British people into conscription by easy stages," and the first step of a "Military Conspiracy" to fling England "into the maelstrom of militarism." Other articles and pamphlets, while supporting the Government case on invasion,

did so to urge that Britain turn from home defence in order to prepare for participation in war on the Continent. The Government itself intervened in the pamphleteering war in 1911, when Lieutenant-General Ian Hamilton was encouraged by the War Office to write a book outlining the remoteness of invasion and the fallacies of the M.S.L. case. The book, Compulsory Service was given additional weight by virtue of a lengthy introduction written by Haldane and an appendix by the First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet A.K. Wilson, which together set out the views of both services as formulated in the course of the 1908 invasion inquiry. Lord Roberts was stung into reply and produced his own version of the home defence situation in a pamphlet entitled Fallacies and Facts. 2

The continuing invasion controversy was not confined to the printed page. In June 1914 invasion was adapted for the first time for the cinema, when the London Film Company released an epic entitled England's Menace. Its advertisements proclaimed

This is the greatest national drama yet produced and is not a mere romance. It has something of the gift of prophecy and stirs the blood as only war alarms can. It shows the perils of wireless as well as its safeguards. It illustrates how the


2. (see next page).
invader's warships might approach whilst England sleeps. IT IS MORE TELLING THAN ANY NEWSPAPER ARTICLE.¹

A 'still' depicted the enemy Cabinet "planning the invasion of England".

The plot is discovered by two children, who rush through the streets of London on their motorcycle to warn the Government. A contemporary reviewer described the results.

The British Government acts at once. Orders are issued with swift decision. The fleets get up steam and the troops begin to march. By a clever use of the enemy's code, the Prime Minister sends out a wireless message which turns back the enemy's fleet and transports. The danger is past. The British Government breathes a sigh of relief and the English people go placidly about their daily business without realising how narrowly a dangerous menace has been averted.²

England's Menace was especially praised for its skill in dramatasing the invasion peril, which was conveyed by alternating scenes of the enemy warships sweeping silently and relentlessly through the sea with those portraying an innocent, sleeping, and unsuspecting London. The film became a great commercial success, as it became suddenly topical after the outbreak of the First World War.³

With this one exception, which saw the issue of invasion transposed to a new media, the invasion agitation had all but died out in the last years before the war. Articles and pamphlets critical of the scare outweighed in volume the invasion propaganda, and it was apparent that the public had, in general, grown weary of the issue. The authorities, however, could not afford to ignore the appearance of new factors bearing on the situation. Although the agitators and publicists were no longer heeded by

1. The Bioscope. 11 June 1914. p. 1148.
the general public, this by no means disposed of the complicated problem of home defence. New information was always coming to light. In October 1911 Italy had attacked and occupied the Turkish province of Tripoli by despatching an expeditionary force across the Mediterranean. Blue Water advocates seized upon the incident as a conclusive vindication of their theories. Blue water writers pointed out that although the Italians had prepared secretly for the landing in the best "Bolt from the Blue" tradition and had enjoyed harbour facilities vastly superior to those the Germans would have available for a descent on England, the interval between the issue of mobilisation telegrams in Italy and the disembarkation had been three weeks, not the three days predicted by invasion alarmists. The incident provided other important lessons: the Italian transport flotilla had been very large and difficult to manoeuvre, its movements had been slow and irregular, and it had crossed in perpetual apprehension of a Turkish destroyer attack, even though the Turkish Navy was nearly a negligible quantity. The indications were obvious, if not new:

If it takes 35,000 troops almost three weeks to carry out an overseas attack, with no opposition whatever, how long would 200,000 or even 70,000, take in the face of some very dangerous opposition, even if the bulk of the defending fleet is out of the way.

Surely this suggested that the Territorial Force was in excess of home defence requirements and that effort should instead be diverted to building up the Expeditionary Force. Fisher, now in retirement, drew the same conclusion from the Tripoli operation and wrote to Balfour that the C.I.D.

studies had now received "a lovely corroboration!". He noted that the first
group alone of the Italian transports had been five miles in length.\textsuperscript{1}

The gauntlet was picked up by home defence advocates. Colonel C.E. Callwell, a military tactician of some reputation, replied through the pages
of the \textit{National Review} that there was no true analogy between the Turkish
defence of Tripoli and the defence of the United Kingdom. Britain was
densely populated, had well-developed communications, and its close country
permitted an invader to dispense with most of his cavalry and artillery.
Tripoli in comparison was open and even unmapped territory with few roads,
which required an expedition of all arms and with comprehensive supplies.
There never had been a question of surprise, for the Italians, encumbered
with equipment, had been forced to land at the one serviceable harbour in
the colony and had made no attempt to mask their intent to do so. The news
that the Italians were preparing such a descent had, however, taken the
Sultan and the British Press with equal surprise. The Germans would not be
restricted to a single harbour and could land on any beach they chose. To
compare the two campaigns was really "inappropriate and unprofitable."\textsuperscript{2}

Another military writer contended that the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 provided
a powerful argument for national service as opposed to the Territorial
Force, for the national armies of Bulgaria and Serbia had inflicted severe
defeats on the Turks, whose ill-organized force resembled the Territorials
in its deficiency of officers, scattered distribution, and slow mobilization

\textsuperscript{1} Balfour \textit{MS.} (49712) Fisher to Balfour, 14 October 1911.
Matters became further complicated by the results of the 1912 naval manoeuvres which tested the power of the fleet to prevent a raid on the British coast. Surprisingly, the "German" fleet, commanded by Admiral Louis Battenberg, succeeded in evading detection and was judged to have landed 28,000 troops in the Humber Estuary. Moreover, the invasion transports returned successfully to their ports through the sacrifice of six older battleships which had been serving as escorts. The Admiralty, although it had thrown a veil of secrecy over the purpose and results of the manoeuvres, was powerless to prevent the spread of rumours and conjectures, which grew in volume with the passage of time. 2 The unsettling conclusion of the naval manoeuvres coincided with a growing chorus of criticism directed towards the Territorial Force, which was now 50,000 men short of its establishment, and did not seem to be growing in size. Many of its influential former supporters, like Esher and Repington, were now considering conscription. 3 The lessons of Tripoli, as well as the naval manoeuvres, invested the Territorial Force with a new importance and responsibility, yet it was obvious that it was not fulfilling its earlier promise. By the summer of 1912 even Liberal M.P.s were asking

When the Expeditionary Force had gone, how were these shores to be defended? How was an amateur force, widely-scattered, ill-equipped, badly officered, and with no war training at all to deal with a compact fighting wedge invasion of 70,000 trained Continental troops? 4

The new critical attitude regarding the Territorials derived weight from the growing awareness that the Expeditionary Force would almost certainly leave for France in the early stages of a European War. Although the Territorials represented a momentous improvement over the old Volunteers, and had made great progress in their training and general military efficiency, the public tended to compare them with the Regular troops whom, they feared, would be absent when the time of testing came.

The Government could not afford to ignore these various developments. By the beginning of 1913 five years had passed since the C.I.D. had last investigated the problem of invasion. Although the excesses of the invasion propagandists had fostered a new skepticism on the part of the informed public, the military authorities were now almost completely taken up by a continental strategy, based on British intervention at the side of the French in a war against Germany. The General Staff's enthusiasm for the continental strategy revived old anxieties that the Regular divisions would be abroad in the event of a German landing, and the condition of the Territorials did not inspire confidence that they would prevail against a highly trained enemy expeditionary force. At the same time, the Italian invasion of Tripoli and the suggestive events of the 1912 naval manoeuvres revealed that there were also new developments in the naval sphere. Although public opinion might be diverted to other issues, the Cabinet could not renounce its responsibility for the security of the Island Kingdom, and at the C.I.D. meeting of 7 January 1913 the Prime Minister announced that the invasion inquiry would be re-opened for a third time within a decade.
CHAPTER VIII: THE THIRD INVASION INQUIRY OF 1913-1914

The actual reason for the re-opening of the invasion question is not completely clear. Major-General Sir Henry Wilson, the Director of Military Operations, suspected that the Cabinet would use the inquiry to decrease the scale of expected attack to “about 5000!” to mask the failure of the Territorial Force.¹ His misgivings in time came to be shared by a number of influential people, including Hepworth, Esher, and a number of members of Parliament. But the tenor of Asquith’s opening statement indicates that the inquiry was initiated by the Admiralty, for he called attention to recent developments in the naval sphere only: the progress of naval architecture, aircraft, and wireless, and the growing naval strength of other powers in the North Sea and Mediterranean. The military aspect of the invasion problem entered into discussion much later. Far from being a plot on the part of the Cabinet to reduce the commitments of the Territorials to coincide with their small size, circumstantial evidence indicates that Churchill was the éminence grise behind the inquiry. Since he had taken office as First Lord in October 1911, Churchill had brought a new vigour and direction to the Admiralty, and his drive and initiative are evident in the transcript of the inquiry’s proceedings. Churchill had personally prepared a report for the Prime Minister on the 1912 manoeuvres, was planning an additional exercise to investigate the problem of a German landing later in 1913, and took an active role in selecting the personnel for the inquiry.² His

¹ Wilson Diary. 7 January 1913.
² Cab 38/23/2 Minutes of C.I.D. Meeting. 7 January 1913; Cab 38/23/9. (contd. next page)

429.
role as initiator seems almost beyond doubt.

As the C.I.D. prepared for a third investigation within a decade, the home defence propagandists were astir. In early February Repington launched a campaign in favour of compulsion for the Territorial Force. He declared that the "voluntary principle" had failed: The Territorials were still 50,000 short of their 300,000 Establishment, which was ridiculously short of actual requirements. Repington disclosed that the Territorial Establishment of 300,000 had been fixed prior to the 1908 invasion inquiry; this figure was now even more suspect owing to the results of the 1912 naval manoeuvres, which had been concealed from the public. His own calculations indicated that this figure should be doubled — to 500,000 or 600,000. Repington alleged that the only means to raise such a force was to resort to some form of conscription, for "the liability of every man to train for the defence of his country must be accepted as an axiom of our national life." Robinson, the new Editor of the Times, echoed this argument in a strong first leader; the nation had concentrated too much on the fleet to the detriment of the land forces.¹

These arguments were beginning to prevail in other important circles. L.S. Amery prepared a secret policy paper for the Conservative


Party which pointed out the weaknesses of the Territorials as a defending force against invasion and suggested means by which the Conservatives could institute national service for home defence once they attained power. 1 In a well-attended debate in the House of Lords on February 10th, Lord Roberts declared that the Government had tried everything to solve the military problem except conscription, and that everything else had failed. The Duke of Bedford and Lords Middleton, Levat and Newton supported his contention that universal training was the only way to solve the debacle in home defence. Haldane countered that conscription would lead to neglect of the fleet. When Lord Crewe, the official Government spokesman, announced that a further invasion inquiry was about to begin, The Times observed:

> Whatever the Committee finds, it cannot be expected to find, with the growth of Modern facilities and the lessons of recent naval manoeuvres before it, that the danger is less serious than in 1908. Our present preparations are inadequate even to the requirements laid down in 1908. 2

Repington wrote a special article in support of the agitators, and noted that the Government had given no satisfactory assurance that the Territorials were ready to take the field in the event of invasion when the Expeditionary Force was out of the country. The Government had evaded the issue as to whether the Force could meet an invasion of 70,000 trained troops, and this evasion of public duty would be punished. The coming invasion inquiry might eliminate the 70,000 standard which was becoming an embarrassment to the Government, for the General Staff were so engrossed in preparing for a Continental invasion.

campaign that they would provide unthinking assurances that Britain was invulnerable. The Government, Repington predicted, would stress all the factors aiding the defence, while ignoring disquieting developments, such as improvements in rival armies and the recent failure in the naval manoeuvres. It would require strong arguments to convince him that the invasion danger had receded since 1909. 1

Repington informed Esher of his suspicions that the General Staff had initiated the invasion inquiry in order to free the Expeditionary Force from home defence duties by reducing the established scale of attack, for they were

entirely engrossed with the idea of fighting on the Mauser and are ready to sacrifice everything to this idea ... Their object ... is to show that invasion is impossible and that therefore the need to provide against a raid of the magnitude of 70,000 men is illusory."

Esher was initially skeptical, but after investigation came to share Repington's trepidations. 2 But these allegations are only partially substantiated by the evidence. Major-General Sir Henry Wilson, the D.M.O., who had engineered Repington's retirement from the army and was now the major architect of the Continental strategy, would have been at the centre of any such plot. But Wilson also described "this last move of Asquith's to reduce the scale of attack so as to enable

the Territorial Force to drop another 30,000" as the "most flagrant thing of all." In spite of all the mistrust there does not appear to have been any General Staff plot to stage an invasion inquiry to release the Expeditionary Force from responsibility for home defense. The available evidence suggests that the Admiralty initiated the inquiry as a result of the 1912 manoeuvres, for the General Staff played a rather passive role in its earlier deliberations. Later the General Staff did employ the argument anticipated by Repington, but there is no evidence to suggest this was the motivation behind the inquiry. Wilson, in fact, lobbied successfully to be excused from serving on the committee.

Once formed, the membership of the inquiry constituted one of the greatest gatherings of British military and political talent in the twentieth century. It included the three great war leaders of the century: Asquith, Lloyd George, and Churchill, in their respective capacities as Prime Minister and Chairman, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and First Lord of the Admiralty, as well as fourth Prime Minister, Balfour. There was an eminent group of Liberal Ministers: Haldane, now Lord Chancellor, McKenna, now Home Secretary, Grey, Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary, Lord Crewe, Secretary for India, and Lord Morley, Lord President of the Council. The military and naval members of the Committee were equally distinguished, including Prince Louis Battenberg, the First Sea Lord, Vice-Admiral Sir Henry Jackson, Chief of the Admiralty.

1. Wilson Diary. 21 February 1913, 23 February 1913.
2. Ibid. 4 March 1913; 13, 14 April 1914.
War Staff, Colonel Seeley, Secretary of State for War, General Sir John French, C.I.G.S., Brigadier-General D. Henderson, Director of Military Training, Esher, Admiral of the Fleet Sir A.K. Wilson, the former First Sea Lord, Field-Marshal Lord Nicholson, the former C.I.G.S., Lieutenant-General James Grierson, C-in-C, Eastern Command, and Captain Maurice Hankey, C.I.D. Secretary. 1 Other famous figures, such as Lord Roberts, Major Generals William Robertson and Sir Henry Wilson, and Admirals J.R. Jellicoe, W.R. May, and Callaghan gave evidence. But the very size of the Committee tended to distract from its efficiency and the full membership of 20 was rarely present. The discussion was generally dominated by the two service chiefs and their professional advisers (the soldiers outnumbered the sailors, three to five,) with the Cabinet ministers serving as an appreciative audience.

As might be expected with such a large assembly, the first seven meetings were rambling and discursive in character, concentrating mainly on the problem of raids. The first papers from the General Staff lent some substance to Repington's contention that they were more concerned with the Continental strategy than home defence, and focused on the problem of a German raid designed to prevent or delay the embarkation of the Expeditionary Force. They argued that no sound strategist would mount a raid merely to cause physical damage, for its psychological effect would be far more telling by putting public pressure on the Cabinet for the retention of the six Regular divisions.

It was "far easier to render dockyards or arsenals reasonably secure against attack than it is to render public opinion proof against scares." Therefore, "Popular terror" might lead to a diversion of the army or the Fleet from its legitimate strategical objective, because 5,000, or even 1,000 raiders might hold back a force from the decisive point. Such a raid would occur in the early days of the war before the Expeditionary Force had left the country. German air supremacy, which could prevent the raiding force from being intercepted by the Royal Navy, would increase the element of surprise and no warning would be forthcoming as had been thought in 1905. The General Staff estimated that 10,000 men, complete with ancillary artillery, horses, and transport, could be thrown across the North Sea using only 25,000 tons of shipping (half Balfour's estimate of 1905) although even a thousand men might suffice to start an invasion panic that would impede the employment of the Expeditionary Force overseas.¹

Hankey, the C.I.D. Secretary, prepared a paper which outlined the prospects of a surprise German raid on Woolwich. A "harmless tramp steamer" might ascend the Thames in time of peace, crammed below decks with a small raiding force of 200 men. Only a steel fence and a small police force stood between the river and the arsenal at Woolwich: if the raiders arrived at dawn they would cause considerable damage before they were apprehended. The power generating station could be destroyed, as well as the lyddite-filling establishment and

the powder reserves. Two hundred men could achieve as much as ten or twenty thousand if sabotage was their aim, and there were other valuable objectives besides Woolwich Arsenal. Hankey had been informed by Sir Charles Ottley, his immediate predecessor as C.I.D. Secretary, that the Armstrong munitions works (of which Ottley was now a Managing Director) were particularly vulnerable. An enemy raiding column could disrupt the production of heavy guns for months by destroying certain heavy presses which were essential for the forging of their barrels. There were only a few of these essential machines in the country and they would take months to replace. The important dynamos in the Newcastle electrical works could likewise be quickly destroyed by an expert, even without the benefit of explosives. A small sabotage unit of technically-trained saboteurs could achieve results out of all proportion to their numbers. The situation could be retrieved only if the nation had ample stocks of guns and shell on hand.

The trend of War Office thinking was confirmed in a paper delivered by Seeley on April 8. He argued that the Territorial Force would suffer if two divisions of the army were permanently retained in the United Kingdom to deal with raids. If the Regular Army were thus given the responsibility for home defence, Territorial organisation and recruiting difficulties would increase, because the prestige of defending the nation against attacks was a strong moral factor.

behind the forces. Seeløy asked the Committee to overturn the two division stipulation of 1908 and to accept Balfour's former argument that the home defence forces had sufficient efficiency to deal with the threat of invasion. He asked:

"That no part of our Regular Army should be allotted to the duties of Home Defence, except such small portion of it as may be required to maintain the Royal dignity and to preserve internal order in so far as it cannot be assured by the Police authorities ... the whole duty of Home Defence ... should be thrown upon the second line Army, to be maintained in adequate strength and efficiency to ensure national safety."

Seeløy cited the many improvements made in home defence since 1909: a coast defence system had been developed and was operating, and the mobile Central Force had been brought into being. This consisted of a flying column of 11,000 Regulars to stiffen the three Armies and a cavalry division of Territorials stationed near London for its protection. Seeløy's arguments for the efficiency of the home defence force were, however, more concerned with maintaining the full strength and freedom of movement of the Expeditionary Force.

In order to come closer to a solution of the problem, the General Staff were directed to provide the Committee with an estimate of the smallest force which could occupy London successfully. The soldiers were quick to point out that the question was difficult to answer conclusively owing to the many variables involved, but assumed that under the worst possible conditions, including a complete collapse of British morale, that an invading General could begin with as few as 60,000 to 65,000 troops for the conquest of Britain. Assuming

that the population remained quiescent, the General Staff believed London could be invested by 35,000 to 36,000 men, if they avoided built-up areas and the possibility of street-fighting. Woolwich and its docks could be secured by a force of 5,000, while two columns of 10,000 men each would circle round through the suburbs to the North and the South of London, destroying the railways and cutting communications. Although this operation could be accomplished within 24 to 36 hours, the investment of London need not signal the end of hostilities, for this force could not safely occupy the city centre and sizeable forces and much manufacturing capacity would still be available to the North. Seeley emphasized that this estimate represented the worst conditions imaginable, but Balfour noted that this estimate of 60,000-65,000 was very close to Lord Roberts' figure of 70,000 made in 1903.¹

The Admiralty, for their part, under the impetus of Winston Churchill, had also modified certain of their attitudes since 1908. Although Churchill frequently annoyed senior naval officers by his assertive opinions and pretensions to technical knowledge, his open-minded approach to the invasion problem was in strong contrast to the obstinate dogmatism of Fisher, the guiding spirit at the Admiralty for most of the preceding decade. Churchill's freedom from commitment to the Blue Water School and his non-alignment in the previous controversies was a great asset, for an

¹ Cab 16/28A. Appendix II. "Estimate of the smallest number of foreign troops with which, suppose these were landed in England, the Occupation of London could be attempted." about 4 April 1913. pp. 343-47; "Minutes of 7th meeting, 10 June 1913. pp. 68-69."
open mind could best appreciate the rapidly changing tactical conditions of the time. In January 1912, two months after he had become First Lord, he had become convinced that submarines conferred a great advantage upon the British defence, for they made "invasion even more difficult than before. They are the most formidable defence for their own coasts. All that suits us, increases our security, and frees our battle fleet." But this development cut both ways and during 1912 the Admiralty was forced to abandon its traditional policy of close blockade of enemy ports in time of war out of respect for the new offensive powers of the submarine and torpedo. The contentious naval manoeuvres of that year had been held to test the efficacy of a distant blockade under the new conditions.

Churchill, in his first C.I.D. paper printed on March 29, admitted that it would now be much harder to stop a German invasion than it would have been to stop a French invasion fifteen years before. Over the centuries, England's Southern coast had been built up with fortifications and bases against France and her three main centres of military strength were also in the South. However, Churchill warned, the opposite was true regarding the coast facing Germany: here there were no forts, naval bases, or sizeable military establishments (with the single exception of Chatham) in spite of the fact that there were many extensive and widely distrib

landing-places. Even the strategic Orkney and Shetlands were without

1. Balfour MSS. (4:694) Churchill to Balfour, 6 January 1912; see also Balfour to Churchill, 9 January 1912.
garrisons or naval defences. The German coast, moreover, as compared with the French, also was more advantageous as a base for invasion. Where the French ports were close to the British isles and open to attack from the sea, the distant German ports were protected by "intricate navigation, shifting and extensive sand banks, strong tides, frequent mist and storms" and were in addition defended by a powerful system of coast forts. The Germans had large ocean liners available for invasion transports, which the French had never had. Numerous test embarkations had taken place in German ports, news of which had taken several days to come to the notice of the Admiralty. Information regarding German naval activity was in general extremely difficult to obtain, as German surveillance of British agents had become especially severe in the last five years. Admiralty information regarding movements of the German fleet was culled from German newspaper clippings several days old. Churchill suggested that the Government establish a confidential coast watch in peace-time, which could be expanded to a permanent organisation in the event of war with Germany.¹

Churchill next outlined various German plans of attack. He believed a raid of 20,000 was likely early in the war to prevent the despatch of the Expeditionary Force. A second, more appalling possibility was that

after the war has been declared, the Germans will assemble a large number of suitable transports at Hamburg, Emden,

Wilhelmshaven, or Kiel ... they may in the course of a
month find opportunities of accumulating on British soil
upwards of 70,000 or 80,000 men, and maintain all the time
the menace of a still larger number; that they will use
their battle fleet in conjunction with some movements of
transports so as to take advantage of the fact that the
emergence of the German battle fleet would produce an
immediate British naval concentration with consequent
denudation in other quarters; and that a variety of combina-
tions exist which it would be open to the Germans to adopt
for executing the above design.1

This theory of invasion through a series of "dribbles" or cumulative
raids was supplemented by two further papers by Churchill. The first
of these described three additional forms which an overseas attack
from Germany might take and indicated Harwich as the best landing
place for a march on London. The second paper, sent to Battenburg
for his comments, assumed that the Germans could mount surprise attacks
on the Fleet without noticeable preparation and asked for a consider-
ation of peacetime arrangements to foil such attacks. Up to 20,000
troops could be collected without information reaching Britain, and
it was probable that half this number could reach the British coast
without the alarm being given. British military resistance could
begin in three to six hours, although enemy sabotage was not to be
ruled out. Churchill predicted that such a surprise attack was most
likely when the Fleet was drawn away to the Southern or South-west
coasts and concluded that "only the army can exact the conditions
which render naval success certain."2

A final Admiralty memorandum presented to the C.I.D. on June 25
1913 and signed by Churchill, Battenberg, and Jackson,

2. Cab 16/28A. Appendix XII. "Admiralty Notes". W.S.C. 29 March
1913 or Cab 37/115/24 "Notes by the First Lord of the Admiralty." 18 April 1913.
provided an authoritative restatement of the Admiralty position as well as a critique of the General Staff's suggestion that the Expeditionary Force should be divested of any responsibility for home defence. The Admiralty undertaking to intercept an invading force of 70,000 was downgraded from an "absolute certainty or guarantee" to a "reasonable expectation". The Admiralty triumvirate employed the "manoeled fleet" argument so beloved of the home defence enthusiasts against the General Staff, stating that unless an adequate military force is maintained in Great Britain, naval operations will be greatly hampered and complicated ... There is also the grave danger that, at a time when a decisive naval battle is impending or is in progress, the Government or some Board of Admiralty may be led by the anxiety of having a defenceless country at its back to make some fatal division of the forces necessary to secure victory. We therefore hold at all times, until the naval strength of Germany has been broken, the military force retained in the British Islands should not fall below the strength necessary to deal with a concentrated invasion of 70,000 men.  

In the five years since the last invasion inquiry, the position of the two services had been completely reversed. The War Office, which had built up the danger of invasion in order to expand a home army, was now concerned with freeing the six Regular divisions for service abroad. The Admiralty, which under Fisher had maintained that invasion was solely a naval question, was now attempting to increase as much as possible the War Office's responsibility for home defence. While the War Office was increasingly influenced by a new and ambitious strategy, the Admiralty was motivated by a development in technology.

which directly affected naval strategy and tactics.

Esher was deeply concerned over the revised positions of the two departments, especially the General Staff proposal to give the Territorial Force sole responsibility for home defence. He wrote a memorandum, based on his five years' experience in recruiting for the Force in London, setting out his view that it would never have more than 250,000 men in peacetime under voluntary enlistment and that the main question to be decided by the inquiry was whether the Force was adequate in its numbers and organisation. ¹ Seeley replied that this "counsel of despair" was a complete mistake, which would make the inquiry's work extremely difficult. ² Esher prepared a further memorandum expressing his reservations over the capacity of the Territorials ³ to defend England alone, and in addition communicated his suspicions privately to Balfour and Asquith on June 25th, noting that

The War Office seem to be anxious to prove that a raid of 20,000 men is the maximum hostile force against which it is necessary to prepare resistance, and that against such a force the Territorial Army and the Flying Column are ample provision. Their object is, apparently, to free the whole of the Expeditionary Force for immediate service overseas.

This, however, would result in heavy pressure from the public to cut the Army Estimates. On the other hand, the Admiralty now were anxious

That two regular Divisions should always be kept in this country, and yet they are reluctant to admit that even a

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3. Ibid. Appendix XX. "Note by Lord Esher." 17 June 1913. p. 245.
raid of 20,000 men can pierce the naval guard. Their object seems to be a double one: (a) To keep two Divisions at home. (b) Not to make admissions which would prevent them, the Admiralty, from using two Divisions overseas, for naval strategic purposes.

To end the impasse, Esher suggested to the Prime Minister that Lord Roberts be called before the Committee so that the case of invasion - in its most aggressive form - can be laid before the Committee by its real protagonist, instead of by means of hypothetical cases, framed (one is forced to conclude) in the interests of departmental proclivities.¹

Esher’s suggestion was soon acted upon. In contrast with the situation of 1908, Roberts, Repington, Lovat, and Scott had had nothing to do with the initiation of the 1913 inquiry, which had been sitting for four months before they were invited to give testimony. The quartet had, however, presented arguments in a memorandum in March, which declared that the 1912 naval manoeuvres had corroborated their case of 1907-08. Circumstances naturally favoured the invader, who possessed the initiative and knew exactly where he was going, while the defending Admiral had to prepare for all possible contingencies. The quartet argued that it was unwise to rely upon the untried defensive capabilities of the submarine; however, when it came to aircraft, their stand was completely reversed: they represented that Germany’s great air power, represented by 28 dirigibles, would be a decisive factor which would keep the British Fleet under observation and protect the invading flotilla from interception. The quartet bore down heavily on the Territorials who, they claimed, had no self-reliance or resolution, owing to the shortages of officers and men, lack of rifle

practice, and their restriction to eight days' training per year. In contrast, German Forces had expanded vastly since 1908. The situation had deteriorated since the last inquiry in five important aspects: the naval defence had become too arduous, Blue Water theory had been refuted by the 1912 manoeuvres, British air inferiority was serious, the Territorials were inadequate in numbers and training, and could not be relied upon for home defence during the six months' training period at the beginning of a war.¹

Churchill was inclined to agree with this latter point, stating that "dependence upon a crowd of Territorials in place of one good Regular division might be compared with an attempt to stop a bullet by a mass of cotton wool instead of quarter inch plate. What he hoped to gain was the retention in this country of a small and compact Regular force." Seeley, however, held that it was impossible to prejudge the value of the Territorials in advance.² Such were the positions of the two services when the quartet appeared before the inquiry on 1 July 1913.

Balfour and Churchill tried to limit admission before the Committee to Roberts and Repington, who had held high official positions, but they were over-ruled by Asquith, who admitted Lovat and Scott as well. After the quartet entered, there was a long altercation as to whether they should publish portions of their earlier memorandum, referring to contentious and confidential matters. The following discussion centred on the deficiencies of the Territorial Force, which, Repington argued, should have a three to one superiority over the invaders. Churchill thereupon asked Roberts if

². Ibid. Minutes of 8th Meeting. 19 June 1913. p. 81.
he thought that 210,000 Territorials could defeat 70,000 invaders and was

told "As they are organised now and officered, they would not have a

chance." Repington added that the Force could not move in large bodies as

an'Army and Lovat noted that Territorials took twice as long to manoeuvre

as the Regulars. But Roberts made his own prediction of a future campaign

in England which would make skill in manoeuvring unnecessary. 70,000

Germans would never be drawn up against 210,000 Territorials.

What would happen would be a sort of guerilla war. If 70,000

men landed in Norfolk, as they advanced each town would be

captured and the inhabitants would be treated pretty roughly.

As regards food, the invaders would take every thing they

wanted out of the town. They would feed themselves as they

came along, no matter what happened to the people. The

populace would disappear and fly in all directions, and I

think at last the pressure would be so tremendously strong

on the country that the Government would be forced to make

terms at once with the invaders.

If the invaders ran out of ammunition and supplies, they could employ

captured British equipment, as had the Boers. There might not be any

standing battle at all.1

Balfour reminded Roberts that there was no precedent for a situation

in which

a large army with no means of communication, no means of

supplementing its ammunition, very likely most imperfectly

supplied with artillery and with the adjuncts which are now

regarded as necessary for a big army, lands amid an enormous

ill-trained hostile population.

This was "a very new problem in military tactics and strategy" which had

not been studied by the C.I.D. During the next four meetings the quartet

focused with more telling effect on the weaknesses of the Territorial Force.


2. Ibid. p. 116. See also Balfour MSS. (49725) Roberts to Balfour, 3

July 1913.
Asquith read a letter from Roberts, which constituted a formidable arraignment: the Force was 2000 officers short, its N.C.O's were undisciplined and had no control over the men, the absurdly small establishment was 50,000 men deficient, a sixth of the Force had not even passed a minimal musketry test, and the Territorial artillery was pronounced unfit for service. The unwieldy and unpractised Force, Roberts charged, was more likely to be a danger than an asset in the field. Asquith was unimpressed and observed that this was "a comprehensive indictment, but did not seem to disclose any new facts." The quartet attempted to sustain their case by calling a number of witnesses who testified as to the poor condition of the Force. Hankey was favourably impressed with their evidence and thought that Repington especially had made several sound recommendations for improving the Territorials. He noted that both Roberts and French were agreed that the retention of one Regular division would ensure the defeat of 70,000 invaders, and thought this standard would be agreed upon by the Government.

The statements of the quartet before the enquiry were accompanied by a campaign in Parliament and the press throughout the spring and summer of 1913. The Opposition repeatedly asked Seeley in the Commons for a guarantee that the country would be safe in the absence of the Expeditionary Force and when he finally complied, Repington and the Times leader assailed him for prejudging the results of the inquiry. Repington intimated that the inquiry was the product of political intrigue, as it included nine Cabinet ministers.

members and only three soldiers. (In fact, the Committee included five soldiers and three naval officers, to whom Repington did not refer.) In a series of articles in April, Repington asserted that Britain's position had worsened in several respects since Napoleon's attempt at invasion in 1804: then there had been a large citizen's army, now the greater power of possible enemy naval concentrations owing to steam, the appearance of air forces, and the vast disproportion between British and Continental armies all augured ill for future military security. The Central Force, he asserted, was practically non-existent and had no practice in mass manoeuvring, while the General Staff was more anxious to participate in military adventures on the Continent than to defend the United Kingdom. Repington was supported by the Times, as well as by letters from Samuel Scott and Colonel Lonsdale Male. Repington later went on to accuse Seeley of withdrawing his earlier statement that the nation would be safe in the absence of the Regulars and of attempting to make the General Staff responsible for his change of front. In his speech, Seeley had visualized 70,000 men arriving in a series of "driblets" or raids, but Repington thundered that this view of "Parcel post invasions and weekend raids" was not endorsed by the C.I.D.¹ Repington continued the agitation through May with special articles and leaders accusing the Government of enveloping the invasion issue in a fog of partisanship.²

Lord Roberts also was active, and in a speech at Leeds claimed that


the invasion standard of 70,000 (for which he was responsible) was "purely hypothetical", had "no foundation", and was "utter nonsense". On April 22, Battenberg unwittingly added to the mischief, in the course of a speech, by alluding to developments which adversely affected the national security, and proclaiming that to rely on the Fleet alone was "foolish and mischievous."

His remarks were immediately seized upon, drawn out of their context, and widely publicized, bringing about angry comments in the Commons. On the same day, Lord Curzon, in the House of Lords, suggested that the leaders of both parties meet to settle the question of compulsion and home defence in conference. The Times gave strong support to Curzon's proposal and its letters column was filled with contributions from N.S.L. advocates. On April 30, Mr. Long of the Opposition asked Seeley to permit a conference of army officers to discuss the question openly at the R.U.S.I., but permission was refused.¹

A strongly hostile article in the National Review repeated Repington's allegation (and almost certainly written by him) that the invasion inquiry was being subverted in order "to acquit the Government of the charge of neglecting the nation's safety." Of the 18 men on the committee, ten (it was claimed) were Radical partisan politicians without any knowledge of strategy. Esher was the only independent, and the Opposition had been forestalled from criticism because Balfour had been included on the Committee. Twelve of the 18 were bound by previous statements that invasion

¹ "National Defence." Ibid. 22 April 1913. p. 8; "Lord Curzon's Appeal." Ibid. p. 9; "The Risk of Invasion." Ibid. p. 5; See also "The Danger of Invasion." Ibid. 20 April 1913. p. 12; "The Military Problem." Ibid. 28 April 1913. pp. 7-8; 1 May 1913, p. 11.
was impossible. The real aim of the inquiry, the article asserted, was to mask the failure of the Territorial Force, and its report would represent that "as the British strength has diminished, the enemy will be so obliging as to reduce correspondingly the numbers of his invasionary expedition or to come without guns and land in scattered detachments." But there was a growing German air menace when neither the British army nor navy had a single airship, British relative strength had fallen in relation to momentous German expansion in both arms, and the Territorials were a sham designed to deceive the nation, a mob of men with rifles and antiquated guns, without cohesion, without trained officers, worse in every respect than the Turkish redifs who bolted from Kirk Kilisee and caused the fall of a once great Empire.

The only remedy was universal service, but Cabinet Ministers would continue to deny the dangers of invasion. Similar charges were brought forward by Lord Roberts and his allies in an additional series of articles in the Spectator, National Review, and the Nineteenth Century.

After the quartet had completed its presentation before the inquiry, Major-General Sir Henry Wilson, the Director of Military Operations, produced an important paper on "The Strength and Composition


of the Military Forces Which Germany might despatch against England in certain contingencies". Wilson, although skeptical regarding the likelihood of invasion, estimated that Germany could send up to 60,000 troops, as well as 1,000 cavalry, 200 machine guns and 500 cyclists as a surprise expedition without recourse to general mobilization. This force, "of some 70,000 men of all arms in one trip ... could be landed in England between Yarmouth and Clacton by 5 p.m. on the fifth day." After German mobilization had begun, 100,000 could be sent in one trip and begin landing on the tenth day of mobilization. Wilson made these calculations without reference to the naval situation, and presupposed that Britain was already deeply committed to a campaign in India or Egypt, and that France was neutral.1

Wilson believed that Germany could get an 18 to 24 hour head-start in general mobilization, owing to Government censorship of communications, and, as head of the British Secret Service, was impressed with the difficulty of obtaining confidential information from Germany.2 During the Agadir crisis there had been no information of what was taking place in German harbours for 24 hours, although there had been a number of false reports regarding the movement of ships and men. Asquith interrupted Wilson at this point, asserting that no information had come because nothing was happening and asked

Wilson if he thought invasion would be worth its risk and cost to the

2. Ibid. Minutes of 16th Meeting, 12 November 1913. p. 221.
Germans. Wilson thought not: they certainly could not send 90,000 to 120,000 men for invasion, because conquest was impossible after British mobilisation, assuming the Expeditionary Force remained at home. There would be 150,000 Regulars in Britain: the Germans could ship only 80,000 owing to limited transport tonnage.

However, assuming the case of the Triple Alliance against the and Triple Entente with Holland/Belgium neutral (a situation quite close to that of August 1914), the Germans might attempt to delay the Expeditionary Force by landing 10,000 troops on the East Coast to shake British nerve and put pressure on the Government. Owing to their accelerated mobilisation schedule, all the Germans would require was one week's delay. It would be very difficult in these circumstances for British authorities to know whether the German landing constituted a raid or an invasion, for the mayors of threatened East Coast towns might despatch exaggerated reports, mistaking a raid of 10,000 for an army of 100,000. Wilson went on to chart the tremendous growth in the size of Continental armies, which had a tremendous effect on the Cabinet and "terrified Harcourt and Crewe": since 1908 the Germans had increased their military forces by 200,000 and raised their annual Army Estimates by £27 million.1

Wilson was followed by Major General William Robertson, now Director of Military Training. Robertson's views on invasion had changed little since he had prepared pessimistic appreciations of French and German invasion in 1901-02. In February 1913, speaking

1. Cab 16/28A. Appendix XXVII; Wilson Diary. 12 November 1913.
at Commandant of the Army Staff College, Robertson delivered a lecture which made use of the same arguments he had employed a decade before: the general uncertainty of naval operations, the historical examples of invasion being carried out over contested seas, and the tradition of the offensive in German military planning. Robertson affirmed before the committee that the East Coast would be endangered once the Expeditionary Force was absent. He reiterated Churchill’s argument that the defensive system was still orientated to an attack from France: there were still twice as many guns on the South as on the East Coast. Robertson advocated a network of garrisons, comprising 141,000 Territorials to guard the Eastern harbours, and called upon the Admiralty and War Office to determine the maximum scale of attack for various localities which would serve as the basis for their distribution. Nicholson attacked the Admiralty for its inconsistency in welcoming this suggestion and proposing forts on the East Coast. Churchill, seconded by Battenberg, maintained that the Navy only wanted a sufficient defence and that this represented no break in policy. But Asquith backed Nicholson, observing that this did constitute “an absolute revolution of Admiralty policy” compared with the statements of the Fisher era. Hankey was impressed with Robertson’s proposals, describing them as “the only constructive material we have had from the War Office.” However, he was holding back his draft

report of the inquiry until the results of the 1913 naval manoeuvres became available.¹

The purpose of the manoeuvres had not remained secret, for the Times had published a description of the exercises in mid-July, which revealed that a raiding party several thousands strong would again attempt to land in the face of naval opposition. The difference from the operation of the previous year would be the addition of an actual force using actual transports, to give the proceedings a more realistic atmosphere. The Territorials would not be mobilised, and there was to be no testing of military resistance on shore.² Repington commended the Admiralty for its open and pragmatic approach to the invasion problem, but he castigated Government Ministers for forestalling and discrediting the C.I.D. by dogmatic and premature statements on the subject.³ In late August and early September he published a series of commentaries on the manoeuvres under the pseudonym of "Colonel von Donner und Blitzen", to avoid trespassing on the territory of the naval correspondent. The letters of the fictitious Prussian colonel, garnished with Teutonic asides, reasserted Repington's old charges: because sea supremacy in the old sense had gone forever, the Expeditionary Force could not be despatched and the Fleet would be tied to the shore "like a goat to a peg" owing to the lack of a

¹ Balfour MSS. (49703) Hankey to Balfour, 27 August 1913.
² "The Naval Manoeuvres." Times. 9 July 1913. p. 3; 11 July 1913, p. 6.
³ "The Army Debate." Ibid. 1 August 1913. p. 8.
British national army. According to Repington, the defenders had enjoyed a two to one superiority in the 1912 manoeuvres. Although the rules had restricted the landing to 500 men per hour per ship, 28,000 men had been put ashore in 4½ hours. This accomplishment had been improved upon in 1913, in spite of the fact that seaplanes and the coast watch had been used in an attempt to locate the invading flotilla. "Enemy" battleships had entered the Nurnber while 4,000 men had been embarked from the transports and had succeeded in "destroying" local railways, docks, oil tanks, and a wireless station. Repington calculated that this was equal to a landing of 48,000 to 60,000 troops under war conditions, while an estimated 18,000 were drowned or lost. He concluded: "Was there ever in history a temptation so great as the successful invasion of Albion the rich, the proud, and the unprepared? Mein. wahrhaftig nicht!" ¹

Repington continued to present his case in further articles, pointing out that the Fleet was defenceless against attacks by torpedoes and aircraft. Its protective power, therefore, was not absolute but relative. The North Sea itself favoured surprise attacks, for its "inconstant and unstable sea is a great, big, broad, rough, agitated surface over which night, mist, and fog continually hang their heavy veils." A real-life enemy could easily have landed a force three times larger than that landed in the manoeuvres. The only answer was a national army, supplemented by British command of the air and adequate coast defences.² As usual, Repington was taken to task in the letters column for his "sweeping and dogmatic"

¹ "The Naval Manoeuvres." Times. 2 September 1913. p. 5.
² Ibid. 8 September 1913. p. 5.
conclusions drawn from the manoeuvres. "These rather theatrical operations" had been carried out, one naval authority replied, in very unrealistic conditions: even so, 45% of the invading force had been lost. The "damage" carried out by raiders had involved merely the placing of chalk marks in strategic sites. It was really unwise to manufacture such strong inferences from speculative newspaper reports.1

Lord Sydenham (formerly Sir George Clarke, first Secretary of the C.I.D.) denounced Repington as a "Strategist at Sea" who was amazingly ignorant of the teachings of war. He declared that the 1912 and 1913 naval manoeuvres had not reflected actual war, for they had been carried out under conditions which had heavily penalized the defending fleet and led to misconceptions and "fallacies of a peculiarly dangerous kind" on the part of unauthorized observers. If all the facts were known, the lessons of the manoeuvres would be found to coincide "with the continuous and consistent experiences of actual war." Sydenham quoted Repington against himself to the effect that "If there is one principle of naval strategy more pregnant with meaning than another, it is that which affirms and reiterates the danger of the despatch of military forces across waters not thoroughly cleared of hostile ships."2 Within the sub-committee, Churchill also protested against such press conjectures as these and offered to submit a full report of the 1913 manoeuvres to the C.I.D. as soon as the exercise had been completed and evaluated.3

1. "The Naval Manoeuvres. Times. 4 September 1913. p. 5;
3. Cab 16/28A. Minutes of 10th Meeting. 26 June 1913. p. 89.
But Bptngton would have been encouraged, had he known of the contents of these official reports. The Umpire-in-Chief, Admiral of the Fleet Sir William May, found that the main lesson of the manoeuvres was that surprise attacks "may be partially successful, especially in misty weather."

It therefore appears necessary to have fixed defences at the principal seaports in the United Kingdom and of sufficient strength to be able to check a determined raid for some hours until a battle fleet can be concentrated on the spot and at the same time give opportunity for the submarines to act.1

Admiral Sir George Callaghan, Commander of the Home Fleet, agreed. It is no exaggeration to say that, whatever weaknesses the Manoeuvres have shown in our present plans, they have shown none greater than the defencelessness of our East Coast harbours and, if the regular troops are out of the country, of our coast. Naval ports, to be of any comfort to the fleet, must be secure; we have no port on the East coast except the Nore where this is so, and the Nore only by its peculiar situation in the sandbanks ... the Thames estuary, Harwich, the Tyne, the Forth, and Cromarty are so poorly defended as hardly to deter any determined enemy from attack from seaward ... important seaports on the East coast should have fixed defences, of such strength that they cannot be rushed and are not wholly dependent on the Navy for their safety.2

Callaghan's conclusions were wholly unorthodox. In my opinion the only proper defence of the country against Invasion and Raid is by Military Forces, and to make the Navy responsible for this work is a grave strategic error, which hands the initiative wholly to the enemy ... The natural deduction to be drawn by the Service in general is that the primary object of the British fleet is to defend the country from attack by the enemy's troops; it could hardly be otherwise, in view of the nature of the most important exercise of the year for two successive years.3

As might be expected, Callaghan's views were a matter of contention with the Admiralty War Staff, who were severely critical in their reply.

3. Ibid. p. 13.
Such a view ignores altogether the fact that Great Britain is an island. It controverts the whole teaching of our past history ... It abandons the principle of attacking the enemy on his way when his troops are helpless, in favour of waiting till they have landed and are able to defend themselves. Lastly it must involve an addition to our expenditure on land forces which, if applied to an increase of our Navy, would raise our position at sea to such strength that we could face any combination at sea that could reasonably be brought against us.  

They charged that Callaghan had been unduly influenced by the manoeuvres, and had not sufficiently discriminated between invasion proper and raids. Callaghan had asked for a conference to clear up misunderstandings between the Admiralty War Staff and officers serving at sea, but this request was refused, on the grounds that existing communication arrangements gave ample opportunities for exchange of views. It was agreed that the shore defences should be strengthened, but the War Staff believed that "the best assistance that can probably be given in this direction by the Government is by putting the military defences of the country (into a state) ready to meet the changed situation of the present century."  

Churchill forwarded his own assessment of the manoeuvres to Asquith, which was more pessimistic in tone than his report of the previous year. However, Churchill pointed out that Callaghan, the defending Admiral, had adopted tactics unsuited to the situation. He detached a very large number of vessels which would have been useful on the East Coast, weakened his force considerably, and yet did not provide a force suitable for dealing with the Red ships in the Western theatre. Churchill thought it would have been better to have ignored the Red, or


2. Ibid. pp. 2-6.
"German" ships from the West until the main decision had been obtained in the North Sea. Although he admitted that "an element of unreality must pervade all such schemes", several important lessons had been brought home.

Generally speaking, I find the mental picture I had formed and the opinions I have expressed, confirmed by the manoeuvres in many important respects. The possibility of transports in twos and threes slipping through our squadrons and flotillas if they care to run the risk; the uselessness of attempting to land on an open beach... above all the paralysing effect produced on the British Admiral by the feeling that he is the sole defence against raiding expeditions which may be directed at any part of the British coast... the necessity of having a proper armed force to make sure that even if a portion of the invading army got here their arrival would not produce any result worthy of the risk and sacrifice.1

Churchill obviously did not share all the misgivings of his professional advisors.

The question of the manoeuvres did not come before the C.I.D. until November 25, when May, the Umpire-in-Chief, Callaghan, the defending Admiral, and Jellicoe, the "German" commander submitted their reports. Most of the discussion turned on the insecurity of the East Coast. May suggested the construction of submarine nets and underground stone walls at various ports, while Churchill revealed that the Admiralty's experimental anti-submarine nets were not proof against torpedoes. May testified that before the 1913 manoeuvres, he had accepted the Admiralty's dictum that any raid over 10,000 men could be stopped. But 43,750 had been landed in the previous summer out of a total force of 108,000; 18,000 had escaped and 46,750 were judged to have been drowned or captured. The situation had obviously changed.

Asquith pointed out that this was "not a very hopeful situation" for the invaders.

1. Asquith MSS. Box 13. Churchill to Asquith. 30 August 1913.
But Jellicoe countered that this raid had taken place in high summer, when the defence had been aided by the fact that there were only three to four hours of darkness. During the winter over 14 hours of darkness would prevail, leaving aside the question of fog and mist. Jellicoe concluded that every British harbour near a possible strategic objective should be fortified. His own feat of landing 28,000 men in the Humber the previous summer could have been prevented if the river defences had been sited at its mouth rather than far upstream. Undeterred, his raiding force had destroyed two torpedo boat flotillas, some submarines, a wireless station, and delayed the mobilization of the army by destroying communications. The committee turned to the question of a raid using a captured harbour, and Jellicoe estimated that 1000 men could be landed every 15 minutes under these conditions. He and the other Admirals repeatedly urged the fortification of Harwich, the Humber, the Tees, Tyne, and the Forth, which Asquith fully authorized.1

At a further meeting of the committee, Churchill explained that the purpose of the manoeuvres had been "to test as far as possible the new conditions which have arisen out of the abandonment of the close blockade, which has been forced on us by the development of the submarine and above-water torpedo craft by Germany." Although the operations had been "pervaded by artificiality throughout", every effort had been made to make them as realistic as possible. Churchill corroborated the gloomy picture of the situation drawn by Jellicoe and Callaghan earlier, stressing the fact that the Royal Navy had only thirty cruisers to patrol the 125,000 square miles

of the North Sea. The weather was thick and visibility poor: diminishing to two miles 25% of the year, with five days of fog per month the year round. Although Britain's principal deterrent was torpedo boats and submarines, it was obvious that fixed defences on shore were also required at strategic Eastern ports. Churchill estimated that up to twelve transports could cross safely and that even larger numbers could be prepared and accommodated in British ports without creating congestion. If the Germans used British jetties, they could unload cavalry and artillery as easily as infantry.\(^1\) Churchill and Jellicoe later revealed that it had been "necessary to stop the manoeuvres on the third day lest we might teach the Germans as well as ourselves" the ease of a landing in England.\(^2\)

An animated discussion followed. Asquith alleged that such a "Bolt from the Blue" would not be undertaken "with a light heart", while Seeley suggested that the Admiralty employ its older battleships as a coast defence force, for they had ten times the firepower of German submarines and torpedo boats. Churchill replied that this policy had been considered by the Admiralty, but that the commissioning of "guardships" was impractical owing to their expensive upkeep and lack of protection from torpedo attack. This was financially impossible in peace-time, but might prove necessary if war broke out. Asquith was plainly perturbed by the implications of the manoeuvres, recalling that the 1908 inquiry had decided that

\(^1\) Cab 16/28A. Minutes of 19th Meeting. 3 December 1913. pp. 301-05.
such an operation as that suggested by the manoeuvres was an absolute impossibility, that is to say, a thing that no rational soldier or sailor would ever dream of undertaking... What are the circumstances which have changed during these five years, so as to make a thing which was then ruled by everybody - Admiralty representatives as well as military representatives - as not only not feasible, but unthinkable... now reasonable to contemplate?1

Jellicoe replied that this was due to the technical development of German torpedo craft. But Churchill added a significant political explanation: The Admiralty in 1908, under Fisher's control, had wished to cut down the Army Estimates in order to obtain more funds for the fleet.

The Admiralty arguments were all pitched in that tone from beginning to end, and lots of statements were made which required considerable modification. Truths were pushed to the point where they ceased really to carry a truthful meaning. The War Office, on the other hand, took the opposite line.

Now the Admiralty had no special axe to grind but had "merely tried to trace the new conditions, and to indicate certain new precautions which have to be taken from them."2 Nicholson, Fisher's ancient foe, took his belated revenge, noting that at the time the War Office had taken grave exception to Lord Fisher's conception of this fleet of transports travelling, as he described it, like the Children of Israel in the Wilderness, being a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of smoke by day, because we said they would use anthracite coal in the day time if they knew anything about their business.3

Jellicoe also contributed to the demolition of the Admiralty's former case by confirming that an enemy force could easily steam at night.

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. p. 316.
without lights; all that was required were trained naval officers to manage the transport flotilla. He himself had adopted this course as the invading commander during the manoeuvres, with a force of 40 destroyers and 14 torpedo boats. Admiral A.K. Wilson, Fisher's former protégé, vigorously defended his former chief and prepared his own report on the manoeuvres which Churchill read to the Committee. But the Old Guard did not prevail.¹

Churchill, in explaining the veil of secrecy and imprecipitate ending of the manoeuvres, paid tribute to the power of the invasion issue in public opinion.

We have always been accused of trying to load the dice ... by the extremists on both sides of this controversy ... it might go so far as to create a very ignorant state of alarm in the country generally if the statement could be made that all these ports on the west were liable to attack and so forth. I thought we had got quite enough to see what could be done for the purpose of this Sub-Committee, and that it was no good creating a situation which would have been used in certain quarters to create a panic in the country ... we did not want to make out an alarmist case.²

Everything had gone wrong at the Humber. The defending Admiral had not received the proper orders and the defending flotillas had not shown the proper vigour. The experience at least confirmed that an attack could only be carried out with tremendous losses, which Churchill believed no German Admiral would accept. But it was undeniable that "the chance of the enemy getting into the open sea and being able to lose you there and evading you is enormously increased", for the Admiralty could no longer afford to station its ships close to enemy ports and expose them to torpedo attack. Owing to the

2. Ibid. p. 318. A different explanation is given in the World Crisis, see p. 64.
contentious nature of much of the reports and testimony, Churchill suggested that they should be given up and destroyed. Asquith agreed: "the larger the holocaust the better."1

As the subcommittee moved on to the preparation of its final report, the C.I.D. and the two services began an extensive and significant general overhaul of the home defences and an examination of many other problems connected with invasion. A C.I.D. sub-committee reported in December 1913 on the feasibility of an official historical section. It cited the French General Staff's history of the Napoleonic invasion preparations as a great example of official history and recommended that the new Historical Section prepare a work on "The Naval Coast Defences during the threatened French invasions from 1793 to 1805". Churchill especially favoured this project, as the Admiralty was in the process of revising and reinforcing the contemporary coast defences, and he believed the past might afford some important lessons. Accordingly, Hankey, the C.I.D. Secretary, was assigned this project and was at work upon it when war broke out.2

At the same time the coast watch system was overhauled. Arrangements were made for Territorial cyclist units to patrol the coastline and to guard vulnerable points as soon as general mobilization was ordered. But as an attack in peacetime was admitted as possible, it was urged that preparations for wartime coastal communications network be extended to peacetime. It was decided that local authorities

in times of strained relations would trace the movements of ships of potentially hostile nations in order to prevent enemy landings. It was recommended that the Admiralty take over coast communications and that local police and customs officers be instructed to report any attempted landings. Following Nicholson’s suggestion, a conference of Admiralty and War Office representatives met in February 1914 to consider the scale of possible attack and the necessary defences for strategic East Coast ports. Neither service would guarantee the ports against submarine attacks, but both recommended that anti-aircraft installations be installed at various important sites.

In March 1914 the C.I.D. also recommended that a registry of aliens be established in coastal areas and called attention to the danger that enemy cargo ships might be filled with bricks, cement or stone, and scuttled in important harbour mouths at the beginning of war. Ships carrying this type of cargo were therefore barred from certain strategic ports.

Another sub-committee recommended in March 1914 that wireless communications be set up between major British cities and rail centres to forestall sabotage of the telegraph wires. It was, however, estimated that any damage to the system could be repaired in 24 hours. The most vulnerable point of the network was the Central Telegraph Office.

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2. Cab 37/24/19 "Coast Defences of the United Kingdom and the Question of a Coast Watch." 25 February 1914.
in London, which contained all wires going in and out of London.1
By mid-May, a revised scheme was being developed to provide for the
diversion of important communications such as the Admiralty and cable
company wires. Mr. Charles Hobhouse, the Postmaster-General, testified
that only 37 telegraph wires led out of London and that only 12 of
these were underground. He believed that “thirty or forty men who were
technical experts could destroy the whole of the lines in one hour
or one-and-a-half hours, and so isolate London for a radius of some
15 miles in any direction.”2 A supplementary study disclosed that
such an operation would require the simultaneous destruction of 48
wires, which would "entail elaborate preparation, perfect organization,
and the employment of a large number of technically trained men."
Although this was technically feasible, it was not "practically
possible." The breaks could soon be repaired and emergency exped-
ients could be improvised, using wireless and motorcycle despatch
riders. But nothing was done to protect the vulnerable position of
the General Post Office.3

While these various defence problems were being attended to, the
invasion sub-committee was hammering out the various compromises
involved in its report, which was printed on 17 April 1914. The
inquiry had been even more exhaustive than its predecessor of 1908;
involving 21 meetings compared with 16, and this was reflected in
its report, which was 20% longer, comprising altogether 491 pages

1. Cab 38/26/12 "Report of Sub-Committee: The Establishment of
Radiotelegraphic Communication between Inland Stations." 23
March 1914.


Radiotelegraphic Communications between inland stations." 2 July
1914, pp. 1-4.
of small print. The first great advance over the earlier inquiry had been the consideration of possible enemy objectives, which had been completely ignored by the sub-committee of 1908. It was decided that the British army would be the invader's first objective, taking precedence over the city of London. Regarding the possibility of a German raid, the sub-committee observed that

We may probably dismiss the idea that it will ever be thought worth while to run all the risks which, as will presently be shown, are inevitably incident to such an enterprise, in order to roam, for a brief space of time, undefeated but impotent, over an undefended countryside.¹

But if public terror was to be mobilized by the Germans at all, it would have the definite object of impeding the Expeditionary Force. Besides this, raids would also be aimed at the destruction of some centre of naval or military strength, such as "an arsenal, dockyard, manufactory of war material, magazine or liquid fuel depot". Other possible objectives were commercial ports, such as Hartlepool, Edinburgh, Scarborough, or Whitby.

Regarding the possibility of surprise attack, the only new factor had been the Hague Convention on the opening of hostilities, signed on 18 October 1907, in which Britain, Germany, and other powers pledged not to begin war without a previous explicit warning. The committee noted, however, that the Convention still permitted a sudden attack, as the interval between the declaration of war and the outbreak of hostilities might be so short as to forestall an effective defence. The 1908 conclusion on surprise attack therefore

remained unchanged. 1

The corresponding conclusion regarding the impossibility of a surprise attack by Germany had been confirmed by the Italian failure to keep their expedition to Tripoli secret in 1911, and in addition, the sources of information open to the British Government had increased. Although warning of a raid of less than 20,000 men could not be guaranteed, a larger force would be large enough to conquer the island. A raid to detain the Expeditionary Force would not come as a "Bolt from the Blue", for the Expeditionary Forces would be preparing to leave the country only if it were obvious that hostilities were imminent. A surprise attack was possible only in a war involving Britain and Germany alone and its only possible objective would be the destruction of a vulnerable strategic point. Such points were few, but were liable to attack immediately on the outbreak of war. The sub-committee were impressed by Hankey's argument that a raid by a small force, conveyed in a single merchant ship might be mounted during "profound peace" against arsenals, munitions factories, magazines, and oil tanks. As such installations were very lightly guarded, they recommended that all such places be guarded by armed contingents ready for immediate action. 2

Having dealt with the problem of surprise raids, the committee turned to examine the problem of attack when the Expeditionary Force was abroad. Under these conditions, the whole or at least part of

2. Ibid. pp. 4–6.
the Territorials would be embodied and the fleet would still be available. Under these conditions an invasion would be more likely than a "bolt from the blue". An attack after the outbreak of war, with the Expeditionary Force gone and the Territorials just having finished their mobilization, would find Britain in the worst possible military situation. There would be only 150,000 troops, including 10,000 Regulars, to oppose invasion and the overwhelming majority of these would be practically untrained. The General Staff believed that an invading force of from 40,000 to 50,000 had some chance of success in this contingency. The enemy's only possible objective was London, which would have to be captured in a few days before his ammunition ran out, and this necessitated a landing as near as possible to the capital.  

The committee took note of the criticisms of Lord Roberts and his colleagues, who called for a home defence establishment of 510,000 against the hypothetical invasion force of 70,000. The discrepancy between this estimate and the existing home defence establishment was explained by the fact that the General Staff calculated that only 50,000 of the hypothetical 70,000 would be combatants, owing to their need to guard lines of communications in a hostile country. The 10,000 Regulars in the Flying Column would certainly be equal in fighting value to the invaders, and Roberts also had not taken into consideration cooperation between British local forces and the Central

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Force, which would oppose the enemy's landing and threaten his
flanks. He also had eliminated from British strength men under 19,
recruits, absentees without leave, men liable to overseas service,
and those who had not passed the marksmanship test. 1 Although the
bulk of Roberts' criticisms had been directed against the Territorial
Force, the general consensus was that the Territorials were slowly
improving in all areas. 2

Evidence from the naval manoeuvres indicated that Roberts and
his colleagues had under-estimated the delays and difficulties in-
volved in assembling a large convoy, for the time required to assemble
the ships and cross the North Sea made it "incredible that we should
be unable to seek out and successfully attack the transports." But
the 1908 argument that the convoy was too large to escape detection
was rejected, on the basis that an observer's range of visibility
was limited in relation to the size of the North Sea. In the
manoeuvres, it was recalled,

Instances have occurred when fleets of considerable size,
sometimes favoured by fog which is prevalent in the North
Sea, have penetrated through waters systematically patrolled
and watched by large numbers of the opposing vessels, without
being reported sufficiently soon to ensure their being brought
to action.

The prospects of successful evasion by the Germans would be improved
by their use of aircraft, and it was certain that their main fleet
would be used in such an event either to make a diversion or to force
a passage for the transports. Making allowance for remote conting-
encies, "the possibility of errors of judgment, bad luck, and

2. Ibid. pp. 10-12.
unforeseen circumstances", evasion was not an impossibility. Its likelihood was increased by the Admiralty's recent abandonment of the close blockade policy. This would have led to a serious wastage of valuable ships which, if prolonged, could have materially altered the naval balance of power. But there was some ground for future optimism. The committee hoped that the development of submarines of ocean-going capacity may modify the situation in our favour, and the use of aircraft may also help in this direction, but without extended exercise to ascertain their capabilities this cannot be counted on with any certainty.

The redistribution of the fleet in progress in 1908 was now permanent and Britain was more fully prepared to meet a sudden German attack on the outbreak of war. This readiness constituted a powerful deterrent against invasion. On the other hand, the British margin of superiority over the German fleet was not as pronounced as it had been in 1908, although it was still sufficient. The development of the torpedo now meant that it was more difficult to use naval superiority directly as an immediate defence against invasion or raids. As far as embarkation was concerned, the C.I.D. now concluded that a beach landing would result in almost certain failure, with the possible exception of a very small raid. In the 1911 Tripoli campaign most beach landings had taken several days, and at the Territorial manoeuvres of 1910 and the naval manoeuvres of 1913, they had been completely thwarted by bad weather. Therefore, the committee decided that

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2. Ibid. p. 16.
the uncertainty of securing favourable weather conditions, the delay which might be caused by the cyclist patrols allotted to watch the coast line, and the probability of being attacked by the naval coastal patrols before a landing can be completed, combine to provide a very strong deterrent to any attempt to land an invading army on an open beach.

All the more effort should therefore be diverted to prevent the capture of Eastern harbours, which would greatly facilitate the invaders' most crucial operation, disembarkation. Unloading machinery would readily be available to him in a port, where it would be also much easier for a German escort force to prevent British interference with the landing. At the Humber in 1913, the "German" escorts had destroyed the local defences at the cost of heavy losses to themselves, and 1000 men had been landed in 15 minutes. The Admiralty calculated that if the Germans cared to risk an invasion army of several divisions, they could escort them with older battleships which could easily overwhelm the light defences at the Tees, the Tyne, or Harwich. Modern battleships were so much faster than these that it would be difficult to work out their tactical deployment. The greatest risk the older German ships would face would be from coastal patrols during their crossing and from superior naval forces thereafter. To equip every port on the East coast against such a force would involve prohibitive cost: British efforts therefore would have to be restricted to ports near objectives deemed worth the loss of a raiding force, i.e. the Humber, the Tyne, and Harwich, where garrisons of artillery and infantry would be established.¹

In conclusion, the committee listed the various developments

¹ Cab 3/2/5/62A. pp. 18-19.
in the situation since 1908. A new home scheme had been put into
effect and a War Book had been adopted, with special provisions to
prevent England from being caught unawares. The Territorial Force,
in embryo in 1908, was now more fully developed. These improvements,
however, were offset by an increase in the number of available
German troops and the amount of German shipping tonnage. It was
difficult to decide who was the main beneficiary of new technical
improvements such as the mine, torpedo, submarine, and airplane, but
it was obvious that these changed the situation considerably. The
C.I.D. certainly had more information about amphibious operations
than ever before, owing to fuller reports on the Russo-Japanese War,
the Tripoli campaign of 1911, and the 1912 and 1913 naval manoeuvres.1

In summary,
Germany in 1914 may still be able to find the men for an
invasion; she is in a slightly better position as regards
finding the ships necessary as transports; the German main
fleets have no reasonable prospect of defeating our main
fleet, though their relative strength is somewhat greater
in 1914 than in 1908; owing to the gradual withdrawal of
the British blockading line consequent on technical progress
in torpedo warfare the transports conveying an invading army
would in 1914 have a better prospect of getting to sea un-
seen and of evading our main fleets in the passage of the
North Sea than the Admiralty believed they would have in
1908; the dangers to be encountered by an invading fleet at
the landing place are greater in 1914 than in 1908 owing
to the establishment of the Coastal Patrols, and these
dangers will become still greater if the recommendations
contained in this report are carried into effect; in
this inquiry more stress has been laid than in the past
on the possibility of utilizing mercantile harbours for
purposes of disembarkation; after effecting a landing the
invading army would have to calculate on encountering, in
addition to any regular troops left in the country, a
field army of Territorial troops which has in every respect
improved since 1908.

2. Ibid. pp. 22-23.
The standard of 1908 remained as the basis of calculations: the home army should not be reduced below a size necessary to defeat 70,000 invaders. Although the Admiralty would no longer provide an absolute guarantee that it could intercept a force over this size, the risk of interception was still so great as to constitute a considerable deterrent. Both French and Roberts had agreed that the enemy must bring at least 70,000 troops if one division of Regulars remained in the country. The sub-committee doubled this margin of safety and decided that it would be undesirable to leave less than two divisions or their equivalent in the country in the early stages of a war.

In spite of the many developments in the home defence situation since 1908, especially the reversed position of the two services, the committee's conclusions were remarkably unchanged. Gains balanced losses, and diminished confidence at the Admiralty was compensated by the General Staff's new-found appreciation of the difficulties of invasion. The conclusion of 1908 that two divisions or their equivalent should always be available in the United Kingdom remained. But it was accompanied by a series of further recommendations which reflected the current anxiety over the vulnerability of the East coast: there should be a war plan prepared so that the Regular Army might meet a sudden attack in an unmobilized state, the Admiralty and War Office should perfect arrangements for the coast communications network, and the armaments of East Coast ports should be increased. The War Office should increase the efficiency of the
Central Force and cooperate with the Admiralty in working out a scale of possible attack for local districts. A guard system should be established over vulnerable points. The Admiralty was asked to assume responsibility for the defence of East coast harbours, while the War Office should make provision for the removal of transport and strategically valuable material from coast areas in time of threatened invasion. 1

The General Staff was not completely satisfied with the report. Wilson described it as "rubbish" and tried to impress his opinions on Asquith in an interview. 2 When this failed, the General Staff, inspired by Robertson and Wilson, produced a memorandum commenting on the committee's recommendations, asserting that if these were carried out, a war between Britain and Germany would see all six Regular divisions tied to British soil. The most difficult and most plausible contingency to provide against would be war between the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente, and under these circumstances the likelihood of a German invasion was extremely remote. The new concern for home defence threatened to disrupt more important strategic planning, but the General Staff had already prepared a plan for the army in an unmobilized state, based on the assumption that four days' warning would be forthcoming. The two services had collaborated in setting up a coast watch and had worked out a scale of attack to be expected at various strategic ports. The Forth, Tyne, and Medway were deemed liable to an attack of 10,000, and the Humber, Harwich, Portsmouth and Plymouth to 5000. All other ports could expect up to

2. Wilson Diary. 16, 20 April; 13 May 1914.
2000 raiders. This excluded raids at the beginning of hostilities; "an entirely new problem, and one that cannot possibly be solved with full security unless and until the necessary troops are stationed in the threatened ports during peace time." Unless garrisons were established and barracks built at the Forth, Tyne, Humber, Harwich, and the Medway, no military protection could be provided for these ports until the second or third day of war.¹ The C.I.D. was perturbed by the negative reaction of the General Staff to the invasion inquiry report and at its meeting of May 14, approved the Report in principle but decided to defer "discussion of the action to be taken to give effect to the recommendations contained in the Report."²

While the General Staff continued to protest against what it considered to be 'the unduly restrictive and pessimistic conclusions of the inquiry, the Admiralty worked feverishly to work out a defence in the light of the abandonment of the close blockade policy. Many of the tenets of the Blue Water School were being abandoned by the naval authorities out of respect for the recently developed destructive powers of the torpedo and submarine. The last peacetime revision of Admiralty war plans against Germany, in July 1914, advised the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet that

As the security of the British Isles against serious invasion is mainly dependent upon our maritime superiority, occasions may arise in which the destruction of transports conveying a large body of the enemy's troops is a more pressing and urgent necessity than any other, in which case the transports must receive prior attention even if the enemy's main fleet happens to be within

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² Cab 16/28A. p. iv.
reach of attack.¹

The classical Mahanian insistence upon closing with the enemy's fleet for the decisive sea battle had been subverted and the rapid progress of naval technology had led the Admiralty to question and modify many of the Blue Water dogmas which had inspired its policy for the last generation. On the eve of War, the Royal Navy faced the future with a new uncertainty.

British domestic life during the spring and summer of 1914 was dominated by the question of Irish Home Rule and the threat of impending civil war. But there were signs that the results of the recent naval manoeuvres and the reopening of the invasion inquiry had brought about a revival of the earlier apprehension over a German attack in some quarters. Throughout the first half of the year, the Opposition repeatedly put pressure on Asquith in the House of Commons to announce the conclusions of the inquiry. On February 25th the Prime Minister revealed that the investigation was finished, that the general conclusions were agreed, and promised to deliver a statement on the subject later in the current Parliamentary session. On this and later occasions Asquith was urged to deliver his announcement before the introduction of the Army Estimates in March so as to guide the House in its voting for military appropriations. The agitation against the Government mounted during March with a series of acrimonious attacks on Churchill and Battenberg, who had intimated that the Fleet alone could not stop an invasion. The campaign culminated in

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an Imperial Defence resolution on March 17 which directed the Government to provide information on the home defence situation and present a full account of the invasion inquiry. However, the motion was defeated by a division along party lines, 290 to 190. Although this represented a set-back to those interested in the problem of national defence, the Opposition persisted in pressing the Government first to publish the inquiry's report and then to make an announcement of its conclusions. Asquith eventually promised to deliver an exhaustive statement on the invasion problem and to permit a general discussion of the question by the House, but war broke out before he had an opportunity of fulfilling his pledge.¹

When Great Britain declared war against Imperial Germany on August 4, 1914, her people and planners were perhaps better prepared for an attack on the home island than they were for a military campaign on the European continent. No other contingency had been so thoroughly examined by the Governments counting the two investigations of the strategic implications of a Channel Tunnel² and the 1905 study of the raid problem, the problem of overseas attack had been scrutinised six times since the formation of the C.I.D. in 1903. In order to understand the great importance of the invasion problem to the prewar strategic planners, it is necessary to recall that they were always at work in the twilight realm of the possible. It was their responsibility to devise a defence against all conceivable hostile combinations

¹ Hansard (Commons) 25 February 1914, col. 1766; 4 March 1914, cols. 431-33; 11 March 1914, col. 1268; 17 March 1914, cols. 1967-2014; 27 April 1914, col. 1319; 11 June 1914, col. 492; 29 June 1914, cols. 27-28; 27 July 1914, col. 919.

² See Appendix C.
and they could not know that the war would evolve in the way that it did. The contingency which gave such force to the case for invasion — that of Britain alone against Germany alone — did not occur. When Britain entered the war, Germany was already at war with France, Russia and Belgium, and was too deeply involved on her own frontiers to detach an expeditionary force to Britain. Nor was the situation favourable for a raid or a surprise attack. In the previous spring, the Admiralty had decided, for reasons of economy, to hold a test mobilization instead of the usual manoeuvres for the summer of 1914. This had come to a close and the ships were dispersing on July 26th, when news reached the Admiralty that Austria had rejected Serbia's reply to her memorandum over the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Battenberg re-instituted the mobilization of the Fleet on his own initiative and by July 31 the Fleet was at war stations. Britain therefore entered the war under conditions more favourable for her home defence than had been foreseen, or even hoped.

On the afternoon of the first day of hostilities, August 5, a War Council gathered at 10 Downing Street for an historic meeting to decide the form of intervention in the war against Germany. It was a strangely unbalanced assembly to direct the war effort of a maritime Empire. Only two "neutral" Cabinet ministers, Asquith and Grey, were present, while Churchill and Battenberg represented the Admiralty. But two-thirds of the men in attendance were connected with the War Office; Haldane, French, Murray, Haig, Grierson, Sir Ian Hamilton, Kitchener, and Roberts. The first question to be

decided was the importance of invasion in relation to other strategic requirements: i.e. how many of the six Regular divisions could be permitted to leave the country? Churchill, speaking for the Admiralty, stated that the situation was far more favourable than had been assumed as the basis of the last invasion inquiry. In contrast with the contingencies then examined, the Fleet was in a state of absolute and complete readiness, the Territorials were fully embodied, and the coastal fortifications were fully alerted. The urgent preparations of the last few months had justified themselves. Battenberg seconded the confidence of his chief and "would not object if five divisions, or perhaps even six were allowed to go." Even Lord Roberts was buoyed up by the hopeful strategic situation which had developed, observing that "Germany was in a worse state than he had ever dared to hope." Invasion under the recent circumstances was impossible.¹

Putting aside the question of a massive invasion, Battenberg asked whether a small raid to impede the Expeditionary Force was now as possible as the General Staff had feared in the C.I.D. discussions of the previous spring. Sir Charles Douglas, the C.I.G.S., calculated that the Germans could spare only 10,000 men for this purpose at present. Hence the General Staff's present arrangement was that five divisions should go at once. The sixth division would be concentrated near Harrow ready for any emergency in home defence, and could be sent to the Continent when the situation had cleared sufficiently.²

However when the War Council re-convened the following day, Kitchener, who had just been appointed as Secretary of State for War, argued that

¹. Cab 22/1/1 War Council: "Secretary's Notes of a War Council held at 10 Downing Street, August 5, 1914."
². Ibid.
"under prevailing conditions, it was hardly politic to send more than four divisions." French disagreed and pressed for five divisions to be despatched immediately; one division at home was sufficient to counter the risk of invasion. But the Prime Minister cast the decisive vote and backed Kitchener.

everything was to be said for retaining two divisions. The domestic situation might be grave, and colonial troops or Territorials could not be called on to aid the civil power.

Asquith's choice of words suggests that he was more concerned over domestic security than the possibility of overseas attack, but it was decided that two Regular divisions would remain behind to deal with the possibility of a raid and the threat of an uprising.¹

Britain therefore entered the long-anticipated war against Germany on terms more favourable to her insular security than most of her naval and military authorities had dared to hope. The surprise attack or "Bolt from the Blue" which had featured so often in the prewar conjecture of peacetime polemics had been thwarted owing to the alertness of the Fleet. Germany's military commitments elsewhere precluded invasion. The Government sanctioned the plan of the General Staff for a continental campaign and Britain, for better or worse, was committed to fight in France. But the coming of war had hardly resolved the invasion question, although it had diminished the range of military possibilities. The months ahead would contain many unpleasant surprises and war experience would over-turn many cherished predilections of peace-time. The last recommendations of the C.I.D. inquiry had not yet been discussed, nor had they been announced

¹. Cab 22/1/1 War Council: "Secretary's Notes of a War Council held at 10 Downing Street, August 6, 1914."
to the House of Commons or the country. As a strategic situation initially favourable to Great Britain's security slowly deteriorated, it remained to be seen whether the belief in her immunity from overseas invasion would become another obsolete superstition discredited by the course of events.
CHAPTER IX. THE INVASION SCARE OF 1914
AND THE SUPREME COMMAND
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War with Germany had come at last; the contingency was transformed to a concrete reality. The exhaustive preparations and recommendations made by the authorities were put into action: the fleet was mobilized, spies were arrested, the home defence army alerted, the coast defence activated, and strategic objectives placed under guard. During the crucial first two months of war the C.I.D. invasion inquiries proved their worth and the strategic planners could watch the home defence situation evolve along previously anticipated paths laid out in the previous inquiries. As defence problems arose, prearranged solutions were applied. The immediate threat on the outbreak of war was a German raid contrived to delay the Expeditionary Force. This possibility had been made extremely unlikely owing to the mobilization of the Fleet and it became even more remote as the days passed. By August 10th, Sydenham was convinced that "if nothing is attempted soon, the possibility may disappear", for the Germans would need every trained man they had on their own territory within three or four weeks. ¹ By the middle of August, the raid contingency had been circumvented: the four designated Regular divisions were safely landed in France and the fifth was on its way.

According to the C.I.D., the situation now presented the optimum conditions for a grand invasion: Only one Regular division, the sixth, remained in Britain (it had been brought over from Ireland and was now concentrated and on the alert near Cambridge). The new Armies and Territorials were at their lowest level of military efficiency, having only just begun

¹ Balfour MSS. (49702) Sydenham to Balfour, 10 August 1914.
their six months of training. Potential resistance against an invasion on land was now at its lowest strength. The Admiralty redistributed its naval forces to compensate for the temporary military weakness. On August 12th Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, the new Commander of the Grand Fleet, was ordered to bring his ships back to the East of the Orkneys into the "decisive area" of the North Sea through which it was believed an invasion flotilla must pass. The Grand Fleet accordingly took up a mid-sea position on the latitude of Aberdeen, while destroyers and cruisers made exploratory reconnaissance sweeps further south. ¹

But the anticipated invasion also failed to materialize. By August 22, Churchill was convinced that the danger was past and informed Kitchener that

The Admiralty are confident of their ability to secure this country against invasion or any serious raid. If you wish to send the 6th Division abroad at once, we should not raise any objection from the naval standpoint. The situation, now that both the Navy and Territorials are mobilised and organized is entirely different from those which have been discussed on the Invasion Committee of the C.I.D., and if you want to send the last Regular Division, the First Sea Lord and I are quite ready to agree, and so far as possible to accept responsibility. ²

The initially favourable strategic situation had transformed Churchill’s approach to the invasion problem. His letter reflects not the caution with which he had expressed in the invasion inquiry the year before, but a confidence in the power of the fleet which was more reminiscent of Fisher’s regime at the Admiralty. Kitchener, however, who had shunned the C.I.D. even when his presence was required, was not as confident, replying that he would be in touch. Regarding the despatch of the sixth division, Kitchener observed

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pessimistically that "If I send it we have practically nothing left" for home defence.1

The balance of the Government, however, continued to deal with the invasion problem in the patient and considered tradition of the C.I.D.

Hankey later recalled that

Early in the war ... as a matter of common prudence, and in no alarmist spirit, Asquith asked me to keep in close touch on the state of our home defence arrangements with the Staffs of the two Services and with Ian Hamilton, who commanded the Home Defence Forces, and to keep him informed of the position.2

As a result of this policy Hankey produced an 11-page minute in mid-September, which compared the situation after six weeks of war with that projected by the last invasion inquiry six months before. The lessons were instructive, as Hankey stressed.

One factor which it is important not to lose sight of is the absolute disregard of human life by the German leaders in the recent fighting. Time after time prepared positions have been captured on land in frontal attacks by sheer weight of numbers, notwithstanding terrific losses. Whether this policy will succeed in the long run remains to be seen, but up to the present time it has succeeded tactically, and a feat, which most of our leading military men believed to be impossible, has been accomplished repeatedly. The naval parallel to such attacks would be the launching of an immense expedition, or of a series of expeditions against our coast. Heavy losses might be faced, as they have been on land, in the hope of dealing a crushing blow. It may be assumed that the whole strength of the German navy would be devoted to the task. It might be employed either in a mass, every ship being included, to force home the expedition, or part of it might be used to make diversions to draw off our deep sea fleet. In any case it may be assumed that at the selected moment every German warship would have its allotted role.3

There was no imminent danger of attack, as Germany had at present no troops available for such an enterprise except third-line fortress levies. But the collapse of the French in the West or the end of the Russian offensive in the East could transform the situation. If Germany could find troops for the invasion of England, the only factor limiting the size of the expedition would be sea transport. Hankey calculated that the available tonnage in German ports (289 British and German ships) could carry over six fully-equipped Army Corps, or "little short of 300,000 men" with cavalry, horses, artillery, and transport vehicles. However, this involved the use of extremely slow ships and was only a theoretical maximum, and the expedition of four Army Corps, or from 185,000 to 195,000 troops, was more probable. This was still a formidable force several times larger than the 70,000 men envisaged before the war.

Several aspects of the naval side of the operation had deteriorated since the war had begun. Intelligence on German harbours was now restricted to unreliable scraps of information provided by neutral ships and forwarded from Copenhagen and Paris. Warning of a preparing invasion would therefore be short, but this might partially be compensated for by deploying submarines, torpedo boats, and aircraft for reconnaissance purposes. There was a further disarming development which had not been foreseen. The laid Germans in late August had/down mines along the East Coast in such a position that a German flotilla could sow additional mines to shield an invasion convoy from British naval attack while its landing proceeded. Hankey therefore concluded that British naval strength should be conserved, in the event that the military situation on the continent worsened. Raids also were always possible and must be provided against. 1

Another lesson of the war was the dependence of German infantry upon heavy artillery; this meant that it would be most likely that invaders would arrive with full equipment rather than as a stripped "flying column" relying on speed. The enemy therefore would have to seize a port to unload their heavy weapons and equipment. All ports on the east coast except Grimsby were defended, but with 6" guns which could easily be overawed by the main armament of the German fleet. However, if the German fleet was committed against harbour defences it would be threatened by British submarines and torpedo boats. A more likely course for the Germans to take would be to land a small force on a beach which would capture a harbour from the land side. But the slow and complicated operation of unloading an expeditionary force with full equipment in a hostile county still remained, the formidable difficulties of which were recently confirmed by the time taken to land the B.E.F. in friendly French ports. Every hour's delay in this most perilous phase of the campaign increased the risk of attack from the land and the sea.

If his dependence on heavy ordnance greatly increased the enemy's difficulties, the development by the British of an effective coast defence system since the outbreak of war constituted a further deterrent to invasion. Hankey reported that every landing place on the South and East coasts was being watched by cyclists. Garrisons of varying size existed at every port, whether defended or not, supplemented by local forces ready to resist a landing. At most places on the East Coast, reinforcing brigades could arrive within hours and locomotives stood ready with steam.

up to carry troops from concentration points in the interior to the coast. In most cases trenches had not yet been dug along the coastline but plans were ready for this if it appeared that invasion was imminent. Piers at possible landing places had been ordered to be prepared for demolition, but no steps had been taken to close or block paths leading up cliffs from likely beaches. Nor had a general scheme been prepared for destroying cranes and other disembarkation machinery at the larger commercial ports. Hankay added that "no land mines nor obstacles have been placed at landing-places, and this is probably justified by the desire to avoid panic in the height of the summer season."\(^1\)

London remained the most likely objective, although attacks on Glasgow and Edinburgh were also probable. The Thames would provide the best landing place for a descent upon the capital, if the enemy committed a strong naval force and could accept heavy losses. He would have to run past a battery of four 6-inch guns at Tilbury, undergo bombardment by heavy guns at long range and face attack from submarines and torpedo boats. Harwich was the only other harbour on the East Coast suitable for landing an expedition and it was strongly defended against capture. A raid would most probably be aimed at Woolwich Arsenal, Glasgow, Barrow and the Tyneside docks and, if successful, would disrupt supplies of war matériel for months. No effort should be spared to make these establishments secure. Hankey further pointed out that a strong German fleet might force the Straits of Dover and recommended that the defences of the South Coast, which had several exceptionally good landing places within fifty to sixty miles of London, be improved up to the standard of those on the East Coast.\(^2\) Although Hankey

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2. Ibid. pp. 5-6.
did not make specific reference to the fact, it is likely that the advance of the German armies South into France made it seem prudent to provide against a possible invasion from across the Channel.

Hankey's various suggestions for improving the half-formed defences was based upon highly mobile units of troops and equipment. Every military centre, he argued, should have an "ever ready column" which could move on short notice. Where railways were not available, troops should be rushed to the coast in convoys of motor buses. In addition, Large numbers of armed and armoured motor cars should be kept at places on the coast and at the military concentration places behind the coast, ready to proceed at the shortest notice to any landing place where the enemy is reported. Suitable concealed earthworks commanding the landing places should be prepared for their use.

His idea was to employ the armoured cars ("landships" still under the control of the Admiralty) as mobile artillery which would attack the German ships while the landing was in progress. In addition, the Central Force lay ready under the command of General Sir Ian Hamilton to provide the core of resistance to any invasion. The Force now consisted of 130,000 Territorials organized into seven infantry and two mounted divisions and would shortly be joined by two additional divisions, eventually reaching its full establishment of 200,000 men. In the event of an attack, it would be concentrated "as far forward as is safe" to interpose between London and an enemy column.¹

Hankey's conclusions after six weeks of war generally confirmed the prewar evaluations of the C.I.D. He stressed that several days would be required to land a first-rate army in England, even with the resources of

a major port such as Hull, Grimsby or London. Disembarkation involved formidable difficulties and the enemy would expose himself to every form of naval and military attack. But raids were by no means "improbable" and might be devised to lure the Grand Fleet onto a hidden minefield. Hankey recommended that blockships be made ready for sinking at the entrance to small ports and that trenches and barbed-wire be installed along the coast.1

Hankey's conclusions illustrate the fact that during the first two months of war the problem of overseas attack could be handled within the context of the prewar C.I.D. studies. The home defence situation had not yet evolved out of control or into unforeseen paths. However, by the beginning of October 1914 two factors were beginning to emerge which would disrupt the continuity of home defence policy developed by the C.I.D. The first of these was the German advance to and down the Channel coast during October, which modified the strategic situation beyond any of the contingencies forecast by the C.I.D. The second disruptive force was the new Secretary of State for War, Field-Marshal Horatio Herbert Kitchener.

Kitchener had been put in charge of the War Office by Asquith on the first day of the war and one of his first acts was to appoint General Sir Ian Hamilton, who had been his Chief of Staff in South Africa, Commander of the Central Force. This was an odd choice, for Hamilton believed that a German invasion of England was "like trying to hurt a monkey by throwing nuts at him." Hamilton later testified that Kitchener in the War Office was like a "poor untamed bull in a china shop", a solitary dictator who distrusted organization and sabotaged systems.2 This was certainly true

insofar as Kitchener's handling of home defence was concerned. In the absence of the General Staff which had gone to France with the B.E.F., the established plans to engage the invader in the interior of England and retreat slowly towards London and the Central Force were jettisoned, although they were based on 30 years of staff work. Kitchener reverted to the policy of "meet them on the beaches", although his troops were of mediocre quality. This strategy had been repeatedly rejected by military authorities since the 1880s on the grounds that it led to a fatal dispersion of force and would permit the enemy to enjoy a local victory, out-flank the mass of immobilized defending troops, and march on to London without encountering serious resistance.

In this and subsequent decisions bearing on invasion, Kitchener was the prisoner of inapplicable experience. He was the last in a long tradition of British military heroes, such as Haig, Wolseley, Baden-Powell and Roberts, who had made their reputations in a series of colonial campaigns. Like them, Kitchener was grievously unequipped either by experience or analytical capacity to deal with the intricate questions involved in a German invasion of England. He had no experience of an opposed amphibious landing, the most difficult operation known in war. The fact that large bodies of European professional troops would be employed on both sides and that the British would probably enjoy overall numerical superiority but qualitative inferiority removed the question still further from Kitchener's frame of reference. He, like most veteran Generals of the old British Regular Army, had little appreciation of the naval aspect of the invasion problem: the military strategic imagination ended at the coastline.
Kitchener was the antithesis to everything the C.I.D. represented. Autocratic, uncommunicative, and imperious in personality, improvising war plans through a series of intuitive insights his method was diametrically opposed to the C.I.D. tradition of collective decisions arrived at after careful mutual study and discussion. In putting Kitchener in charge of the War Office, Asquith introduced a 19th century atavism into the councils of the supreme command: an undoubting and charismatic equestrian hero faced a modern policy-making committee, which shaped strategy on the basis of group decisions. Kitchener's awkwardness was further compounded by the brilliance of his Cabinet colleagues. Surrounded by Asquith, Grey, Haldane, Churchill, and Lloyd George, the taciturn and inarticulate Kitchener sat as a Titan among the Olympians, a relic from another age.

It was not long before the consequences of Kitchener's disruption of the carefully-evolved home defence plans came to the attention of the C.I.D.'s supporters. As early as September 11 Sydenham condemned Hamilton's deployment of Territorials "in forward battle array" as "very dangerous"

... in the War Office I was given to understand that the policy of the General Staff was to await an enemy in a prepared position round London and not to meet him on the coast. The plan appeared to rest upon the hypothesis that the Territorials were only adequate for purely defensive operations, and that it would be necessary to bring part of the Expeditionary Force back from France in order finally to finish the enemy off ...

I pursued the matter further and saw Sir Ian Hamilton, who commands the Central Force. Sir Ian told me that he had received two entirely contradictory sets of instructions from the War Office. Lord Kitchener's personal instructions were that he was to meet an enemy at the beach immediately he landed, push in all the forces he could, and worry him at every moment until he was utterly crushed. This was the policy which commended itself to Sir Ian Hamilton. The other policy, which was communicated to him in an official letter from the Army Council, was the one favoured by the General Staff ...

1. A similar judgment is found in Robert Rhodes James, Gallipoli, London, 1965, p. 20.
Hankey was convinced that the problem "necessitates the intervention of
the C.I.D." and laid the whole matter before Asquith suggesting that a
meeting of the Committee be called to solve the "muddle" in home defence.¹

As a result, the first wartime meeting of the C.I.D. on October 7 was
devoted entirely to questions connected with invasion. The Committee had
to cope not only with Kitchener's dismantling of the established home defence
dispositions, but also with the rapid sweep of events on the continent. For
the first time the decisions facing the C.I.D. were not the products of the
slow and predictable pace of weapons development or diplomatic re-alignments;
they rather were being dictated by the forced march of German armies through
Belgium and Northern France. The strategical situation had now evolved
beyond any foreseen by the C.I.D. before the war. The fall of Antwerp was
imminent. Soon the nearest German-held ports would no longer be Emden and
Hamburg, 300 miles distant, but Zeebrugge and Ostend, 60 miles from the
English coast. The 30 mile German foothold on the Channel coast also out-
flanked most of the home defence preparations of the previous decade, which
had been centred on the East coast from the Thames to the Wash. The Germans
now possessed ports which aimed directly at Dover and the Thames Estuary.
The situation was a dangerous one and no one knew whether the German march
south along the coast could be brought to a halt; it was widely suspected
that the Germans were aiming at Dunkirk and Calais as bases for an attack
on England. For the first time since the home defence crisis of 1900 the
concern of the planners and statesmen coincided with the anxieties of the
public over invasion. (See Chapter 10).

Asquith observed in his journal following the C.I.D. meeting of

¹. Balfour MSS. (49703) Hankey to Balfour, 3 October 1914; (49702) Sydenham
to Balfour, 11 September 1914.
October 7, that German invasion had been discussed under conditions being, of course, totally different from any we had ever imagined in our long hypothetical inquiries. Everybody agreed that nothing of the kind was likely to occur at the present, which is just as well, as during the next fortnight we shall have fewer Regular troops in the country than has happened for years. Much our weakest point is deficiency in guns and ammunition.1

As in 1900, the government's anxiety was rooted in the low number of Regulars available in the country to oppose invasion. At one point in October only four battalions remained in the country, instead of the two divisions stipulated by the C.I.D. before the war.2 During the meeting Grey repeatedly called for the retention of the two divisions until the anticipated stalemate on the Continent occurred.3

Kitchener's statement on the progress of the war had established an apprehensive atmosphere. He stated, that it might be anticipated that at a later stage of the war — by the coming of winter or by the Germans occupying strong defensive positions — that a military deadlock would occur which would release sufficient German troops for an invasion of England. He believed that the defensive capacity of the country had diminished since the outbreak of war; the greater preparedness of the Territorials was more than offset by stoppages in the supply of ammunition and the great drain on the reservoir of trained veterans. He prophesied:

Should Russia fail to push home her attack, or should the French Army go into winter quarters, this country might, so far as military conditions are concerned, be seriously exposed to the danger of invasion, not by 70,000 men but by 150,000-200,000.

Germany had ample shipping for the transport of these numbers and she would make her attempt under cover of a fleet action and aided by her Zeppelins.\(^1\)

With this one sentence Kitchener had almost trebled the expected scale of attack and overturned the conclusions of all of the various prewar inquiries. Kitchener made no reference to the fleet and repeated many of the allegations of the prewar "invasionists". But he was not directly challenged, for the war had already seen many things accomplished which the C.I.D. had previously adjudged impossible.

Kitchener pointed out that the Germans had already violated with success every rule of war and therefore to say that the operation of invasion was unreasonable did not mean that it would not be attempted. A general fleet action might involve the entire Navy and last several days and while this was in progress German transports could reach British shores. Churchill was more confident and replied that there was no manoeuvre he would rather see the Germans take. Their most promising course would be to send 15,000 to 20,000 men to capture a port, laying mines in the vicinity as a trap for the British Fleet. If this proved successful, the Germans could engage a reduced Grand Fleet on better terms and perhaps contain it while reinforcements were landed. But the Germans would have to seize a port to support a massive invasion in view of their dependence on heavy artillery and the Admiralty already had stationed older battleships in certain ports as a precaution. But Churchill remained optimistic and estimated that the present situation was even more discouraging to the prospects of a raid or invasion than those examined by the C.I.D. in 1913–14.

\(^1\) Cab 38/28/47. "Minutes of 129th Meeting." C.I.D. 7 October 1914, p. 3.
But he, and Sir Charles Douglas, the C.I.O.E., were concerned over the reduction of garrisons in the crucial Eastern ports. These garrisons were now half the size they had been on the outbreak of war and were largely untrained and unarmed.¹

A general discussion followed on the possibility of recalling the B.E.F. from the Continent in the event of a German invasion following a military deadlock. Churchill quoted the "amphibian" philosophy of Sir John French: "our transports should be regarded as a bridge for the purpose of transferring troops from one theatre of war to another." Asquith believed this to be necessary. But Churchill took full responsibility for preventing the landing of more than 70,000 and asked Kitchener, following C.I.D. practice, to guarantee the defeat of that number once they were ashore. Kitchener replied evasively that the War Office had left nothing undone to train sufficient men but had made no definite commitment. He believed that if a deadlock occurred, the B.E.F. could be withdrawn if the Channel were secure, for they constituted only a small part of the forces fighting Germany. Kitchener warned that the danger of invasion would prevail until January 1915, when he would have so many trained men available that invasion would be defeated. But until then it would be necessary to follow the trend of the campaign on the continent very closely, so as to have forewarning of a situation that would liberate German armies for an attack on England. Churchill added that should the danger become extreme, the Royal Navy could lay defensive minefields parallel to the English coast.²

² Ibid. pp. 5-6.
Churchill criticized Kitchener's hypothesis in a letter written to Jellicoe the next day. What Kitchener needed to do, he believed, was to study the invasion operation as had been done by the C.I.D.: "it is useless to discuss such matters in general terms, and we are sure that a detailed study of a concrete plan of landing, say, 150,000 men will prove fatal to such ideas." If Kitchener's case were developed to its ultimate conclusion its weakness would be apparent.

we could transport our men back across the Channel with the command of the sea much more swiftly and surely than the Germans could bring theirs across the much wider distances of the North Sea in the face of a greatly superior naval force. All that would have resulted from the success of this most perilous operation on the part of Germany would be to transfer the fighting of a certain number of Army Corps from the Continent to the British Islands under circumstances unfavourable in the extreme to the Germans, and favourable in every way to our troops; with the certainty that the Germans could not be reinforced while we could be re-inforced to almost any extent, and that unless the Germans were immediately successful before their ammunition was expended the whole force to the last man must be killed or made prisoners of war.

Churchill's confidence and lines of reasoning were directly influenced still by the C.I.D. inquiries before the war.

But as the war progressed, even Churchill's optimism began to fade. He wrote Jellicoe a week later that the general aspect of the war was grim and that the pressure of Russian armies on Germany was not what it was expected to be. Churchill was evidently influenced by a further memorandum by Hankey on the invasion problem, which was printed on October 15th and reflected the deteriorating situation on the continent. Hankey began by noting that the prewar inquiries into invasion had provided a reasonable

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2. Ibid. pp. 386-387.
basis for British military policy in peacetime. These were of necessity the product of various expert opinions, for there had not been sufficient experience of modern war to provide accurate information. But they were hardly an infallible guide to conduct in war: peacetime hypotheses had been exploded in a number of instances. Expenditure of ammunition and percentages of casualties were far greater than had been expected. Frontal attacks had been held to be impossible, but had frequently succeeded. Attacks on trade routes had proven less successful than some experts had predicted. Experts had said in 1909 and again in 1913 that airships were useless, "one consequence being that we ourselves had not a single airship, though we live in daily apprehension of Zeppelin attacks."

The fluid and unpredictable course of war called into question, Hankey asserted, the hypothetical peacetime conclusions of the C.I.D. It had been decided that London was the only possible objective of a mass invasion, but the coming of war had brought a new factor. The formation of the New Armies and the efforts to equip them had enhanced the strategic value of the munitions factories in the North beyond a point foreseen by the C.I.D. The destruction of the Tyneside factories alone would justify a great effort and the taking of risks by the enemy, as this would paralyse the greater part of the New Armies for months or longer. Another wartime development was the difficulty of attaining information as to what was occurring in German harbours. The peacetime estimate was that only 20,000 German troops could embark

without a warning reaching London; now the Government had little news at any time. It was now known that Germany had more than a million tons of shipping available for transport purpose, more than double the peacetime estimate.¹

War experience also confirmed the difficulties of close blockade. German submarines had driven the Royal Navy out of the North Sea. British submarines could move into the Heligoland Bight for observation purposes during calm weather but could not destroy more than one or two transports proceeding at full speed, especially if these were escorted. These would now have to be withdrawn with the onset of winter. Unless some regular system of extended reconnaissance and communication was established, "the invading force does not run much risk of discovery until close to the British shores." Instead of 24 hours warning of invasion, only one or two hours could now be guaranteed.² Disembarkation conditions had therefore altered in favour of the Germans. Diversions by the German fleet, the sowing of mines, and the actions of German submarines might delay the arrival of the Grand Fleet on the scene even further. British coast patrols could provide an early warning of invasion, but might be drawn off by false reports or an urgent call from the Fleet. If the Germans succeeded in bringing their transports into shallow water, they could not be sunk by British submarines. Running them aground would secure them from sinking.

². Ibid. pp. 3-5.
from any source. There was always the eventuality that the entire German
High Seas Fleet would be risked in one supreme effort to effect a landing.
When it is remembered that their whole strength could be
converged at one point suddenly and without warning, whereas
our force is scattered from one end of the coast to the other,
the difficulties of the defence become apparent.

The main British force would eventually arrive, but could it arrive in time
to thwart a landing?¹

Although the C.I.D. in 1908 had admitted that an embarkation on a
beach was possible, the seizure of a harbour was far more likely. War
experience at Antwerp, Liege, and Namur indicated the power of German heavy
guns: even these the most heavily fortified ports would soon succumb to the
11" main armament of the High Seas Fleet. The defended ports had been
designed to hold off the enemy until the arrival of the Royal Navy in
strength, but it was extremely doubtful whether any of the "exposed and
often conspicuous" defences could hold off a determined enemy, ready to
accept losses and run risks, for twenty-four hours.² The situation once
the invaders were ashore, was equally unpromising, for the War Office con-
sidered that the Territorials were unfit to take the field. If the German
preoccupation with two fronts ended, the War Office would have to consider
two unpalatable alternatives: the retention of two Regular divisions now
being prepared for the continental campaign or the withdrawal of part of the
force already there.

¹ Cab 38/28/48 "Invasion" M.P.A.E. 15 October 1914, p. 5.
² Ibid.
So great and so paramount ... is the importance of securing the heart of the British Empire that the War Office cannot take the responsibility of running any risks. If Great Britain were successfully invaded it might be impossible to continue the war. All the supplies of our own armies and many of those for our Allies would cease. The Expeditionary Force might be deprived of its means of continuing the war, and it is by no means unlikely that the whole campaign of the Allies would collapse. Even a successful landing and a campaign of two or three weeks in Great Britain would be a terrible shock to our prestige, and would probably result in bringing back the whole Expeditionary Force — if it could be disengaged, which the enemy would do his utmost to prevent by concentrating at this portion of the line. From every point of view it is most important that a landing should be rendered impossible.¹

Hankey ended this most pessimistic appreciation of the situation by noting that the only reassuring development of the war thus far had been the mining of the Channel, which had secured the Southern coast from invasion. The Admiralty had also decided to supplement the existing German minefields off the Humber, Tyne and Suffolk, which constituted a new defence against a German landing. The situation required careful and constant study, as its main elements changed almost daily.²

Kitchener, evidently influenced by this paper, wrote to Churchill suggesting that it might be "a good thing to have some of the more powerful modern ships from the grand fleet in the Eastern ports, so that they could act quickly in case of emergency in the North Sea or Channel."³ Kitchener's foray into the deep waters of naval strategy inspired a lengthy letter in Churchill's own hand the same day which catechised Kitchener in Admiralty

2. Ibid.
The foundation of our policy is to keep intact and united with Jellicoe a fleet able to beat the whole German Navy ...
There can be no question of dividing it or dispersing it.

Churchill instead advised Kitchener to emulate the exhaustive methodology of the C.I.D.

You have at your disposal probably the best experts in the world. Let them make a plan for the landing of 150,000 men (a) on a beach, (b) at a port ... Let them work out the number of transports, the number of men in each, the number of horses, the number of wagons, the tonnage of supplies and ammunition, etc., etc. Let them select their beach ... Choose any day in the past month. Assume (a large assumption) that your Armada has reached the English coast without being detected ... Leave out the chance of weather. Assume it all goes perfectly and that we only get notice when your ships are sighted from the shore. Assume that the whole German Fleet supports this operation ... The Admy will then say what force we can bring to bear ... You will then be able to see whether any, and if so what changes are required in our arrangements. It really is no use dealing with the subject in general terms.¹

History unhappily does not record Kitchener's reaction to Churchill's letter. But it was inevitable that misunderstanding should evolve between the two men, for their approach to strategic problems were diametrically opposed. Kitchener was the last of the old-style Generals relying on intuitive insights to solve strategy, to have a voice in the supreme command. Churchill was the outstanding representative of the C.I.D. tradition, insisting on an open-minded and flexible attitude to strategic problems until decisions had been made as the result of a rigorous analysis of detailed hypotheses. Their divergent philosophies slowly led to a breakdown of communications between the two men and the departments which they controlled.

¹. Asquith MSS. Churchill to Kitchener, 19 October 1914.
By the end of the year Churchill was complaining to Asquith that "cooperation between the Admiralty and the War Office is difficult, owing to causes of which you are fully aware."  

The divided counsels of the two men were apparent in a Cabinet meeting which convened the next day. Both Kitchener and Churchill outlined their version of the invasion problem and described the defensive preparations of their respective departments. Kitchener reported that another two Regular divisions would be in the United Kingdom within a month, that the Territorials were now armed with rifles, and that "the process of entrenching the background of possible landing places is in full operation." Churchill was yet confident that any German incursion was "doomed to Disaster" but the Cabinet approved his proposal to secure a line of torpedo-proof harbours along the coast for capital ships and a scheme to close the North Sea to all but licenced British ships. The Cabinet also agreed to intern the 23,000 German and Austrian males in England "in view of the nearer approach of the German forces."  

By this time British armies were heavily engaged against a German Southward advance near the Channel coast and even Ministers who were veterans of the C.I.D. inquiries were impressed by the enemy's military achievements. Grey wrote to Kitchener after the Cabinet meeting asking that the Elswick works on the Tyne, "our greatest single source of supply of field guns and ammunition", be protected against German raiders. Grey believed "it would well be worth while for the Germans...

2. Cab 41/35/54 Asquith to George V, 22 October 1914. (report of Cabinet meeting, 20-21 October 1914).
deliberately to sacrifice 30 or 40 thousand men or more, if they could
disable Elswick before their men were stopped or taken." Kitchener in
reply described the measures he had already taken for the defence of the
area: Elswick was within the defences of Newcastle and was guarded by a
division of Territorials as well as by seven strong battalions of infantry
and eight heavy guns. ¹ This contingency, at any rate, was well provided
against.

The German advance towards and down the Channel coast was paralleled
by an even more unsettling development in the North Sea. On October 26
the C.I.D. printed a paper by Balfour which enlarged upon Hankey's observa-
tions of the week before and called attention to the revolutionary con-
ditions at sea produced by the advent of the sea-going submarine.

the North Sea is neither commanded by the British Fleet nor
by the German fleet, it is in the joint occupation by (sic)
the submarines of both countries . From this it would seem
that our fleet has been compelled by the threat of submarines
to occupy stations almost as far from the coasts they have to
defend as if war had broken out suddenly and they had been
caught carrying out manoeuvres to the west of Ireland.

The newly-discovered offensive power of the submarine made nonsense of the
concept of "command of the sea" and had rendered permanent a situation
suggested only as a temporary possibility by invasion "alarmists" before
the war. If the doctrine of "command of the sea" was an absurdity in the
presence of German submarines, they also made a mockery of the Mahanian
insistence on the capital ship, and the culminating naval battle was a thing
of the past. Balfour stated that fear of invasion was not removed, but
only "materially diminished" if the German fleet were wholly destroyed in
a general engagement.

¹ Kitchener MSS. PRO 30/51/77 Grey to Kitchener, 21 October 1914;
Kitchener to Grey, 23 October 1914.
It is not the German battle fleet but the German submarines which are causing most of the trouble; and the German submarines would be as numerous and effective after a new Trafalgar as before it. If there were no German battle fleet in existence our own battle fleet would have to remain thirty-six hours away from the threatened coast. In these circumstances, ought we not to endeavour to throw additional difficulties in the way of a German landing other than those presented by "a fleet in being."

The situation now approximated that foreseen by the C.I.D. the previous April: British defensive capabilities were no longer sufficient to meet the demands made on them and the Government would have to take risks somewhere. Balfour rejected Kitchener's crude hypothesis of invasion by 150,000 to 200,000 and instead forecast that invasion might be attempted in a form mentioned earlier by Hankey, but never contemplated by the C.I.D. through "the invading force mining itself in against our attacking ships, and thus being enabled to effect disembarkation in comparative security."

Balfour's brilliant mind was among the first to grasp the radical transformation of naval strategy and tactics wrought by the submarine and his was the best and most lucid analysis of the situation at the time. But when it came to suggesting a remedy, Balfour could only suggest that naval weakness be counter-balanced by augmenting the military and shore defences. Balfour, who saw the problem more clearly than any of his contemporaries, was reduced to recommending piecemeal expedients already suggested by Hankey and Kitchener: camouflaged mobile howitzers to cover landing beaches, blockships, the mining of piers and jetties, and the formation of a secondary coastal force of obsolete battleships. Balfour understood the radical nature of the problem at sea, but even he had no answer to meet it. He

conceded that "a small turn of Fortune's wheel might put the Germans in possession of Dunkirk and Calais" but all he could suggest was the demolition of the ports before capture.¹

Vice-Admiral Frederick Sturdee, Chief of the Admiralty War Staff, also recognized the revolution brought about by the submarine in a manuscript note written two days later (October 28), ominously headed "The Fleet cannot prevent a landing." But where Balfour in the C.I.D. tradition had given all the benefits of the doubt to the enemy, Sturdee observed that the newly-proved powers of the torpedo and submarine did "invoke caution on both sides." German submarines could now be watched only by submarines, whose wireless was only of limited range. Early warning of invasion could not therefore be guaranteed. Sturdee calculated that owing to the German submarine menace, "Our fleet may be from 300-500 miles from point of invasion and will take some 20 hours to reach the danger point." In addition, the Admiralty had to deal with an exceptional man, who is impulsive, imperative, and all powerful in his country and must be ready for a real flash of his genius in his present hatred of England and everything may be risked to strike a crushing blow at England.

Sturdee, however, realized that the submarine danger preserved the integrity of coasts everywhere.² The problem, he seems to have seen, contained its own solution: he had therefore gone one step further than Balfour. Unhappily, Sturdee could not work with Fisher, and when the latter came to the Admiralty at the end of October, the Admiralty had to dispense with his services,³ at a time when Sturdee's services and strategic insights could have provided a crucial contribution.

¹. Balfour MSS. (49692) Asquith to Balfour, 28 October 1914.
³. Sturdee had been Beresford's C.O.S. in 1907–1908. For a rather critical (see p. 506)
Churchill's letter to Sir John French the same day (October 26)

reflected the rapidly-changing situation.

Kitchener is strangely alarmed about invasion, and on the C.I.D. we have witnessed an absolute reversal of the roles — the W.O. declaring the country not safe and an invasion of 250,000 a possibility, and the Admiralty re-assuring them or trying to. You know how carefully I have examined that position, and how I have never minimised the risks. But now that we are face to face with realities, I am not alarmed, and my policy is that you should be reinforced by any effective division that can be formed and maintained; and that the Navy will prevent any invasion of a serious character. The Prime Minister is solid as a rock; but waves of nervousness pass over others, and may result in some retardation of your reinforcements ... But my dear friend, I do trust you realise how damnable it will be if the enemy settles down for the winter along lines which comprise Calais, Dunkirk, or Ostend. There will be continual alarms and greatly added difficulties.

By now even the ebullient first Lord was taking measures against a German invasion. Churchill later recalled that "I do not remember any period when the weight of the War seemed to press more heavily on me than these months of October and November, 1914." In October 23rd Churchill informed Battenberg and Sturdee that

From 1st Nov. begins the maximum danger period for this Country, ending during January when new armies and territorials acquire real military value. During this period, very likely deadlock on land enabling Germans to economise troops for an invasion. If ever to be attempted, this is the time. I am confident of our ability to inflict salutary punishment if it is tried, but no precaution must be neglected.

Churchill proceeded to outline the probable shape the German attack would take. The enemy could guard his invasion convoy with "Roon" class cruisers and "Wittelsbach" battleships, preserving the first line modern ships for battle with the Grand Fleet. Because invasion had come to be regarded as a serious contingency by the Admiralty only in the months

2. Ibid. p. 397.
before war broke out, no detailed plans against/ad had been worked out. Precautions and preparations were now hurriedly improvised. Churchill recommended an extension of the existing reconnaissance system: Destroyers and light cruisers were to push up close to Heligoland while seaplanes could carry out an additional patrol in the evening. In addition, the Admiralty should ensure that the coast watch "is thoroughly geared up." The second remedy involved a massive re-deployment of vessels in home waters. The first line fleet was at Scapa Flow ready to intercept the High Seas Fleet. In addition, obsolete cruisers and battleships would be organised as a second force which would engage the invasion convoy and would be based on East Coast harbours. Also, "the Patrol Flotilla of submarines ought during these months to be concentrated as much as possible on the more vulnerable and important parts of the Coast, the Tyne, Norfolk, Harwich, the Thames." Churchill concluded by urging vigorous action at once from all departments to carry out these measures. 1 Battenberg in reply outlined dispositions for various ships along the East Coast and recommended that an interservice inspection of the coast watch and coastal defences be carried out by motorcar by senior officers of both services. 2 On October 27 - the day the battleship Audacious was sunk off Ulster by German mines - Churchill outlined another possible version of a future invasion designed "to overhaul our tackle" and recommended that Admiral Callaghan study the problem with some officers from the War Staff.

His scenario visualized an invasion convoy proceeding under the protection of 17 cruisers and five older battleships of the Kaiser class and the

2. Adm 137/965/100 Battenberg to Churchill, 26 October 1914; see also Adm 137/965/101 Churchill to Sturdee, 27 October 1914.
general cover of the High Seas Fleet. Churchill assumed that the Germans
would employ numerous armoured lighters and armoured barges capable of
carrying 500 to 1200 men apiece (similar to vessels being planned at the
Admiralty for a landing on the Baltic coast). Given this situation, Churchill
asked:

If the enemy intend to attempt an invasion, carrying their troops
partly in self-propelled light draft lighters, capable of self-
defence by rifle fire and machine guns against torpedo craft; and
partly in transports armed with guns capable of resisting a torpedo
attack; and if they escort this force with some or all of the older
vessels named above; and, in accordance with what seems to have
been the practice in British expeditions against the French coast,
they cover the expedition from attack by the Grand Fleet by means
of their High Seas Fleet; what steps do we propose to adopt to
defeat the landing of these troops?

Churchill shot off a barrage of questions. What force should
attack the expedition and its escort? How could the armoured barges be dealt with? What
use could be made of aircraft? Was it desirable to concentrate more sub-
marines? Where would the enemy land to march on London? Could the enemy seize
Harwich and block it from attack?

An Admiralty committee under Admiral Sir George Callaghan considered
the problem and reported four days later on 31 October. The committee decided
that the Grand Fleet should not be risked in operations against an invasion
force, for it was the sole defence against starvation and blockade. Even
if the main German fleet appeared to provide an escort to the convoy, it
should be attacked only by British mines and submarines so that it would
enter an area more favourable to the British fleet. The committee regretted
that the capture of London was the only contingency brought up by the First
Lord, for diversionary attacks on the East Coast and elsewhere were equally
possible. Only heavy guns would stop the armoured barges, which would

have a short range and would therefore be restricted to landing on the coast between the Humber and the Thames. Advance warning of the attack could be obtained by employing reconnaissance aircraft to carry out extended patrols daily just before daylight and daybreak. Approaches to Heligoland were to be mined continuously while submarines were to cruise in the vicinity ready to give the alarm via wireless or homing pigeons. Callaghan's committee further recommended that senior naval officers inform the Admiralty 12 hours in advance of weather conditions favourable for a landing. They called attention to the fact that officers with the fleet were unaware of the location or strength of the military coastal defences and doubted whether the Admiralty itself was in possession of this information. ¹

Churchill had directed this general tuning up of the naval defences against invasion as a result of Kitchener's pessimistic forecasts and the crumbling strategic situation on the continent. Now an additional incentive reached him in the shape of an alarming series of intelligence reports on German invasion preparations. On October 21 the Foreign Office informed the Admiralty of a conversation which had taken place between the British and German naval attaches in St. Petersburg the previous spring. The two men had enjoyed a close friendship; on one occasion the German had revealed that he had recently been employed in the planning department of the German Naval Headquarters and that amongst other strategic plans considered by the Staff, naturally the special one of invading England had also been examined. In the first place, it was laid down that to be effective, a force of not less than 5 Army Corps must be landed; requiring for transport at the very least half a million tons of shipping. The collection and preparation of the latter alone presented practically

¹ Adm 137/965/110-118.
insuperable difficulties, but the further demand of the Staff that in order to have the barest chance of success, complete command of the North Sea must be absolutely guaranteed during three months so as to safeguard the passage of supplies and reinforcements, etc. during the subsequent operations, as well as the initial landing, simply showed up the essential and fatal weakness of the whole idea... by "complete command" the Staff meant it to be understood that not one even of our Destroyers or Submarines was to be at large in the German ocean.

The Germans had "very clearly intimated" that the attainment of these requirements "was at best visionary." The invasion plans were therefore considered merely as an interesting academical thesis, and in consequence relegated to the topmost row of the Office pigeon holes. 1

Although the Admiralty had no means of ascertaining this, an examination of the German naval archives confirms that this report was substantially accurate. (See Appendix A.) Naval intelligence took it quite seriously, but noted that one of the "insuperable difficulties" of invasion - lack of shipping - no longer existed. There were 144 steamers known to be in German ports, certainly sufficient to convoy five Army Corps to the British coast. But the real importance of the report was that it rightfully emphasised the importance the Germans put on freedom from interception during the sea crossing. Naval intelligence believed that more sanguinary counsels were coming to prevail in the high command of the German Navy. Certain preparations on the Continent seemed to point to plans to block British torpedo-boat harbours. 2 One report described the preparation of iron barges in Germany as blockships by filling them with cement and sinking them at harbour entrances. 3

1. Adm 137/965/79-80 Foreign Office to Admiralty, 21 October 1914; Commander Grenfell to Sir George Buchanan, 8 October 1914.
Throughout the last week of October various reports reached Naval Intelligence from other, less impeccable, sources. There were repeated rumours and reports of "landing barges", perhaps an echo of the Admiralty's own secret exertions in this field. An intercepted despatch from the Daily Telegraph correspondent in Copenhagen reported that the Howald and Germania shipyards at Kiel were building 30 armoured motor lighters, each of which could carry 500 men making nine knots. These were to make their way through the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal to the Scheldt to prepare for invasions; three were believed to be already en route.1 The British Minister in Copenhagen telegraphed a variation of the report the next day.

From 20 to 30 large iron barges ... bullet and machine gun proof and with Diesel motors capable of developing a speed of 8 knots ... are to be taken through the canal and thence by sea to Antwerp.2

Reports of this type appeared with variations until the end of the year. On December 11 the Consul at San Francisco forwarded a letter which described the manufacture in German ports of

fifty odd craft designed to carry troops across the North Sea to England. Each craft sits low in the water, with slightly sloping roof, roof and sides covered by four inches of armour plate, having a sufficient number of air compartments to make it unsinkable. Each craft designed to hold 2,000 soldiers, the men being entirely protected, first by the armoured plate and second by being disposed below the water line. Enough of these will be constructed to carry 200,000 men ... a fairly large sized army is being daily drilled in handling them.3

The informant thought this was merely "Town talk" in Germany, but the D.N.I. thought the Germans might be contemplating "the seizure of a pied-a-terre by an advance corps in lighter draft vessels which are capable of moving over and placing men ashore quickly."4

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2. Ibid. H.M. Minister, 21 October.

3. Adm 137/965/270 "from F.O. 11 December 1914. Consul General at San Francisco: German Preparations for Invasion of Britain."

Other informants provided news of other ambitious German projects for invasion. The Minister at Copenhagen on October 27th provided news of intense excitement at Hamburg. A number of large steamers are being fitted out with the rumoured intention of invading England. Upon the decks of the largest ships are platforms for starting aeroplanes. The interiors are ready for transport of troops.

One "Mr. Voigt of London" provided details of an invasion scheme which he had gleaned, he claimed, from a letter he had seen from a Corwetten-Captain in Wilhelmshaven. According to this version, three Army Corps were in readiness at Wilhelmshaven, Cuxhaven, and Emden, preparing for a landing in the Firth of Forth. Following "another decisive success in France", every available liner of the Nord-Deutsch Lloyd and Hamburg-Amerika companies, which had been waiting for weeks with steam up and all guns and supplies on board, would cross to England under the escort of Zeppelins. Other Zeppelins would fly ahead to attack points on the East Coast, for German aerial reconnaissance had ascertained the whole north-eastern coastline is practically unguarded. There are no mines and few ships. Within a week we shall be in possession of the whole of England. The High Seas Fleet may then risk battle with the British Fleet, although the plan is for us to return with our convoys, many of which are 20-22 2000 steamers. No doubt the unloading of stores will take a few days, and a meeting with the English fleet will hardly be avoided.

Further reports were even more fanciful. A "Belgian Red Cross Sergeant who had left Antwerp on October 13th" had overheard German officers discussing the invasion of England in a sidewalk café.

1. Adm 137/965/88 Copenhagen. 27 October 1914.
2. Adm 137/965/90 "Precis of a supposed letter from a Corwetten Captain to his brother a Lieutenant in the army. Said to have been seen by a Mr. Voigt of London. Wilhelmshaven. September 15th, 1914."
10,000 German soldiers were to dress in Belgian Uniforms and ask the English for transport to England. These would form an advance guard. Simultaneously from other points the main expedition would leave, apparently in barges which were now being fitted with engines out of motor-cars.\textsuperscript{1}

Churchill passed the reports to Fisher, who had recently succeeded Battenberg as First Lord, with the comment "You should look at this variegated stuff."\textsuperscript{2}

Although they varied widely in accuracy, the variety and number of reports reaching the Admiralty testify that the invasion project was being widely mooted in Germany, Great Britain, and other countries. They doubtless provided an additional impetus to the precautions now being prepared against overseas attack.

By early November Churchill and Fisher were taking measures against overseas attack in earnest. On the end of the month, the Grand Fleet was given draconic orders.

The Commanding Officers of His Majesty's Ships meeting with enemy transports, which there is reason to believe are carrying troops to British Territory, are enjoined to sink them at once by torpedo or gun fire. No parley with, or surrender by, a transport on the high seas is possible.\textsuperscript{3}

The next day Fisher warned Jellicoe that a German naval move was imminent, pending the outcome of the fighting around Ostend. The full extent of Admiralty trepidations is disclosed by a "Most Secret" order despatched by hand to Jellicoe on November 12. Contrary to usual practice, this was written out in manuscript by Churchill and no copy was kept. (Corbett could find no copy of the letter in the Admiralty files while compiling the

\textsuperscript{1} Adm 137/965/91 "Precis of a report of a Belgian Red-Cross Sergeant who left Antwerp on October 13."
\textsuperscript{2} Adm 137/965/85 marginal note: V.S.C. to ISL 31, 10.14.
\textsuperscript{3} Adm. 137/965/118A "Treatment of Enemy Transports." 2 November 1914.
Both Fisher and Churchill were now fully committed to Kitchener's version of a possible attack, and "endeavoured to imagine the most formidable and dangerous plan that the Germans could adopt."

Their Lordships have considered very carefully the possibilities of German decisive action during the next 6 weeks. If a deadlock occurs on the lines of battle in France and Russia, ample troops could easily be spared by the enemy for a raid or invasion. The volume of shipping at Hamburg is sufficient to transport an army of a quarter of a million men, and there is no doubt that this shipping has been specially fitted with all appliances necessary for the transport and speedy disembarkation of an army. We have no certain means of knowing when a fleet of transports with its escorts, with or without the High Seas Fleet, has put to sea. The Lordships' appreciation of the situation leads them to the conclusion that if the Germans move at all, they will move with their whole force and that the naval battle will be fought as an integral part of a concentrated operation of invasion or raid, or both. Probably the first news will be of a military raid on the Northumberland, Yorkshire, or Norfolk coasts, followed at a calculated interval with a more serious descent with an army. The enemy will probably use his old battleships and old cruisers to escort his transports and to engage our flotillas. He will protect his landing operations from naval interference and extensive mining.

Jellicoe was advised to concern himself exclusively with the destruction of the High Seas Fleet "taking your own time, choosing your own method, and not troubling yourself at all with what is going on in England." The Germans would "count on your being hurried by panic in England", but the destruction of the German fleet would retrieve at a stroke everything that may have happened in England, and places at our mercy every man who may have landed. Nothing therefore must distract or divert you from this single and paramount

1. The covering letter is found at Adm 137/965/164 with the following note: "No copy of the Memorandum forwarded with this letter has been found among Admiralty papers or the Grand Fleet records. HISTORICAL SECTION, 6/3/1929".

2. Jellicoe MSS. (48990) Churchill to Jellicoe, 12 November 1914, counter-signed "F".

3. Ibid.
Jellicoe, who had been the successful "invading" Admiral in the 1913 naval manoeuvres, certainly needed no reminder of the danger of invasion. His reply to the Admiralty was even more pessimistic in tone and affirmed that "within the last month the conditions in the North Sea have entirely changed". The numbers and activities of German submarines, whose range had been tremendously increased through the use of tenders disguised as neutral merchant ships, he contended, made it impossible to maintain a watching force of cruisers to give advance warning of invasion. "Command of the sea" in the strict sense could not exist in the North Sea. Jellicoe concluded that there is no alternative but a radical change of ideas and policy, and the abandonment of the basis upon which that policy has hitherto been framed. Once it is acknowledged that we cannot expect certain warning of a raid ... then it must be acknowledged that the fleet cannot stop a large force landing. It is true that the Fleet may make maintenance of the force when on shore difficult or even impossible, but it cannot do this unless there is military resistance at the start.

It therefore appears to me that the altered circumstances should be officially recognised and admitted and that the necessary steps should be taken immediately to meet the new conditions. It will be unpalatable, but once the truth is realised the necessary military force must be provided. I am aware that the question of armament may prevent difficulties, but preliminary training of the necessary military force can be taken whilst arms are being manufactured. The force required is probably not large; some 300,000 men should, I imagine, be sufficient ...2

Kitchener's warning of invasion had now been seconded by the senior Admiral afloat, to whom the suggestive incidents of the pre-war manoeuvres now seemed to be borne out in reality.

Jellicoe urged that a number of measures be taken on shore to frustrate a landing. A beach landing was unlikely in winter weather; "the danger

1. Jellicoe MSS. (48990) 12 November 1914.
2. Adm 137/965/166-68 Jellicoe to Secretary, Admiralty, 14 November 1914.
points" were therefore the rivers, harbours, and estuaries, all of which should be blocked to prevent German transports getting through and landing troops on jetties. In the majority of cases the rivers could be blocked at their mouths and Jellicoe recommended that "merchant vessels shall be placed in position ready to be sunk at a moment's notice by the explosion of charges prepared in the bottom of the ship." Emergency measures were required, for the crisis period would arrive in less than a week.

... the conditions for a raid or invasion will be favourable on about the 20th of this month ... high water occurs shortly after daylight on this date, and as the majority of the ports under consideration are shallow at the entrance it is reasonable to assume that the attempt will be made at high water and at daylight ... I feel that with the present military weakness of the country it is of the first importance to be prepared to meet the danger of a raid by the date mentioned — the 12th November ... There are further steps which could be taken.
(1) The use of large quantities of petrol for creating surface fires on the water.
(2) Preparations for the rapid demolition of jetties by explosives.
(3) The use of old battleships to supplement defences.
(4) Effective measures for keeping spies away from these localities.
(5) Defensive mining.1

Jellicoe concluded by enclosing an elaborate appendix which gave notes on the moon and tide at various Eastern ports for the "danger period" from 15 November to 31 January, and itemized defence measures to be carried out at each place.2

Jellicoe's communication inspired differing reactions at the Admiralty. Admiral A.K. Wilson was quite skeptical and observed that sinking merchantmen in harbour mouths "would almost certainly be done prematurely or too late and in any case would have the effect of permanently damaging our own ports for the sake of avoiding a very small danger." The destruction of jetties at short notice was likewise impractical, but it might prove possible

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to lay minefields which could sink transports approaching them.\(^1\) Churchill and Fisher, however, were not content with half-measures and almost immediately (November 16) sent a cipher telegram directing Jellicoe to detach the 22 battleships of the \textit{King Edward} class, half a flotilla of destroyers, and the Third Cruiser Squadron from his force at Scapa Flow and despatch them to Rosyth to strengthen the "denuded" naval defences on the coast. In effect, a second-line defensive fleet had been created. At the same time, more detailed orders were sent by courier. Reconnaissance by naval aircraft was again to be extended and the Admiralty suggested that coastal monitors could be used offensively against a landing, for the calm water which would make an embarkation possible would also make it possible for these craft to be employed in the open sea.\(^2\)

Fisher had already warned Jellicoe that November 17 was "New Moon Day!" and that he had a presentiment that "a German Naval move is \textit{very very} imminent."\(^3\) Now he informed him that

\begin{quote}
Kitchener (who spent a long time with me yesterday) \textit{EQUALY CONVINCED} that they are coming \textit{AT ONCE!} (to-day or November 20) with 250,000 troops we know of as available - untouched best men of the first fighting line.\(^4\)
\end{quote}

Kitchener was powerfully moved by Jellicoe's prognostication of imminent invasion, for it confirmed his own premonitions. He accordingly made heroic efforts to meet it. When \textit{Der Tag}, the fateful 20th November, arrived three days later, Kitchener had managed to collect 300,000 troops and spread them along the coastline to repel a landing. This had not been accomplished

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\(^1\) Adm 137/965/176 manuscript "Memo by Sir A.K. Wilson", undated.

\(^2\) Adm 137/965/177-78 "Telegram, Admiralty to CIG, Home Fleets, 16 November, 1914; Adm 137/965/206-215 "Orders in event of raid or invasion," 16 November 1914.

\(^3\) Jellicoe MSS. (49006) Fisher to Jellicoe, ca. 3 November 1914.

without some difficulty, as Churchill recorded.

... the whole coastal watch, military, aerial and marine, throbbed with activity. The Army arrangements were complicated by the fact that some of the divisions which were sufficiently trained to be used to repel the invaders, had lent their rifles to those that were undergoing training, and these rifles had to be collected and redistributed as a part of the procedure prescribed for the supreme emergency. To such expedients were we reduced!

Fisher quoted a couplet for the occasion to Jellicoe,

'He who would old England win
At Weybourne Hope must first begin.'

I'm told at high water you can put a gang-board on shore from a battleship!

The same day Fisher told Beatty that Grey anticipated a landing of 100,000 Germans in Tipperary, but it's a long way to Tipperary in Southern Ireland, which lies 35 miles from the coast. Weybourne Hope, Norfolk, is the easternmost extremity of England and thence the nearest point to Germany. The anticipated Armada did not materialize in either case and Fisher wrote to Churchill the morning after,

Kitchener's balance of 160,000 men will amply suffice and the 'Ides of March' have passed! The waning moon and dawning tide will not recur till days following December 10. Do write to him accordingly, or shall I? It has been a splendid 'dress rehearsal', tell him, and very reassuring - his mass of men and his mobile guns!

Although the sense of imminent peril had passed at the Admiralty, both Fisher and Churchill were not prepared to relax their vigilance. Fisher wrote to a friend on November 21 that "a flying raid on Hull might again be expected on December 8, as the moon and tide would again provide favourable

conditions. A similar incursion could be expected on Christmas Day "because of the hope of the Germans of our being happy at that season." 1 Churchill has described how he succumbed to the suppressed excitement which grew throughout the highest circles and did my utmost to aid and speed our preparations. We stationed as described the 3rd Battle Squadron at the Forth, brought the 2nd Fleet to the Thames, disposed the old Majestic battleships in the various harbours along the East Coast, arranged block ships to be sunk, and laid mines to be exploded, at the proper time in the mouths of our undefended harbours... 2

All of Jellicoe's suggestions were carried out, and their implementation continued throughout 1915. So exhaustive were they in scope that the official papers make up two entire volumes in the Naval Historical Archives. Secret experiments at Chatham on 5 December provided conclusive evidence that a mixture of petrol, kerosene, and Admiralty oil fuel can be distributed in a burning condition over the surface of the water ... with the production of a sheet of flame of great fierceness and destructive effect, which constituted an additional deterrent to future invaders. 3 The Admiralty worked closely with the War Office which was informed (again on the 20th November) that two of Churchill's pet projects, the Royal Naval Division and the armoured care units, would be placed "instantly under the orders of the War Office in the event of raid or invasion." The War Office assigned the Royal Naval Division to concentration points near Gravesend and Dartford in the event of an emergency. 4 Naval patrols were given detailed instructions for co-operation with the Military on shore in repelling a German attempt at

landing. The naval authorities were deeply concerned lest the defending British patrol boats be mistaken for the enemy by the home defence troops and sunk. The ships' officers were accordingly instructed in these circumstances to break out and fly the largest red ensigns they had available and to sound signalling blasts on their fog horns if they came under fire from the shore.¹

On the military side, Kitchener was no longer the only veteran Field-Marshall worried over invasion. Like many other authorities, Lord Roberts had been optimistic about invasion in the War Council at the beginning of the war, but was now gravely disturbed over Kitchener's mishandling of home defence and the German thrust to the Channel coast. Hankey recalled that Roberts called on him on November 10th, "extremely depressed about the dangers of invasion."

For over an hour we discussed the matter in front of a great chart of the North Sea on which I had marked our naval and military dispositions for home defence. I did my utmost to reassure him, describing the naval dispositions, the respective roles in home defence of the Grand Fleet and of the flotillas of destroyers and submarines, the minefields, the arrangements at the ports for watching the coast, the dispositions of the mounted brigades and of the central military force, the railway arrangements, the plans for driving and denuding the country, and so forth. But he refused to be comforted and left in the same depressed state of mind in which he had arrived.²

In late October Roberts had returned to the C.I.D. for the sole object of promoting home defence. Being mistakenly informed by Repington that Balfour was organizing a C.I.D. sub-committee for this purpose,³ Roberts wrote to the latter, enclosing a four-page memorandum on the subject. Roberts acknowledged the submarine menace, asserting "It has been proved by recent

³. Roberts MSS. Case X20927 Box R1 R62/71 Repington to Roberts, 22 October 1914.
events that the ability of the Navy to protect our shores and home waters cannot be relied upon as completely as the country was led to believe by naval experts." He went on to reiterate several of the arguments for invasion being put forward by Kitchener in the Cabinet and Repington in the Times; the security of the British Isles as an allied military base must be absolute, German submarines kept the Fleet at a two days' distance from the East Coast, and naval warfare had so changed in recent years that no man alive knew what the result of the expected great naval battle would be. Uncertainty was increased by Germany's widespread use of mines. On the military side, Roberts reiterated what was generally admitted in official circles: the 9½ Territorial divisions in England were inadequately trained and their command structure was extremely weak, almost lacking. There was no unity of command encompassing all home defence troops. This would be absolutely essential in case of invasion; "Hitherto we appear to have been playing at war in England."¹ Lord Roberts remained consistent to the end. Within a week he had died within sound of the guns in France while inspecting Indian army units. Almost his last conscious words expressed concern over the chaos at the War Office, Kitchener's misdirection of home defence, and the lack of resources against a German invasion.²

By late November Roberts' warnings seemed to be justified; even the Prime Minister took extraordinary measures. On November 24, four days after Jellicoe had expected a German landing and Kitchener had assembled his armies along the shore, Asquith held a secret consultation with a select group of Ministers and experts to discuss the "most critical" naval and

¹. Balfour MSS. (49725) typewritten "Confidential" memorandum on "Home Defence" by Lord Roberts, 6 November 1914; Roberts to Balfour, 25 October 1914; 6 November 1914; Balfour to Roberts, 25 October 1914.
². Wilson Diary 13 November 1914.
military situation. Those invited to 10 Downing Street were: Churchill, Kitchener, Grey, Lloyd George, Balfour, Fisher, Hankey, and Sir James Wolfe Murray, the C.I.O.S. This new compact organization of 10 men now became responsible for the higher direction of the war, absorbing the C.I.D. and displacing the 22 man Cabinet. Although the first meeting of the "War Council", as it came to be called, was predominantly devoted to home defence, it made no new inroads into the invasion problem but instead perpetuated existing procedures and problems.

As before, Churchill opened with a report on the latest Admiralty measures taken against invasion. A new fleet, entirely independent of the Grand Fleet under Jellicoe, had been created to defend the coast and comprised 260 warships, including battleships, cruisers, torpedo craft, submarines, and coastal monitors and gunboats recently returned from operations off the Belgian coast. Eight seaplane stations were now assigned home defence duties, and submarines and destroyers were making daily reconnaissance sweeps to obtain advance warning of an approaching German armada. Churchill provided a long and impressive list of the various ships at each Eastern port, indicating that the Admiralty had made prodigious efforts to meet the problem.

Kitchener in turn described his military arrangements on the coast. Three 9.2" guns had been mounted on railway trucks and despatched to the Tyne, Humber, and Harwich respectively. Elsewhere at most possible landing places there were heavy moveable guns and field guns within reach. The orders to these guns were to deal with the steam launches first. Even the armoured barges, which the enemy was reported to be getting ready, and which might be proof against rifle fire, would be vulnerable to artillery fire.

1. Cab 22/1/3 "Secretary's Notes of a War Council held at 10, Downing Street." 25 November 1914; Balfour MSS. (49692) Asquith to Balfour, 24 November 1914.
The heavy guns would force the enemy to row into the shore in open boats and provide additional time for naval and military reinforcements to arrive on the scene.

Churchill circulated an Admiralty paper which gave a more hopeful picture of the situation. The Director of Transports had worked out detailed calculations of the time required for the enemy to land 200,000 troops using a captured British port. He had assumed that the enemy would bring cavalry and artillery with horses and guns and that landing cranes had been destroyed and port machinery sabotaged or removed. Southampton, the most useful port, was unavailable. Ten days would be required for the embarkation if the Humber was seized, and fifteen days for the Tyne. Even if the Tyne and Humber were captured and employed simultaneously with two separate beach embarkations, he judged that five to six days were required to land 200,000 men and their equipment, even if no serious interference was offered from land or sea. Even the landing of the B.E.F. in France had not been a quick operation.

For a disembarkation in a friendly country, with every facility, a trained disembarkation staff, and no hitch anywhere, the lowest possible estimate is 5 days. In the circumstances contemplated I consider 10 days the least time possible.1

The Cabinet had received convincing and reassuring evidence of the difficulty of an enemy disembarkation from an authoritative source.

However, the invasion issue continued to haunt the minds of Fisher and Churchill. Throughout December and into 1915, Churchill campaigned for an "inverted invasion", contending that the best way to

1. Cab 37/122/167 "Time required to Disembark a Hostile Force." by the Director of Transports. 17 November 1914.
prevent a German invasion of Britain would be to launch a British invasion of Germany. Although he later in the World Crisis justified this plan as a means of forcing the German fleet to action; at the time he employed almost exclusively the argument of security from overseas attack. Churchill first introduced his imaginative proposal at the War Council of 1 December 1914; suggesting that

the seizure and occupation of a suitable island might render possible the establishment of a flying base, by means of which the movements of the German fleet could be kept under constant observation. It would also enable us to keep large numbers of submarines and destroyers, including the older as well as the newer classes, constantly off the German coast. We could also drop bombs every few days. In these circumstances it would be very difficult for the Germans to prepare for invasion without our knowledge, or to escape from the North Sea ports. Invasion could then only come from the Baltic.

Fisher was favourable, approving any offensive move which would bolster the morale of the Fleet. Balfour stated that while the operation would not provide a complete substitute for home defence, it would release some of the many troops still deployed within Britain. Throughout December Churchill kept the Prime Minister informed as to the progress of the planning and re-affirmed at the War Council of 7 January 1915 that the capture of Borkum or Sylt would render a German invasion impossible and enormously reduce the risk of raids. To reassure Kitchener, who feared that "it might prove necessary to withdraw men from the continent" to obtain the high quality assault troops necessary for the adventure, Churchill anticipated that a division "would be the largest force that could be employed". If the enterprise succeeded, "The Army would be fully recouped by the greater security of and the fewer troops required
for Home Defence." Churchill later informed Jellicoe that a British landing on German territory also would have a powerful psychological effect on the enemy.

In remembering "Sylt" he would lose sight of England. Our position there would be intolerable to him. He would have to attack us not at any point he chose on our sparsely-guarded coast, but where he would have to force a very concentrated swarm of submarines ...

The proposal was postponed, however, owing to lack of suitable equipment and detailed planning (both of which were soon to be absorbed by the Gallipoli project). Evidently no one fully calculated to what extent the factors militating against a successful invasion of England could be overcome in a landing on the German islands, for the plan was cancelled in the summer of 1915.¹

Fisher, evidently impressed by the fighting continuing near Zeebrugge and the development of the military stalemate predicted by Kitchener, persisted in his warnings of invasion. On December 7 Fisher informed Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty, his former protege in command of the Third Battle Squadron (now stationed at the Forth against an invasion attempt) that

the latest German scare from our Minister at the Hague is that 150,000 Germans will land, half at Dundee, the other half at Oban, and the feint of 20,000 men at Norwich 4 days sooner! This is to be on Christmas Day, when we are all supposed to be drunk.²

At the end of the month Fisher, writing to Jellicoe of invasion in a

1. Asquith MSS. Box 13. Churchill to Asquith. 3 December 1914; 29 December 1914; manuscript memorandum on seizing Borkum, 31 December December 1914; Cab 22/1/4 "Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of a War Council Held at 10, Downing Street, December 1, 1914." pp. 2-3; Cab 22/1/6 "Secretary's notes of a Meeting of a War Council ... January 7, 1915." p. 6; Jellicoe MSS. (48990) Churchill to Jellicoe, 11 January 1915.

more serious vein, revived the fears of the month before. We are sending every living soul we can to our Army in France and quite rightly—hence England is denuded of troops against even a big Raid. The Military Situation between the Germans making a 'Coup' with their whole Naval resources—the Fleet and 150,000 men in Transports—they also have a numerous flock of old Vessels filled with cement to sink in the channel left open by our mines and so block our Southern Naval Force from coming through into the North Sea. The two German words used I forget but they mean "Let every d----d thing go in"!

Fisher added that the American ambassador in Berlin had told his niece to let someone in England know that "the Germans were contemplating some big 'Coup' shock against England" because a large number of German navy officers were on leave in Berlin in preparation for some momentous onslaught.  

But the invasion menace was deflated considerably at the Admiralty when a secret German appreciation of British coast defences was captured at the end of December. These revealed that the Germans had over-rated the strength of the British dispositions ashore and that they were decidedly pessimistic regarding the prospects of a raid. At the Thames, for example, the Germans considered that the landing of a sizeable force was possible only after securing complete command of the sea and the complete destruction of the shore batteries. The Germans were much more defensive-minded than the British had believed. At the Firth of Forth the enemy held that

A surprise attempt could be made to destroy the Forth Bridge, but a large quantity of explosives and much time would be necessary for this. There is not much object in such an

undertaking, as even in case of success, it is very improbable that the passage would be blocked owing to the great depth of water.

Other ports were held to have almost no objectives worth the risk of a raiding force.\(^1\) The captured report was forwarded in the utmost secrecy on December 30 to Jellicoe, who was ordered to make no reference to them in correspondence, signals, or telegrams so as to hide the fact that they were in British hands.\(^2\)

Kitchener, however, had no such information to guide him and re-introduced the question of invasion at the War Council meeting on 7 January 1915. He complained of the difficulty of obtaining sufficient rifles for the Territorial Force, which he restricted to home defence duties: only 250,000 rifles were available in the country for 490,000 troops. Rifles for the home force remained in short supply throughout the first half of 1915. Lloyd George wrote Balfour on 6 March that he had discovered 130,000 to 140,000 rifles at Clydeside, not worth the trouble of fitting new sights to, but "good enough to kill Germans with in this country."\(^3\) By July, however, the problem had been solved by supplying Japanese rifles and carbines.\(^4\) But even in January, most authorities were convinced that the worst danger of invasion had passed and when Kitchener proposed that "for Home Defence it was considered we ought to work up to the figure of 500,000 men", with 370,000 more

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3. Balfour MSS. (49692) Lloyd George to Balfour, 6 March 1915.

in a special reserve, both Asquith and Churchill expressed skepticism. Asquith asked how this figure was arrived at while Churchill observed that "this figure appeared to exceed any estimates made in the course of inquiries by the C.I.D." The Navy was prepared to protect the country against invasion: therefore why such a large figure? Kitchener's reply was not couched in terms usually reserved for Cabinet colleagues.

500,000 was only a conventional figure towards which the arrangements aimed. It could not in any case be realised before the autumn and it appeared unnecessary at present to discuss the matter further.

The War Council returned to a discussion of a proposed advance on Zeebrugge and the important questions of the anticipated scale of attack and the necessary size of the defending force were left in abeyance.¹

By January 1915 even Kitchener must have recognized that invasion had become an exceedingly remote possibility. The "maximum danger period" had now drawn to a close, for the New Armies and Territorial troops were in the final stages of their training. The worst period of winter storms was now beginning in the North Sea and the German advance along the coast had long ago been brought to a halt. For the next few months discussion of invasion virtually disappeared in the supreme command, which was soon deeply involved in planning the Gallipoli operation.

Only Fisher, who had been the most vociferous critic available of "the invasion bogey" before the war, continued to bring up the possibility.

On March 25th he scribbled hurriedly in pencil to Jellicoe that

I fear that no one but myself at Admiralty at all appreciates that Von Fohl may make a dash of some sort with all his force and perhaps a mass of troops ... I don't see what is to prevent their larding at Harwich

¹ Cab 22/1/6 "Secretary's Notes of a Meeting of a War Council... January 7, 1915." pp. 3-4.
and in the Thames as we have no force at all in the south and as the German Transports would be grounded the English submarines would be ineffective. And you can't get down under 36 hours (I don't believe) because of the necessary detour and the Germans putting down masses of mines behind them intending to return via Ireland if they sacrifice their landed Army of 260,000 men!

Strategy had never been Fisher's forte and with this exception invasion remained a dead issue for five months.

In the spring, however, Kitchener's fancy turned once more to thoughts of invasion. The War Council met on 14 May 1915 at a critical point in the fortunes of the war: the Gallipoli campaign of which so much had been hoped was now bogged down, the Russian offensive had failed in the East, the Fleet had lapsed to passivity, stalemate persisted all along the Western front, and Repington had precipitated an attack on the war leadership that very morning by revealing that British artillery in France were woefully short of shells. At Asquith's promptings, Kitchener gave his views on home defence. He believed that Britain was secure only so long as the new Armies remained in the country. The Central Force, supposedly the elite unit of the home army, was now predominantly composed of second line troops - owing to the drain of Territorial battalions to the front. Its Commander had told him that his nominal nine divisions were no longer an effective military force. Kitchener was worried lest the Germans break through in France as they recently had in Poland; he therefore concluded that "we ought to reserve part of our new armies for an emergency at home."

It was possible that the Germans might send a force to this country in order to try and keep our armies in the United Kingdom away from the decisive point on the continent. In

his view, the Admiralty ought to take such steps as would prevent the possibility of a landing in order to release our armies for service abroad.\footnote{1}

He could not therefore send Sir John French the four divisions promised him.

"When he had finished," Churchill recalled, "the Council turned to me — almost on me." For the last time, Churchill replied for the Admiralty, emphasizing that the Grand Fleet had been gradually strengthened since the War Council had last considered the question of invasion in January. Since then German battle cruisers had ventured out twice; on the first occasion they were nearly caught; on the second they were caught with heavy loss. The High Seas Fleet came out only after careful air reconnaissance, which showed that they regarded all waters past Heligoland Bight as in the British domain. With the support of his professional advisors, Churchill declared that "the Admiralty considered nothing more unlikely at the present time than an attempted landing."

Nine battleships, as well as the ten cruisers of the Third Battle Squadron, stood ready to reach any part of the East Coast in 15 to 20 hours, and in June the first of the new long-range submarines and destroyers would come available. All the Admiralty opposed Kitchener's view that German ships could come South; "there was absolutely no reason for anxiety." Churchill once again reverted to the conclusion of the prewar C.I.D.: as long as the War Office kept enough men in Britain to defeat 70,000 men, no landing would be attempted.\footnote{2}

\footnote{1} Cab 22/1/16 "Secretary's Notes of a War Council Held at 10 Downing Street, May 14, 1915." p. 7-8.

Kitchener rejected the C.I.D. conclusion: he had grave doubts as to whether a landing of even 70,000 men on these shores would not place us in a very critical position, as it would tie up a large force in this country. To meet 70,000 men we should require 150,000 men. Balfour, another C.I.D. veteran, intervened on Churchill's behalf and asked Kitchener to adopt the C.I.D. methods:

- to place himself in the enemy's place and to say how he himself would like to have to land 70,000 men in this country in the face of opposition, with the prospect of all communication with his own country being cut, without heavy guns (without which the German army appeared to be useless), and with the certainty of being attacked from the sea as well as from the land within the land within twenty-four hours.

Kitchener was impressed by this line of reasoning, admitting that "it was a difficult position" but that "if he were the Chief of the German Staff he would be willing to sacrifice a force in order to keep part of our army in this country." The War Council ended in this atmosphere of tension and irresolution; the larger questions of scale of attack and the size of the home defence establishment remained unsolved.

That evening a scene occurred between Fisher and Kitchener of which only conflicting accounts survive. Kitchener's version was that he visited the Admiralty with Sir Charles Douglas, the C.I.G.S. to discuss the "very unsatisfactory distribution of the fleet for the defence of the East Coast from invasion, which I had mentioned in the Cabinet." Fisher wrote Jellicoe the following day that "Kitchener came at 6 p.m. last night with all his Staff in Great Majesty and demanded a power squadron being stationed in the Humber." Apparently

Kitchener made the same proposal which had so aroused Churchill the previous October: to detach two armoured cruiser squadrons from Jellicoe's force and station them in the Humber. Needless to say, this suggestion provoked a similar energetic reaction from Fisher, who shouted threats of resignation. The interservice conference consisting of Kitchener, Murray, the C.I.O.S., A.K. Wilson, Admiral H.F. Oliver, the C.O.S., Commodore Bartolome, the Naval Secretary and Graham Greene, broke up in disorder. Nothing further came of Kitchener's project.

But more momentous events were now moving to a climax. For some months Fisher had been at variance with Churchill over the Dardanelles operation and on 15 May he finally did resign, unable to sanction further transfer of warships from the North Sea to this distant theatre. The Tory Opposition, already activated by Repington's revelations regarding the shell shortage on the Western front, now saw their chance to topple the Government and eliminate the hated "turncoat" Churchill.

At the end of the month the First Lord left his beloved Admiralty and was replaced by Balfour; an all-party Coalition replaced the Liberal Government which had now been in power continually for almost a decade. The last Liberal Cabinet passed into history and Churchill, the most decisive and active protagonist of the policy against invasion, lapsed into a political limbo from which he did not recover for years. But Churchill was determined to have the final word on invasion.

On June 1, 1915 Churchill, now Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, circulated "A Note on the General Situation", which in part represented one last attempt to convince Kitchener and other believers.

in the intricacies of the operation, as revealed by the C.I.D. studies and confirmed by ten months of war.

It is not a question of evading the Fleet, but of launching 70,000 men or upwards on the following enterprise, viz. to cross 250 miles of sea in the face of a decisively superior hostile navy; to disembark the army on an open beach (for all the ports are mined or otherwise defended); with all the chances of weather and the certainty of attack at the latest within a few hours by submarines and destroyers; to land in the face of opposition, for all the coast defence is thoroughly organized; to accomplish this and land all the necessary artillery ... with all the stores, appliances, transport, and ammunition ... within a period at the longest of 20 to 24 hours, after which they must with certainty be attacked from the sea by a decisively superior force, their escort defeated, their transports destroyed, and their communications irretrievably severed; and then with what has been landed, and only that, to enter upon the conquest of Great Britain. That is the proposition, for the sake of which Germany is incidentally to risk the decisive battle with her fleet. It was, and I believe is, the universal conviction at the Admiralty that no sane Government will entertain it for a moment. 4

At the end of Churchill's administration at the Admiralty, he showed no sign of the caution or concern for German submarines and other adverse factors which had so moved him during the previous Fall. But he went on to overstate and exaggerate the unity of the C.I.D. on this point, contending that his view would have been agreed to absolutely by every military authority who spoke for the War Office up to the outbreak of the war. It should be remembered that the body of doctrine assembled on this subject before the war was the result of prolonged and detailed discussions extending over many years and ending in a complete agreement among all - soldiers, sailors, and politicians - who took part in them. All that has happened during the war has justified and confirmed our conclusions, on which the War Office and Admiralty have, in fact, regularly and boldly acted. 2


2. Ibid.
Churchill's strategy may have been sound; his history was grossly distorted. He had indeed participated in the C.I.D. at a time when friction between the two departments was at its minimum. Perhaps he was unaware of the many previous years of interservice controversy and dissention. Although there had been a policy since 1903, it was hardly correct to say this entailed "complete agreement among all". It was rather the amalgam of grudgingly-surrendered positions resulting in an uneasy compromise. Churchill was distorting matters even further in asserting that all events of the war had confirmed the prewar conclusions, for the events of Fall 1914 compelled many of the C.I.D. veterans - Asquith, Balfour, Hankey, certainly Churchill himself - to admit that the strategic situation was extraordinary and beyond anticipation. It was equally inaccurate to contend that the War Office and Admiralty had "regularly and boldly acted" on C.I.D. principles. Kitchener, in particular, had never absorbed or accepted them.

Yet Churchill perverted the historical record for a good reason. He was anxious that the new and inexperienced Unionist ministers be fully indoctrinated in sound strategical principles so that continuity of previous policy might be preserved. In June 1915 home defence was one area where one could err on the side of zeal and confidence. The German fleet had made few offensive moves, none that signified invasion, and the German army was deeply involved in the aftermath of the Second Battle of Ypres. British naval defences had increased and the New Armies and Territorials had completed their required six months of training in March. Churchill was justified in masking the alarms of the previous year.
But in the Fall of 1914 the British supreme command was agitated over the possibility of invasion as it had not been since Napoleon had assembled his Armée d'Argenteuil at Boulogne in 1805. Hankey, almost the last surviving participant in the supreme command, defended the actions of his colleagues almost half a century later:

At the beginning of September, when we were tuning up our plans for home defence the situation on the Continent was certainly one of almost unrelieved gloom. Who then could say that the Government was wrong in keeping a vigilant eye on home defence? Suppose the French Army had been encircled, as might well have happened! Suppose France had collapsed, as in 1870 and later in 1940! What would then have been our position with the whole coast of France and Belgium in Germany's hands? Invasion, though still difficult, would have been appreciably nearer - and the preparations to meet it must necessarily have required time.1

In retrospect it is easy to condemn the alarms and excursions. The urgency of the official preparations is borne out by the writer's discovery that roughly half of the British Government documents dealing with invasion during the 52 months of the First World War originate in the 2½ month period between September 15 and December 1, 1914.

But in the context of the time it must be remembered that the supreme command was dealing with the most complicated operation known to the art of war, that naval and military technology had been completely revolutionized since the last great European conflict a century before, and that there was little trustworthy evidence to indicate the course of future events. In three months of hostilities, many of the certainties of nineteenth century Britain had been overturned. The "balance of power" was threatened and the low countries were occupied. The most powerful military instrument ever seen stood at the Channel, where only

a few miles separated it from England, its most powerful and hated
enemy. British seapower, the last defence of the national integrity
for centuries, was no longer secure even in home waters. "Command of
the sea" had become a meaningless expression. Even as the German armies
advanced down the Channel coast, a single U-boat torpedoed and sank
three British battlecruisers off Holland on September 22; on October
27 a German mine destroyed the battleship Audacious off Ulster. The
opening "white-hot months" of the war provide the authentic climax of
official anxieties over invasion; simultaneously public interest revived
and reached its culmination. The unprecedented exertions of the supreme
command were interconnected with a series of developments no less
significant in the realm of public opinion. For the first time since
1900 the activities of the Government synchronized with the agitation
of the public. Never again in the course of the war, nor for the next
quarter century, would the possibility of invasion assume such
prominence.
CHAPTER XI: THE INVASION SCARE OF 1914 AND THE PUBLIC

Britain's entry into the war transformed the domestic political scene. All of the causes which had convulsed public opinion in the last years before the war - Ireland and Home Rule, the Suffragette campaign, the threatening General Strike, the promise of Civil War - were forgotten. Yet while the war brought an end to the controversies of peacetime, the outbreak of hostilities naturally led to a revival of fears over invasion. The informed public, though it was aware of recent developments bearing on the invasion problem, had no clear lead or information from the Government to guide them. Owing to the pressing political controversies of peacetime 1914 and the sudden outbreak of war, the proceedings of the C.I.D. inquiry had still to be announced to the House of Commons and the country. For that matter, the sub-committee's recommendations were still to be discussed by the C.I.D. With the imposition of censorship and the lack of hard information from the fighting fronts, the old anxiety about Britain's security from invasion recurred.

The prevailing uncertainty, patriotic fervour, and alarming reports of the fate of the civilian population in the path of the Germans in Belgium all combined to bring about a revival of agitation for a citizen defence force against invasion. On August 8th, H.G. Wells, who had written several fictional descriptions of the invasion of England, and Arthur Conan Doyle, who had advocated home defence formations during the crisis of 1900, wrote letters to the Times calling for the formation

1. The War in the Air (1908); the War of the Worlds is basically an invasion of Britain.
of a home defence reserve, made up of men over military age. Wells later suggested that a uniform could be improvised by sewing a red collar and cuffs onto a regular suit, with a red stripe added to the trousers and band added to an ordinary felt hat. Over this, Wells suggested, a belt and crossband of linen or calico could be added. The ensemble would enable its wearer to claim the full rights of a combatant under the Hague Convention and it, Wells asserted, could be improvised in less than an hour in any village in England.  

It would leave the whole countryside free to convert itself immediately into a bed of stinging nettles against raiders as soon as rifles and ammunition came to hand. In many places they are at hand.

But another Times correspondent pointed out that many Belgian peasants had taken up arms and died, yet had not slowed the German advance through their country by a single day. He warned

If any part of our islands were raided ... and if desultory attempts were made by local organizations to kill or harass the invading troops, let no one doubt for a moment what would be the consequences. We should be treated to the ghastly and maddening spectacle of blazing villages, brutal executions, and all the nameless horrors that retaliation of an exasperated soldiery usually involves.

Nor would improvised uniforms provide a guarantee against atrocities.

The best course was to prepare active armies which could surround and annihilate the German invader instead of dissipating the national energies in sporadic defence organizations which would only impede and provoke him. Every available man should be made available to

1. 'Our Latent Forces' and 'The Use of the Untrained.' Times, 8 August 1914, p.9.
2. 'A Uniform for Irregulars.' Ibid. 17 August, 1914, p.9.
the War Office, then the result could be awaited with calmness and resolution. Further letters amplified the debate between the partisans of a citizen home defence force and the advocates of professional direction and leadership. Eventually, on August 26th, the Times published a leading article by its Naval Correspondent which pointed out that it might be a year or more before a decisive engagement at sea could take place and that any attempt at invasion would be preceded by a massive buildup of armies and military equipment on the coast, as Napoleon had done in 1803-05.

The issue was further clarified by an article in the September issue of the United Services Magazine which described "The Position and Duties in War of Local Authorities and Peaceful Inhabitants located within an area of active operations in this country." The article outlined international law as applied to invasion. The enemy could not ask the British populace to swear allegiance to Germany, but he was entitled to certain other services. Civilians could be compelled to quarter troops, to demolish houses and fences if in the probable line of fire of an impending engagement, and to quit occupied territory if male and of the age of military service. The Germans could not impose new taxes, but could regulate the press and telephones. Hospitals must be kept open. No citizen, however, could be forced to take part in operations against his own country, although he could volunteer to do so and receive payment for it.

3. Ibid. 10 August 1914. p. 9.
4. 'The Fleets at Sea. Napoleon's Threat of Invasion.' Misleading German Rumours.' Times, 26 August 1914. p. 6.
During September references to invasion were sparse, although the *Times* reported on the 13th that

a Breslau merchant has offered 30,000 reichsmarks as a reward to the German soldier who, weapons in hand, shall be the first to place his feet on British soil.

On the 29th, Repington sounded the first of his many wartime warnings on the theme

as the hatred of England by Germany passes all bounds we must never forget that any attempt to invade us at home, however hazardous, and however apparently impossible of achievement, is an idea which must constantly recur to German minds. We cannot afford, either on land or sea, to run a single unnecessary risk.

During the month, the problem of instructions to the populace in the event of invasion had come to the notice of the Government. Hankey, then Secretary of the C.I.D., recalled,

At the time when the war became imminent, I was engaged on a study of the plans made in 1804, at the time of Napoleon's threat to invade England, for evacuating the civil population from the coast districts, driving the country, and flooding large areas, although no plans had been worked out when war broke out.

On September 14th, Hankey argued in a C.I.D. Memorandum that confidential instructions for the population should be prepared in the event of a raid, even if invasion was too improbable a contingency to provide against. This could contain instructions for groups of men to act as guides for British troops, proclamations for the guidance of the civil population, and orders for the destruction of large food-stocks, forage, and petrol upon the approach of the enemy. Valuable aid might also be provided by the public in felling trees and destroying bridges to impede

the invaders' advance, and rosters of men with entrenching tools should be made up in areas where a stand was to be made. Hankey further advocated evacuating food supplies inland from the coast during the first few days of invasion, while the enemy was still preoccupied with landing his force and heavy equipment.  

At the C.I.D. Meeting of October 7th, a newly appointed Sub-committee presented Hankey's proposals in a paper, "Instructions to Local Authorities in the Event of Belligerent Operations in the United Kingdom." For some years previously, General Staff Studies had considered proposals for removing supplies and transport from the East Coast District. But could a practicable scheme be prepared secretly without raising public alarm? It would be difficult to ascertain the proper moment to put the scheme into action. A general exodus of the population with vehicles and animals might benefit the enemy by clogging communications and preventing a British advance or counter-attack. The care and feeding of the evacuated livestock would prove an additional complication. In the opinion of the General Staff, the main dilemma facing the German invader would not be his food supply, but rather whether he could achieve his objective and end the campaign before his ammunition ran out. Therefore, the removal or destruction of transport facilities were of greater importance than the evacuation of foodstuffs, for this would immobilize the enemy's ammunition supply.  

The Sub-Committee therefore recommended that the populace in threatened areas, on receipt of a notice from the local military authorities or police, should remove to the interior all motor vehicles, bicycles, and horses. All vehicles that could not be moved inland should be destroyed; harness and petrol supplies should be ruined, and all boats, steam launches and lighters

1. Memo by Hankey. 14th September 1914.
in areas favourable to an enemy landing should either be evacuated or sunk. Banks should arrange for the transfer of cash and valuables from threatened areas. It recommended that the populace be ready to dig trenches, clear woods and hedges, and to take orders from the appropriate naval and military authorities, who were to be given full powers.

Instructions were prepared for the guidance of the civil population regarding their attitude to the possible invader. Significantly, they were forbidden to fire upon or obstruct enemy troops. The customs of war also demanded that they should give up any weapons if called for by the enemy and should comply with requisitions of food as much as they could. They were to be warned that Germany in Belgium had not held to the Hague Convention against forcing civilians to provide information on military movements, so British civilians were to be advised not to try to learn details about their army. Local committees, based on the authority of the Lord-Lieutenants of Counties and the Mayors of Towns, were being formed and would co-operate with the War Office planning. In the actual event of a landing, all enemy males over 16 and other suspect persons would be put under arrest. At the same time, British men 17 to 45 years of age, could be compelled to present themselves at a designated time and place for noncombatant duties. But no attempt was to be made to destroy food supplies, forage, bridges, railway rolling stock, electric light or power stations, telegraph or telephone wires, wireless stations, waterworks, sluices or locks, piers or jetties, boats or ferries, unless specific orders to do so were issued by the police or military authorities.

These home defence measures having been approved, the C.I.D. deliberated

as to whether or not these instructions should be made public. Grey advocated that they should be published as soon as possible, but Asquith, presumably concerned lest a panic should ensue, decided that they should be publicized only when invasion was imminent. The existence and activities of the local committees were to be kept as secret as possible, on the ground that a public announcement of the preparations for an invasion would increase the national alarm.¹

Balfour was asked to preside over the direction of the scheme, owing to his previous experience with the problem of invasion and the C.I.D. inquiries. Balfour was in a delicate and embarrassing position; is a former Tory Prime Minister and recently-resigned party leader he was decidedly uncomfortable as a junior administrator of a Liberal Government. Moreover, he was strongly opposed to Asquith's decision to keep the Instructions secret, to allow the people only a passive role in anti-invasion defence, and to keep the existence of the local committees unknown.² Balfour unburdened himself to Hankey on October 13th:

However desirable it may be to induce the civil population to remain in their homes if a landing should occur in their neighbourhood, I have some doubts whether any Proclamation or Police Directions would be sufficient - in many cases at least - to attain that result. The Germans have a very bad reputation, but even in they were angels instead of devils, I think that their appearance on our shores should probably produce a local panic. If this were so, would it be possible to confine the retirement to particular roads, keeping free (by force if necessary) the lines of march most valuable to our defending troops? To block by force all lines of retreat against terror-stricken women and children would probably prove impossible in practice. To direct an exodus through the least injurious

² Balfour MSS. (Vol. 49863) Balfour to Cubitt, 28 October 1914.
channels would be far easier.¹

Events were moving rapidly, which provided Balfour with several allies in the arena of public opinion.

Although the public press and periodicals had been relatively quiescent over the issue of invasion throughout August and September, the events of early October 1914 were to make invasion seem an imminent probability. By October 10th the Germans were in possession of Antwerp, Churchill's hurriedly-organized and under-equipped expeditionary force having been defeated. The Germans now mounted an offensive along the coast, known to history as the last phase of the "March to the Sea" but described by contemporaries as "the German march to Calais". Soon the nearest German-held port was no longer Emden, 300 miles from British shores, but Ostend, only 65 miles away. The strategic situation was transformed: at the time it appeared that the victorious German advance would roll south through to the French Channel ports, as happened later in 1940. Invasion appeared to many to be more likely than it had been at any time since 1805.

It is instructive to note which organs of public opinion were most exercised over the possibility of invasion. During the First World War the British press reached the peak of its political power and influence. Newspapers, as yet without competition from radio or television, possessed an almost complete monopoly of information. In addition, as most politicians lapsed into a "patriotic" wartime silence, the press suggested alternate policies as well.² The faith of the British people in the printed word was

¹ Balfour MSS. (Vol. 49703) Balfour to Hankey, 13 October 1914.
still unquestioning; skepticism would arise later. The invasion issue in 1914 followed political divisions: it was promoted in the pages of the Conservative Times, Daily Mail, and Spectator and was virtually ignored by the Liberal Manchester Guardian, and Nation. The Times in 1914 was certainly the most influential newspaper in Britain, and the Daily Mail, with a circulation of over a million, easily the most popular.¹ Both were owned, if not controlled, by the invasion-obsessed Lord Northcliffe, who had in 1906 directed that news of the first heavier-than-air flight in Europe be announced, not with the words 'Man Flies at Last', but with the headline 'England is no longer an island.

this news means no more sleeping safely behind those 'wooden walls of old England' with the Channel our safety moat. It means the aerial chariots of a foe descending on British soil if war comes.²

Similarly, John St. Loe Strachey, Editor of the Spectator, had been preparing for the invasion of England for at least twelve years. Strachey had been organizing village rifle clubs and local defence formations in anti-invasion war games and manoeuvres at least since 1902 and had advocated a National Reserve of trained military men since 1900. His wife had been organizing a system whereby large country houses throughout England, would be converted into field hospitals in the event of an invasion. Strachey himself had also been successful in raising and training a paramilitary the detachment, "Surrey Guides", whose duty it was to guide British defence forces against the invaders at night or through difficult or unfamiliar country.

¹ The average daily circulation for the Daily Mail during 1914 was 945,719. (Daily Mail Records and Information Department). It has been assumed that circulation during the five war months were over 1,000,000.

The Guides were chiefly made up of middle-class gentlemen too old for
military service, and affected something approaching a uniform. Strachey
also used his position as High Sheriff of Surrey after 1913 as a recruiting
platform, and delighted in drawing up home defence war games and planning
staff rides against imaginary invaders.¹

But again it was Repington who first brought forward the possibility
of invasion, following the German capture of Antwerp on October 10th. On
October 11th, Repington published a special article under the headline "THE
DANGER TO BRITAIN" which said in part

"A pistol pointed at the heart of England", the Napoleonic
dictum, is recalled here in reference to the fall of Antwerp
which is likely to produce a greater effect on Great Britain
than here.²

On October 15th, Repington became more specific, speculating that the "Great
Adventure" of invasion might be attempted: the war was now reaching "the
climax of its disastrous violence" now that Britons must expect to be
attacked at home, as Germany realized a landing could compel Britain to
sign a disastrous peace. Repington mobilized many of the arguments used
before the C.I.D. in 1913. The military problems of defence against an in-
vasion were many: the great length of the coasts, the absence of Britain's
best troops overseas, the lack of a national army which was still in the
process of formation, the submarine menace which kept the Grand Fleet far
from the decisive point, as well as the unknown effects of other new weapons,
such as mines and Zeppelins.

¹. Strachey MSS: general correspondence and Surrey Guides, 1913-1916.
Amy Strachey. St. Loe Strachey: His Life and His Paper. Gollancz, London,
John St. Loe Strachey. The Adventure of Living. Hodder & Stoughton,
Repington even went so far as to predict what form the future attack would take: the High Seas Fleet would engage the Grand Fleet while German transports slipped across and landed 250,000 troops behind the protection of mines, submarines, and vessels sunk in the fairway. There was ample shipping in German ports for a quarter million men, or more. The fighting thus far revealed that the German General Staff accepted great loss of life in order to attain strategic goals — therefore a loss of one-fifth, or 50,000 of the troops in transit, would seem a cheap price to pay for throwing the remainder ashore. Repington was convinced that spare troops were available for the project. Although the sea passage remained the great and insurmountable difficulty, the blow against Britain would give Germans the opportunity they longed for. Repington summarized: "It is not strategy. It is an adventure. The odds are against success. But still the adventure may be attempted."

Therefore, the British people should be trained in guerilla warfare techniques. There was no unity of command over the Home Defence Forces in Great Britain, and no Commander-in-Chief, other than the overburdened Kitchener, existed: General Sir Ian Hamilton indeed commanded the Central Force, but large bodies of men essential for the defence were outside his control. All these matters, Repington demanded, should be put right at once. Repington informed Lord Roberts privately a few days later that as a result of this article, "many correspondents wrote to ask that you should be appointed C in C in the British Isles ... I have always said that the public would ask for you directly things grew warm." He reiterated his personal concern on the subject of home defence, regarding the "frightful" condition

1. "Will Invasion be Tried. A Great Adventure" *Times*, 15 October 1914, p.4
of the troops and the difficulty of presenting an alternative constructive policy around Kitchener. He had attempted to raise the question again in a later article but the censor cut it out. Repington was convinced that the Censorship is being used as a cloak to cover all political, naval and military mistakes, and I wish you to realize clearly that I am muzzled, and that the Press is no longer free.1

The Liberal Press refused to respond to the tocsin of alarm. Massing- ham's Liberal weekly, The Nation, replied on October 17th that the fact that Germany was in possession of "the pointed pistol" and might soon be in possession of one shore of the Narrow Straits was "more a sentimental than a military event."2 Both The Nation and the Guardian had been phlegmatic regarding the fall of Antwerp,3 and now refused to subscribe to, or even to discuss, Repington's theory that the Germans were driving Southward to establish a spring-board for invasion.4 The Daily Mail was initially skeptical, having already ridiculed a German report that a pontoon bridge to cross the channel had been secretly prepared for some months. The Mail derided the project as a "monumental absurdity" and observed that "Armies since Caesar's campaigns have pontooned streams. It will be reserved for Attila (one of the Mail's favourite aliases for the Kaiser) to bridge a Channel."5

The Times, however, took Repington's theory more seriously. On the day following, the Naval Correspondent noted that only two causes would send

1. Roberts MS. Box R.1 262/70-71. Repington to Roberts. 19, 22 October 1914.
2. The Nation. 17 October 1914. p. 56. See Also for 10 October 1914, p.27.
4. The Nation and Manchester Guardian were examined from September to December.
5. "Germany Day by Day." by Frederick M. Miles. Daily Mail. 13 October 1914, p. 5.
the High Seas Fleet out to sea. First, to re-open German overseas communications and secondly, "the need for some 'splendid Hussar-like stroke' to put heart into their people", who were not inspired by the substitution of Antwerp for Paris. Otherwise, it was quite unlikely that the German Fleet would be sent out to give battle except as a desperate adventure, as it was outnumbered by the British Grand Fleet two to one. Repington's suggestion that invasion could be attempted while the two fleets were engaged was but a forlorn hope, as the crammed transports would be easy target for British coastal craft. The Germans had forfeited secrecy by mining their supposed place of embarkation from Aldeburgh and Lowestoft right up the Yorkshire coast late in August. But, the Naval Correspondent concluded, there are times when risks must be taken in war. It was always possible that when every hope of obtaining decisive victory on the Continent is gone, that an attempt may be made to throw troops upon these shores. Such an attempt it is natural to expect would be preceded by a sea battle rather than simultaneously with the issue of the fleet from its ports.¹

Although the two articles of the Naval and Military Correspondents did not accord perfectly on every detail of the expected attack, they made a great impression, as the correspondence column of the Times for the next few weeks attests. One reader wrote that the articles on invasion, as well as those on German spies, had gone home to every reader, and went on to say:

The German Fleet is a military arm. Germany would sacrifice every ship and 500,000 men to land a force sufficient to destroy London. That is their policy. It is the paramount duty of civilians to see that if

and when that attack is made dynamite bombs and wreckage shall not cause internal panic and deflect the undivided energies of defence.¹

From Germany it was reported that the semi-official Wolff Telegraph Agency had noted that

the article in the Times about the danger of the landing of Germans in England seems to have produced great excitement. In order to allay this excitement the Admiralty instructed the Times to represent a German landing as improbable. ²

Even in Britain, not everyone was convinced. It was reported from Amsterdam that the Battle of the Aisne, which was then raging, would cripple any project to send German troops to England, as the health of the German troops at the Aisne was declining and the situation there in the trenches must shortly become indescribable.³ Another letter to the editor denounced this "alarmist" agitation: if any invasion were to be undertaken soon, it would be the British invasion of Germany. Why, then, was there all this talk of arming "every woman, child, and cat and dog?"⁴

On October 24th, however, Strachey published a long leader in the Spectator which elaborated upon Repington's invasion hypothesis. Strachey was in contact with Balfour, Grey and Hankey, and publicized certain speculations that had taken place within the British Cabinet.

¹ "German Spies and Invasion." Times, 16 October 1914, p. 9.
² "Through German Eyes." Ibid. 26 October 1914. p. 6.
⁴ "Civilians in Invasion." Times. 2 November, p. 9.
less than two weeks before. He began:

The Germans are nothing if not philosophers. They do desperate and unexpected things not as other races do, instinctively, or from a Berserker rage, but because they are the right things to do logically from certain premises ...

Time being against her, a condition of stalemate on her frontiers is a hopeless business for Germany. Invasion, then, is a logical necessity ... When the fervent attempt to expedite attrition has either succeeded or failed, the Germans would have to make up their minds to the final dash. Their transports are ready and lie floating on many a mile of the waters of the Ems River. First, we presume, would come the submarines, then the destroyers, then the light cruisers, then the battle cruisers, and last of all the great battleships. Behind them would march - we use a landman's word advisedly - the transports. The notion is that this vast and mixed Armada could make its dash at our shores, coming on very much like the German columns which have attacked our positions in mass with their machine-guns in front. If they were undetected by our fleet till they reached our shores, they would, it is suggested, beach the transports while the fighting craft formed a protecting iron ring around them, a ring outside which minelayers would have lain a plentiful store of mines. In this protected area the transports would disembark their men and stores with feverish haste. The horses would be thrown into the sea and left to swim ashore. The men would tumble into flat-bottomed boats specially provided for the purpose and towed by launches. Cranes on board the ships would lift the heavy guns into huge lighters brought from Germany, and then by inclined planes and so forth. The guns would somehow or other be dragged up the beach: for it is quite clear that an army of non-marksman - if we may, without offence, so describe the German infantry - could not afford to come without a very plentiful supply of powerful artillery.

This, the most detailed wartime statement of the "invasionist" school, reveals under analysis many of the fallacious and misleading assumptions of their position. It embodies them all: the military tactical analogies crudely imposed upon what could only have been a tortuously complex naval operation, the questionable assumption that the German Navy was a military arm modeled on the Prussian Army rather than on other Navies, and the dearth of careful analysis and surplus of imagination that

sketched out complex operations such as the landing of heavy German artillery from the North Sea in late autumn without any reference to the conditions of time, sea, and tide.

But it must likewise be admitted that the immediate situation confronting Britain in October 1914 was not conducive to dispassionate analysis. We have seen earlier in the Cabinet how experienced statesmen who had taken part in the lengthy C.I.D. analyses, including finally even the ebullient Churchill, had finally been forced by the pressure of events to accept invasion as a serious possibility. Three months of war had seen the overthrow of many cherished anticipations and careful calculations of peacetime, and this was unsettling and perplexing. In the background of the invasion scare may be discerned elements of violence and hysteria natural enough to a nation which had been on the brink of civil war less than three months before. In addition, Britain was now being flooded with Belgian refugees whose stories, true or not, gave a lurid picture of the consequences of a German invasion in one’s homeland. While the fighting on the coast continued, and was being described as the first stage of a German “march on Calais”, it was difficult to regard invasion as a purely academic problem.

Strachey admitted that his version of invasion did not seem likely to succeed. But he agreed with Repington that the Germans might take the risk, for they could easily spare the necessary 250,000 men, in view of their tremendous reserves of manpower. He also publicized Churchill’s theory of an invasion by increment or “dribblets”, introducing the possibility that “the invading host, instead of coming like a common shell, might burst in shrapnel on our shores.” These, however, he hoped, could be
hunted down in detail by home defence detachments. He was careful to conclude that "a careful survey of the German metaphysic of invasion" still left room for confidence that British sea-power would prevail and that though the Germans will probably be driven by their worship of logical necessity to attempt invasion, the wisest minds among them will consent to it very regretfully.

But the fascinating and appalling picture of invasion continued to exercise an imperious rule over the imagination of the editor of the Spectator. The whole British nation must pray, Strachey wrote later, that the German fleet would come out with the transports behind it and give battle, for in spite of what the policy of the Fleet in being has done for Germany, her ships and transports will advance upon our shores as the great German columns advanced upon France.1

The impression persists that the "logical necessity" which Strachey and Repington perceived was the imperative force behind invasion was, in fact, a reflection of their own need to their past. If an invasion did take place their reputations would be enhanced.

In the fall of 1914, however, concern over invasion was not restricted to the professional alarmists. Even Strachey's great Liberal arch-rival, H.W. Massingham of the Nation, granted that invasion was clearly in the minds of our governors and ... underlies the German attempt to command the Channel seaboard. What of the dangers of a raid on these shores? That is a matter for experts to discuss with the knowledge that the naval war has brought and with their eyes fixed on the striking power and general availability of our fleet. The danger must be small; some of us who hold firm to the naval view must believe it to be almost invisible. But it is, I suppose, a possibility, a shape which need not haunt one at nights, and should not be quite banished from our military calculations. All that the average civilian need contemplate is the spirit in which such an enterprise should be met. And on this point the difference between the British and the Belgian case is plain enough. Germany could

never land a continuous stream of reinforcements. She might just conceivably slip in a single expedition. There her resources would stop. Can there be any doubt of the reception with which we are likely to meet any such isolated adventure? I see none at all.  

The Guardian reported a prophecy of invasion delivered by Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts, who had caused a stir in a similar manner in 1908. (See Chapter Seven.) Baden-Powell warned that England would be invaded if she did not prepare for it, and asked that the nation put six million men under arms to counter the 8 to 10 million soldiers available to Germany. As for invasion, said Baden-Powell, 

The German checks are only checks so far; they are nothing more. Their aim is to get England, and if they have a jumping-off place in Holland or Belgium that is very nearly enough for them. They want to get command of the Channel from the shore and if they succeed - for there are chances of the navy being held by stress of weather and so forth - there is a possibility of their getting over here. When they come to a stale-mate, as now - the next thing may be a blow for the place they want to get at, and we are now prepared for that ... 

Baden-Powell also continuously warned of the invasion peril in the pages of the official Boy Scout monthly, Headquarters Gazette. In November he advised his minions that in his investigations five years before he had found conditions ideal for attack on June 13th of any year. He, quoting invasion forecasts by Repington, directed older Boy Scouts from 15 to 17 years of age to practice marksmanship, train for home defence, and to prepare for mobilization. The Gazette printed detailed instructions to be followed in the event of invasion. 

While an agitation raged in its letter columns calling upon the Government to release the invasion instructions to the people, the Times felt constrained to alleviate the controversy its Military Correspondent had helped to 

create. Its editorial for October 26th counselled:

Should the Germans reach Calais, we shall hear much talk of Zeppelins, and perhaps see them. We shall hear stories of monstrous guns, and perhaps the dwellers on the coast shall hear them. We may hear boastful threats of invasion, and perhaps some reckless and desperate scheme may even be attempted. The sole object of all these hoaxes will be to alarm the people of these islands, to produce panics, and to induce the public to bring pressure to bear upon the Government.

But the Germans did not know the British people; it was the duty of everyone to remain calm and resolute. The German advance to Calais, like the "advances" to Warsaw and Paris, would fail, but even if it succeeded Britons must remain unmoved.¹ A letter on the same page, however, cold-bloodedly championed "The Right of Civilians to Fight" in event of a German landing.²

The deteriorating situation on the continent, as well as the publicity given to the possibility of invasion, produced fruitful results in an even more receptive quarter. Northcliffe's Daily Mail, in 1914 the most widely read paper in Britain, with over a million circulation, had overlooked the threat of invasion during the opening months of the war. And but now with the Germans in possession of the Channel coast, prophesies of invasion emanating from several sources, the topic of invasion came to predominate in the pages of the Daily Mail. The paper reprinted Strachey's Spectator leader almost verbatim on its editorial page,³ and for the next three weeks invasion played a role in virtually every edition of the Mail.

On October 27th the second leader informed its readers in half-inch type

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¹ "The Fight for Calais": 26 October, 1914, Times, p. 9.
² Ibid.
³ "The Spectator" on Invasion." Daily Mail 26 October, 1914, p.4.
of "THE GERMAN PLAN OF INVASION. STATEMENT BY GENERAL BARON VON ARDENNE. MINES, SUBMARINES, HOWITZERS, ZEPPELINS AND NEW GUNS." It transpired that von Ardenne, who had recently been connected with the German General Staff, had written an article on invasion for the Saxon State Gazette, which was now translated for the edification of Englishmen. Ardenne outlined a plan whereby the capture of Calais and Dunkirk would make possible the emplacement of huge German guns, which would provide cover for a large safety zone for German ships in the Channel. As was envisaged by a later German plan in 1940, a triple minefield would be laid between the French and English coasts which would close the Straits to all but German shipping and protect a German invasion flotilla as it crossed. The German General was represented as concluding

in spite of all England's minelaying, in spite of her great fleet, she is always afraid of a German force landing in the United Kingdom. When the French north coast is in our hands, such an invasion – which is now considered a foolish romance – will be easily possible, especially when England continues to send troops away from the island. The preparation made by Napoleon in 1804 to reach the English coast have been discussed in military circles for more than an historical point of view. 2

Napoleonic allusions were never lost on Northcliffe and the editorial of the Daily Mail the next day, "How to Meet Invasion", quoted a Napoleonic dialogue: "I hear that all your people in England are afraid I shall come over." "Sire, what we are afraid is that you will not come." 3 In following paragraphs the German press was pilloried for "trying to make our flesh creep" (an occupation apparently regarded as the exclusive monopoly of the

3. Ibid. 28 October, 1914. p. 4.
Northcliffe press.) The Germans, it was noted, no longer pressed for Paris or Warsaw, but for the coast towns of Northern France and their conversion into a base for the invasion of Britain. But the Daily Mail believed that this, like all German plans, would go astray, and transposed Bismarck's comment regarding a British landing on the Baltic coast to read:

A friendly American commentator on British life and character once observed that if a German force ever landed here it would be run in by the police.¹

In Napoleon's time, the Daily Mail recalled, the people had been issued instructions for the event of invasion, and the Daily Mail now joined the agitation towards this end already under way in the letters column and editorial page of the Times.

The following day, October 29th, an entire column of the Daily Mail's editorial page was devoted to a reprinting of 'PREPARATIONS FOR INVASION IN 1801',² and the issue of October 30th reprinted a German cartoon burlesquing the ease of invasion.³ A special article in the next issue contained a synopsis of the supposed "GERMAN INVASION PLAN", by the Mail's naval correspondent, H.W. Wilson, an expansion of the revelations of General von Ardenne of four days before, which also foreshadowed many of the features of the German invasion planning of 1940.⁴ The tremendous energy

¹ Daily Mail, 28 October, 1914. p. 4.
² Ibid. 29 October, 1914. p. 4.
³ Ibid. 30 October, 1914. p. 12.
⁴ The parallels to 1940 were the capture of the Channel coast, the use of two minefields to seal off a German corridor in the Dover Straits. The differences are the lack of consideration given to air power, the fact that the Germans planned a feint landing on the East Coast in 1940 and did not contemplate meeting the Royal Navy, for they had no heavy ships. In 1940 it was also planned to cross primarily in barges towed by tugs and medium-sized steamers, rather than pontoon boats. (Wheatley Op.Cit., pp. 100, 160-162; Taylor: Op.Cit. pp. 215-245).
with which the Germans were battling to reach Calais led Wilson to conclude that Germany was planning invasion. First, the Germans would capture Dunkirk, Calais, and the French coast to Cape Griz Nez. Then two lines of mines would be run across the Channel to close the Dover Straits while huge German guns would be mounted along the coast to command the Channel.

Sir Percy Scott had said some years before that the then existing German 12" gun would shoot from Calais to Dover, and even ordinary German guns had a range of between ten and twelve miles. German coast artillery could establish a very large area of fire superiority in the Channel and further protection against British trawlers and mine-sweepers would be provided by German submarines, which would concentrate in Ostend, Dunkirk, Gravelines, and Calais. Finally, when the preparations were complete, the High Seas Fleet would emerge and race down channel. While its best and most modern ships would close and engage the Grand Fleet, its older vessels would proceed to the area of the Dover Straits, entering the German minefield by a prearranged gap. Meanwhile, flat-bottom pontoons would have moved through the canal system of Belgium and Northern France to the Channel ports, where they would be filled with the invading German hosts, and then towed by motor-launches and torpedo boats to the selected embarkation points under the cover of the German secondary fleet. But the whole plan depended on the capture of Calais, for which the Germans had already fruitlessly expended two weeks of time and 10,000 lives, and appeared no closer to their first goal.\footnote{Op. Cit. 31 October 1914. p. 5.}

That same day, October 31st, the Times published, and the Daily Mail
reprinted, another letter from H.G. Wells, inspired by the Repthgton
articles on invasion, on arming and organizing the people against invasion.

The Times editorial introduced it in these words

We publish today a characteristically interesting letter
from MR. H.G. WELLS in pursuance of our frequent advice
that this matter should be quietly and soberly discussed
and not tacitly ignored.1

The spirit of Wells' letter, however, was hardly quiet and sober. Wells
at the beginning made it plain that he did not believe in a German Raid and
that, indeed, to do so was to play the Germans' game. But he then insisted
that the Government organize and prepare the people for "any raid that in
an extremity of German 'boldness' may be attempted". Wells continued with
language which anticipated another time when Britain would face invasion, 25
years later.

Let the experts have no illusions as to what we ordinary
people are going to do if we find German soldiers in
England one morning. We are going to fight. If we cannot
fight with rifles, we shall fight with shot guns, and if
we cannot fight according to Rules of War apparently made
by Germans for the restraint of British military experts,
we will fight according to our inner light. Many men, and
not a few women, will turn out to shoot Germans. There
will be no preventing them after the German stories. If
the experts attempt any pedantic interference, we will
shoot the experts ...

And if the raiders, cut off by the sea from their
supports, ill-equipped as they will certainly be, and
against odds, are so badly advised as to try terror-
striking reprisals on the Belgian pattern, we irregulars
will, of course, massacre every German straggler we can
put a gun to. Naturally. Such a procedure may be sanguin-
ary, but it is just the common sense of the situation. We
shall hang the officers and shoot the men. A German raid
to England will in fact not be fought - it will be lynched.2


2. "What we Shall Do If they Get Here, by Mr. H.G. Wells." Daily Mail
31 October 1914. p. 3; "Mr. Wells on Invasion. The Civilians' place in Home Warfare." Times. 31 October 1914. p. 9.
Wells asked from the government certain concessions for the irregular forces: recognised military status, specific enrolment, provision of some form of uniform and supplies of accessible and serviceable arms, as well as the proclamation of a levée en masse by the Government if the Germans were so foolish as to land. He further suggested that steps be taken to convert passenger cars into engines of war against invasion by means of armour plate and trained crews, which could also serve to "guarantee national discipline under any unexpected stress." The Times endorsed Wells' call upon the Government for immediate action: "in the unlikely event of invasion, every man left in these islands would fight. It remains for the Government to tell them what they ought to do, without further delay." 1

Strachey's two leaders of November 7th on "The Naval Situation" and "Civilians and Invasion" were inspired by Wells' letter, as well as by Cabinet information supplied by Lloyd George, and supported the agitation of the Times and the Daily Mail for the release of the home defence instructions to the people. Strachey, with his penchant for paramilitary formations, went further to advocate that lads of 16 to 19 years of age as well as older citizens over 38, should be trained in home defence detachments. He advocated (in full italics) that such men, above or below military age, should

form themselves into Town Guards and Village Guards, and enquire, when they can do so without interfering with or impeding the training of the Regular recruits, (a) the capacity to shoot straight with a rifle; (b) the elements of drill and military discipline.

1. Times. 31st October 1914. p. 9. See also "In case of Invasion."
Ibid. 11 November 1914. p. 10.
Strachey gave various examples of local clubs that had already followed this advice with profit. No explicit evidence has been discovered on the subject, but it would seem that the reluctance of Asquith's Government to adopt the idea of paramilitary formations in Britain was not unrelated to their experience with the Ulster and Irish Volunteers in the last months of so-called peace. Further, it has been seen that the advocates of formations of this type often had other ends in view than the defeat of a future invader. In any event, rifles and equipment were in extremely short supply. In a home defence rehearsal on the coast in early November, participating troops had to borrow their rifles back from units in training.

On November 11th, Lloyd George, who had provided Strachey with Cabinet information for his two articles on invasion, introduced the topic in the course of a recruiting speech at a meeting of the National Council of Evangelical Churches.

There are men (he said) who maintain that even if your house is attacked, if your country is invaded and threatened with oppression, if you had a second William the Conqueror landing in this island — not a very likely contingency — one or two accidents that have happened today have made that prospect a little more remote (cheers) — you ought never to use a deadly weapon to defend yourself or your country. I am afraid I shall never to attain in this world quite that altitude of idealism, I maintain it is not the principle of the Christian faith.

Strachey wrote immediately to Lloyd George, congratulating him on this speech.

My only criticism is that this appeal to make it effective ought to go hand in hand with a very grave statement by the Government as to the seriousness of the present situation.

The appeal will use half its force and may indeed be a fiasco if at the same time the Government do not use the threat of invasion and the danger of invasion to drive it home. If they will only take this country into their confidence on this matter and then make this confidence the basis of the appeal for men, they will get all they want. If you keep the preparations for resisting invasion secret, as now, the country will go on saying: "Why should we bother? There is no danger."

Strachey repeated this argument in another leader on November 14th.

For the first two weeks of November, Northcliffe likewise continued to stress the possibility of invasion. On November 3rd the Daily Mail published an illustration depicting "How Napoleon Threatened to Invade England", which represented a strange and fearsome raft measuring 350 by 700 feet, loaded with men, horses, tents and cattle, with an awesome castle mounted in its centre. On the picture page, a photograph of a woman lying dead in Belgian ruins, with a presumably orphaned child looking on, was labeled "What War Means to the People Who Are Invaded." Another caption was "A Lancashire cotton mill as it would probably appear after a German invasion. These are the remains of a sugar factory near Lille." The Northcliffe's Sunday paper, the Weekly Dispatch, published a series of articles which observed "Can the Germans land in England? is a much-discussed and all-engrossing topic of the moment": the reader was referred to an article on the subject by Robert Blatchford, the military-minded socialist. On November 12th

1. Strachey MSS. to Lloyd George, 12 November 1914.
3. Daily Mail. 3 November 1914. p. 3.
4. Ibid. 4 November 1914. p. 4.
5. Ibid. 14 November 1914. p. 11.
6. Ibid. 5 November, 1914. p. 4; 7 November, 1914. p. 2. See also 9 November 1914, p. 4.
an American's account of a visit to various German waterfronts appeared as
"WHAT I FOUND IN HAMBURG: LINERS FOR INVASION: WAIT UNTIL THE SPRING COMES!" described three huge Hamburg-American liners being converted to the new grey and yellow colours of the Imperial German Navy. It was reported that it was impossible to approach closely to the ships, and that the soldiers swarming over them were forbidden to go ashore. The American was told that these liners were destined to transport troops to England when the time arrived. Another issue of the Daily Mail featured a photograph of a German soldier with rifle gazing soulfully from the shore across the ocean, captioned "So near and yet so far. A German soldier looks longingly towards England's shores." 1

Northcliffe's press campaign brought reaction from his rivals. The Standard published a series of well-reasoned articles by the naval writer Howard D'Egville, which pointed out the remoteness of invasion and exhorted young men to enlist for service in France. The articles were re-published later in pamphlet form, with an introduction by Lord Sydenham. Punch published, among other things, a cartoon depicting Tennant, the Under-Secretary for War, on the beach bayonetting a "Hun" in the surf with his umbrella. 2 But the invasion propaganda was not without effect on the populace.

While the Government drew back from making its measures known, for fear of instigating an invasion panic, the people, inflamed by rumours and reports of German atrocities in Belgium, took matters into their own hands. In mid-November, Walter H. Long, a former Conservative minister, reported

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to Balfour that

I can assure you that we hear on all sides, more probably in the country than in the town, of German invasion, and all sorts of definite, well-thought-out schemes are being prepared, such as arming the best of the local dependents, e.g. Keepers, Bailiffs, Farmers, &c. with revolvers; moving women and children and invalids to safe places in the hills; and burying pictures, plate, &c. And if an invasion really takes place the commotion will be extraordinary and the hotheads will prevail, because they will act while others are talking ... people will be thinking too much of their women and children to trouble about their cattle. Already it has been circulated in many districts that the Germans have determined on a raid, and that they mean to come here and violate every woman over the age of 14.¹

The rumours and reports being spread by the number of Belgian refugees arriving in England had a powerful effect on the countryside, and fear of sexual attack was a dominant factor underlying anxiety in these areas.

Long later testified that "this is the sort of thing one hears:—

"the Germans mean to send 200,000 men, to sacrifice their force to a man, but until they are exterminated they will wreak their vengeance upon us and our property and destroy everything in the area which they are able to cover. Amongst other things we are told, that they mean their vengeance to extend to the next generation, as they are determined to outrage every girl over the age of 14, in the hope of raising up a mixed breed of boys who would be a difficulty to us in the future." This may sound like the vapourings of a lunatic, but it has gone deep into the minds of our country people.²

Reinforced by the anxiety of the populace and the agitation of the Conservative press, Balfour presented his complaints to the Liberal Cabinet on November 9th. He pointed out that publication of the official home defence instructions would now allay, rather than contribute to, public apprehensions over German invasion. Once this question was decided, other problems called for solution. A general scheme of compensation was required...

¹ Balfour MSS. (49777) Walter H. Long to Balfour, 13 November 1914.
² Ibid. 15 November 1914.
if the Government insisted upon a "scorched earth" policy in the path of the invading army, and the destruction of food supplies would be difficult and introduce hardship in such large cities as Norwich and Edinburgh. Further, was it really consistent to discourage the populace from moving out of the path of invasion, while at the same time orders were being given for the destruction of their food? Balfour also criticised by implication the indecision of the Government regarding the question of civilian armed resistance. If invasion occurred under present circumstances, one or two stray rifle shots would jeopardise the entire population. Surely, Balfour remonstrated,

we should not deprive ourselves of help from men of spirit who from age or other reasons cannot enlist ;... but until a scheme has been prepared for providing these irregulars with arms, badges, and some kind of organization, however loose, they should advise those who consult them that no sporadic opposition by the civil population should be attempted.1

The Government finally adopted Balfour's advice on a number of points on November 27th, and further action was taken after the German bombardment of the Yorkshire coast in mid-December convinced Asquith that some publicity of home defence measures was required. On November 27th it was decided that the secrecy of the work of the local anti-invasion committee did not preclude announcement of their organization in local papers. It was also explained that the Government would provide ample compensation for any goods destroyed as part of a scorched-earth policy against the invader, but orders, signed by officials, for the destruction of property, should be kept for claims. Removal of livestock was now made dependent on local conditions.

1. Balfour MSS. (49703) Balfour to Hankey, 27 October 1914 and 23 November 1914; to Lord Harris, 27 October 1914; from Hankey, 30 October 1914.
As far as the larger question of resistance was concerned, the policy of the Government was to encourage every man to take his part in the present struggle by either enlisting in the Army, or, if unfit, to join the Volunteers. The Cabinet had therefore reversed the decision of the C.I.D. against armed resistance. But Balfour remained unappeased and argued that while the old policy had been abandoned, no new policy had been put in its place.  

Simultaneously, the war of words with the Reich over invasion continued in the pages of the *Times*. A continuing diversion was provided by the filtering through of invasion reports from Germany. On November 6th it was revealed that Count Reventlow had warned the German press to be more careful of the topic, and not to speculate, for obvious reasons, as to Germany's supposed plans. It was noted ominously the same day, that the *Kreuz Zeitung*, the journal of the Prussian military class, had turned its attention to the issue of guerilla warfare in Britain. It was quoted as saying:

So people in England continue to play with the mischievous idea of the arming of the people, notwithstanding the experience for which the Belgians had to pay so heavily. Among the children of instinct in Belgium who were so shamelessly misled, *franc-tireur* methods were intelligible, but one would not have expected such gigantic stupidity from the English with their coldly calculating sense for facts.

On November 20th, the *Times* reproduced a speculation by a Russian General which had first appeared in a Nice newspaper and then had been reprinted in the *North German Gazette*. This claimed that "the event which is being prepared at the present moment is the landing of a German army in England."

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3. Ibid.
Why else were the Germans attacking Dixmude and Nieuport so heavily, and with eight Army Corps where the front only called for one? It was very likely that the German General Staff had prepared two or three differing schemes for the advance to Calais and the invasion of England.¹

On November 21st, Repington again sounded the tocsin of alarm, as invasion reports had been accumulating from many varied sources. Some time before, the Copenhagen correspondent of the Times had reported signs of activity in the German Navy, while at the same time a report in the Daily Mail had warned that troops were embarking on transports. Now, Repington wrote,

From Zeebrugge again have come reports that large numbers of flat-bottomed motor-driven barges, which might well pass over a minefield without touching the mines, were being collected. At the same time the writer was compelled to observe that he had lost sight of certain German Army Corps. Putting all these things together, and considering the constant threats addressed to us, it is a fair and proper deduction that an overseas attack on us has been for some time in preparation and may at any moment be launched.

It is quite true that this would be a desperate adventure and that it ought not to succeed. With an unbeaten and superior Fleet, with all our Flotillas intact and on their guard, and with all the considerable forces which we possess on land, the chances are all against success. We can admit this freely, and still believe that the changes and chances of modern war are so many that the adventure may not prove in practice to be so insane as it is supposed to be.

Assuming that something of the sort is preparing, we must, of course, allow that it may only be a device to keep our troops at home, and again that it may be the intention to threaten us constantly by crying Wolf so that we may at last be caught unprepared. But on the whole we should do well to act as though an overseas attack was seriously intended, for on land the German cause begins to be lost, and, if the German leaders think the same in their hearts, they may be more willing than before to try a gamble across the sea.²

¹ "Through German Eyes." Times. 20 November 1914. p. 6.
On the same day it was reported that the Under-Secretary of State for War had been asked in the Commons if the troops training in the island were to have Christmas Day leave. Mr. Tennant said no, as the Defence of Britain depended now to some extent on the troops training in Britain and observed that "it would be inadmissible to name a month and a half in advance a particular day when the whole defensive forces of the country would be away on holiday."¹

The Government were finally cornered on the issue of civilian resistance in both Houses of Parliament between the 24th and 26th of November. In the Lords, pressure was applied by Lord Parmoor to have officers of irregular formations given Crown Commissions. Lord Haldane, who answered for the Government, undertook evasive action and restricted himself to observations upon international law as it applied to invasion.² In the Commons, Mr. Tennant declared that the question was still under consideration by the War Office and that all those too young or too old for recruiting should join the Central Association of Volunteer Training Corps, although it was still undecided whether or not this would be recognised as a combatant organisation. Tennant then read a rather chilling letter from the War Office, which presumably reflected Kitchener's scorn for amateur formations, and his predominant concern for the needs of the New Armies.

No arms, ammunition, or clothing will be supplied from public sources, nor will financial assistance be given ... There may be uniformity of dress among members of individual organisations, provided that

¹ Hansard (Commons) 20 November, 1914. col. 675. Times. 21 November 1914. p. 9.
² Ibid. (Lords) 26 November, 1914. cols. 192-197.
the dress is distinguishable from that of Regular and Territorial units.¹

The next day it was announced that the War Office recognised all civilian and rifle corps affiliated to the Central Association, but assigned to them the rather unromantic duties of removing livestock, helping threatened inhabitants, and lending general assistance to military operations.²

Behind the scenes Hankey, perhaps inspired by the Northcliffe campaign against spies and invasion, had turned to the problem of enemy aliens. Although a C.I.D. Sub-Committee had dealt with the "Treatment of Aliens in Time of War" from March 1910 to August 1913, the position was still unsatisfactory in the first few months of war. As early as September 14th Hankey had argued that it was impossible to be certain that the large number of Germans and Austrians in England were completely harmless.

Arms, for example, and explosives might be concealed for their use in the houses of naturalised aliens in sympathy with the enemy. Apart from the disconcerting possibility of a 'Sidney Street' incident in Whitehall, where the Government Offices are only guided by police, enemy aliens, in the event of an invasion or raid, might render invaluable aid to the enemy by cutting telegraphic communications, and other acts of sabotage, by serving as guides and interpreters, by spreading alarming rumours, by acts of incendiarism, and in a number of other ways.³

In October 1914 the C.I.D. Sub-Committee on Aliens was re-activated, and Asquith reported to the King on the 22nd of that month that some

¹ Hansard (Commons) 24 November 1914. col. 941.
² Ibid. 25 November 1914. cols. 1112-1113.
23,000 Germans and Austrians of military age were still at large in the realm, 9,000 of whom were already in confinement. The entire number would be interned when the Army authorities could find room for them.

Hankey remained unsatisfied. In early December he wrote to Balfour that "It really is outrageous to have numbers of enemy aliens equal to the Infantry of an army corps, in the capital of the Empire." Hankey sent a memorandum to Asquith, which enlarged on the problem, stating that the 25,000 Germans and Austrians of military age in the London area could be opposed by only 3,000 police by day and 6,000 by night. The aliens had been disarmed and their dwellings searched, but they could still do a great deal of damage, for example, by firing grain silos with petrol or short-circuiting electrical power stations.

Hankey then put the question to the Prime Minister in even more graphic terms.

It would not require a very extensive organization or very considerable numbers simultaneously to attack the houses of nearly all Members of the Cabinet and of the principal Administrative of the State. A good deal of harm could be done even at 10 Downing Street by half a dozen desperate men armed with knives or clubs, before sufficient force was available to deal with them.

Invasion has been dealt with as a contingency not sufficiently remote to be ignored, and in most respects we are now very well provided against it. Is it not probable, however, that an enemy possessing such great powers as Germany, imbued with such intense hatred of this country, and with so pronounced a sense of nationality and a peculiar sense of honour, would endeavour to utilize this great army of its nationals resident in London to paralyze the Administration at the moment of an invasion or raid?

1. Cab 41/35/54. Asquith to George V. 22 October 1914.
2. Balfour MSS. (Vol. 49703) Hankey to Balfour and Asquith, 4 December, 1914.
3. Ibid. Hankey had sent Balfour a copy of the paper and his covering letter.
Balfour wrote to Hankey, expressing complete agreement but pointing out that finding accommodation for the 25,000 would be a real difficulty. ¹ Asquith, after reading the paper and hearing Hankey's case, only remarked that he was "entirely unconvinced!" Hankey believed that this was only because Kitchener's New Armies were making great demands on accommodation. ²

Hankey, undeterred, turned to other aspects of the problem of aliens and invasion. Earlier, a bird enthusiast had written to Hankey pointing out that racing pigeons based on British soil could be used to convey information to the enemy, warning that

An alien enemy with a racing pigeon is far more dangerous than one with a live bomb ... my own mind is clear that many losses and surprises, both on land and sea, are due to racing pigeons.³

The untiring Hankey accordingly instituted a committee which decided to take all long-range pigeons in British territory into custody for the duration of the war. Military units were detailed to remove alien long-range pigeons from suspect coops, assisted in their discrimination between long- and short-range birds by loyal pigeon-fanciers.⁴

The general invasion scare was given a new lease of life by a series of events in mid-December. On December 15th, the local authorities in the East Coast counties of Lincolnshire and Norfolk

¹. Balfour MSS. (Vol. 49703) Balfour to Hankey, 5 December 1914.
². Ibid. Hankey to Balfour, 8 December 1914.
⁴. Ibid.
published the hitherto-secret "Instructions ... in the event of belligerent operations in the United Kingdom" the next day German battle cruisers successfully bombarded Scarborough, Hartlepool, and Whitby on the Yorkshire coast. To a generation nurtured on the theme of British sea-power, aware that hostile guns had not been heard in England since the 17th century, this was indeed a rude awakening. Unwittingly, the Manchester Guardian reported the very day of the bombardment held forth on the "Invasion of England as a Ruse", to the effect that "reports of an intended invasion of England may be spread by the enemy in the hope of causing a dislocation of plans of which full advantage may be taken." But the German bombardment of the towns on the Yorkshire coast accomplished an effect far more moving than the circulation of invasion rumours. Such was the force of the public outcry that the Times took the unusual step of devoting two editorials in succession to the defence of the Royal Navy and the subtleties of naval doctrine. The first of these, which appeared on the day of the bombardment, explained that the purpose of the Grand Fleet was not to protect these shores, but to destroy the German Fleet. The bombardment, it was emphasized, had no military or naval significance; it was only to terrorise. The Times explained:

1. Manchester Guardian. 15 December 1914, p. 6, and "In Case of Invasion." p. 7.
2. Ibid. 16 December, 1914. p. 3.
drawn before the German ports. Whatever their occupations may be, it is not that. The possibility of a German raid upon the English coast has always existed since the war began, and will continue to exist so long as a single German warship of great speed remains afloat; but the indignant protests we have received whenever we have pointed these matters out show that the first principles of naval strategy are still imperfectly understood even by this maritime race. The duty of repelling invasion, should it be attempted, rests upon the manhood of the nation. Perhaps it will now be more clearly discerned. The Royal Navy is doing its work, doing it resolutely, and doing it well.

The editorial went on to stress that the situation now clearly required complete publicity of the home defence instructions "instead of dealing with the matter in piecemeal and furtive fashion." ¹

The second editorial on December 18th, the day following, explained "What the Navy is Doing." This emphasized that invasion would involve even greater risks than a confrontation between the two fleets, which would in itself bring a disaster upon the Germans. Invasion meant a longer sojourn for disembarkation which would ensure that the fleet would arrive and destroy the German forces. The entire German fleet would have to come out to cover the operation and could not evade battle—"we should therefore be instantly in the presence of the culminating episode of the war." The Daily News was condemned for playing the enemy's game by demanding anti-invasion "measures which should render demonstrations against our East Coast too perilous to be attempted." Even if the East Coast were in ruins, the Times urged, we should not change our strategy of going for the enemy fleet.² This strategy, of course, had already been abandoned by the Admiralty.

In the same issue, the latest instalment of a series on "England In Time of War" dealt with the coastal areas from Dover to the North Forelands. The calmness of the local inhabitants regarding invasion was emphasized throughout. The coast of Kent, it was said, was watchfully waiting for the coming of the invader, but there were no signs of nervousness or even disturbance of routine activities. The Kent coast, reported the Times, "contemplates raid or bombardment with an equanimity less vulnerable places in England might well emulate." In Kent alone 50,000 had enrolled in home defence formations, although, of course, "not one Kentish man in a hundred will admit that any such landing is remotely possible." So many of the local labourers were digging trenches and defence ditches that farmers between the coast and Canterbury were having trouble finding hands for the harvest. One of the major difficulties was that the anti-invasion forces had no unified command, and in one reported case were receiving orders from four different navy and army commanders.

The public pronouncements of politicians were likewise confusing. On December 22, following a long and bracing speech by Bonar Law on the theme that "the raid has only steeled our resolve," Lord Derby, later to become Secretary of State for War, made a few comments which could only have exacerbated invasion anxieties.

Surely Scarborough might have brought the real state of affairs home to people. Yet I am not sure even now that it has. I am myself somewhat of a pessimist. I do not for one moment believe that this raid at Scarborough is the last. I go further and say that I believe Germany will be able to land troops on these shores. (Shouts of "No," "Never.") Well, they will never get

back. (Cheers) But my opinion is that is what they may do, and, if so, you will see exactly the same horrors in this country as you have seen in Belgium.¹

Nor were reports of the state of public opinion in Germany reassuring to the British public. The Times on Christmas Eve contained an interview with "the manager of an important bank has connexions among influential financial and official circles" in the Reich, who believed that the German Army would enter London by Christmas.

we will certainly do so, (he was quoted as saying) and in a way which will have to be written in thick type in the history of that robber nation and uncivilized lot. But in war one reckons as far as possible in certainties, and we have not got London yet.

The Times correspondent testified that "everybody seems to think that it will be quite easy for a German Army to land on the East Coast of England. They also talk of 'a walk over the Channel' as a matter of course."²

German journals exploited to the full British fears of an invasion. The satirical monthly Lustige Blätter printed on its cover a full-page cartoon of a giant German soldier vaulting the Channel, complete with hobnail boots and pickelhaube, rifle in hand, and supported by a cloud of Zeppelins. This cartoon and others of the type were reprinted by the Daily Mail on its picture page.³

An even more elaborate index to German aspirations was provided by Hindenburg's Einmarsch in London, a novel published early in 1915, and soon translated and published in English. The story correctly predicted Russia leaving the war and the massive transfer of German armies to the Western front. But at this point the story became a wish-fulfilment fantasy which

¹. "German Ambition ... Lord Derby's Fear of Invasion." Times 22 December 1914, p. 10.
presented a German version of the invasion of England. Huge fleets of Zeppelins and submarines destroy the Grand Fleet as the augmented German armies over-run the Channel coast. An eight day bombardment by huge Krupp guns at Calais reduce Dover and Folkestone. Finally two German Army Corps cross over the Channel under the protection of torpedo boats, submarines, and mines, and fight their way inland. Britain proclaims a levée en masse, but this only results in the Germans shooting captured sharpshooters on the spot. Following a bloody series of battles around the North Downs, Hindenburg enters London at the head of the Prussian Guards and leads the German armies, with military bands at their heads into St. James's Park. The novel ends with a "stately parade march" at Croydon and a ceremonial entry into London in which Hindenburg addresses his conquering legions and assures them that their grandchildren would remember that they had "camped in front of Buckingham Palace." 1

During the latter half of December, the invasion controversy raged anew in the Times. Following the Scarborough bombardment, one correspondent had listed historical examples "to show such raids are no new thing in hostilities against a maritime Power, and that they must be expected as long as the war lasts." His answer was 1000 recruits for Flanders for every German shell fired in Britain. This introduced another long debate on invasion, which progressed with that exhaustive erudition peculiar to the Times correspondence column for the next two weeks. A.F. Pollard, Professor of History at University College, London, went to pains to point out that this, so far, had been the first great naval war in which the British Isles had not been invaded. Raids had been incidental to every naval war Britain had had; Pollard listed 15 examples from 1338 to 1797.

The Naval Correspondent entered the lists to express agreement, but also to point out that it was more correct to call these "raids" rather than "invasions." Lord Sydenham intervened to point out that the classification lists had not yet allowed for a raid where a specific limited objective was attained and the raiders successfully re-embarked, as had already happened twice in the course of the war. Sydenham concluded cryptically that these questions which Professor Pollard raises were "not so simple as they appear to be; nor do they lend themselves to correspondence in your columns."\(^1\)

Outside such traditional outlets as the *Times* correspondence column, the invasion agitation was given added force by the appearance of a number of invasion films, apparently inspired by the commercial success of *England's Menace*. (See Chapter Seven.) During the first few months of the war, both Le Queux's novel, *The Invasion of 1910*, and Du Maurier's play, *An Englishman's Home*, were adapted for the cinema as patriotic propaganda to stimulate recruiting. The film version of the latter does not appear to have been a great improvement upon its stage prototype, for a contemporary reviewer noted that it would have been much more effective in its appeal if it bore fewer signs of hasty preparation. The acting is mediocre, and the Territorial forces are not shown to very great advantage. The story, however, should force home the urgency of the present crisis.\(^2\)

*If England Were Invaded*, as the film version of Le Queux's novel was named, was a more successful adaptation. Although it had been originally planned "to have two finales - one favourable to England and one in favour of Germany, thus pleasing everybody",\(^3\) this scheme was evidently interrupted by the outbreak

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of war and the production appeared instead as a "Great Patriotic Film." The final version was much less ambitious in scope than the book, restricting itself to the presentation of a strong German force landing, occupying a Norfolk village, and defending it in trenches against home defence troops who came to its rescue. *Bioscope*, an early film magazine, commented:

Some interesting pictures of the mobilisation of our troops are worked into the story with telling effect and the battle scenes and fighting in the trenches are manipulated with a skill which provides some very realistic pictures ... The story is full of dramatic incidents, and is sufficiently strong to connect the military incidents which form the purpose of the film.

But the more successful invasion films produced during the first months of the war owed nothing to prewar prototypes and were original inspirations designed to stimulate recruiting. *The Mimic Battle of Whale Island* appeared on behalf of the Royal Naval Division and showed how a Naval Brigade would cope with an invading force. The enemy's vessels are seen approaching the shore, and after a preliminary bombardment, a force is landed which vigorously attacks the entrenched defenders. The fight - a most realistic one - sways this way and that, but the situation is saved by the arrival of an armoured train, which enables the attacking force to be driven off. Through the action is most realistic and conveys absolutely the impression of a real battle. It forms a valuable illustration of the training and hardiness of our Tars.  

In December 1914 the Daily Express, in cooperation with the War Office, produced an invasion recruiting film entitled *Wake Up! - A Dream of Tomorrow*, with a cast including 2000 Boy Scouts and 2000 veteran sailors and soldiers. *Wake Up!* embellished the traditional invasion theme with infuriating incidents inspired by contemporary reports of German atrocities in Belgium.

In the story, the invaders sweep across England with a Teutonic ferocity which knows no bounds. A village church marked with a Red Cross flag and used as a field hospital is deliberately shelled, executions regardless of age or

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2. *Kinematograph Monthly Film Record*, November 1914, p. 57.
sex are relentlessly performed, and German troops bayonet babies and rape their mothers. After the small British armies are defeated, guerilla warfare engulfs most of Britain. The Germans shoot and hang captured guerillas and burn whole villages and towns which shelter them, while German aircraft bomb towns to terrorise the populace. Finally, the Battle of London begins. The people are drilled in the city parks and served out machine guns, which inflict terrible casualties on the invaders from barricades built in Highgate. Infuriated, the German Commandant of London orders the destruction of the city, beginning with its artistic treasures and historical monuments. Soon Westminster Abbey, Buckingham Palace, and Clubland lie in ruins while the National Gallery and the British Museum are battered by heavy artillery and finally break into flames. The dome of St. Paul's is repeatedly holed, and the bodies of civilian dead are piled high in the streets. As the destruction reaches its climax, it is suddenly revealed that all the foregoing is but the dream of Lord Pax, a "feeble War Minister" (evidently modeled on Haldane) who opposes conscription and "sleeps while our enemies seek to destroy us." Needless to say, he is converted, awakes, and makes England ready against Der Tag.1

In order that the lesson would not be lost on the public, the Daily Express had the film scenario re-written as a serial, which appeared daily in its pages from January 5th to February 26th, 1915, and later sponsored its publication in book form. The film, with its highly-charged presentation of outrages and war crimes, was taken on a tour of theatres throughout Britain. Wounded war veterans and Boy Scouts attended free matinees, while

military bands played and local officials delivered patriotic speeches. A
typical performance, at the Picture Playhouse in Chelsea, was described by
the *Daily Express*.

More than 300 West London Boy Scouts were in the house, and
a more interested and appreciative audience it would be
impossible to imagine. Whenever the enemy spy who signals
to the invading fleet from the east coast appeared on the
film the stalls where the scouts were seated hissed like a
snake-pit; whenever the Territorials came to the rescue or
the enemy was foiled the beautiful picture palace resounded
to the applause like the patter of a million raindrops on
the roof. Scene by scene, ruthless as fate itself, the horrors
of invasion, rapine, murder, and pillage were unfolded on the
reel. Many of the hundreds of civilians in the audience went
white with anger and horror ...¹

The invasion motif had been harnessed to the war effort. But while the
invasion films doubtless stimulated patriotic resolve and recruiting for the
forces, they also inevitably irritated and prolonged fears of a German
landing in the country.

Further insight into the temper of the time is provided by a game
which appeared on the market in early 1915, called "War Tactics" or "Can
Great Britain be Invaded?" This was advertised as "a War Game of skill
bringing into play both (sic) Naval, Aerial, and Land Forces, for the occupa-
tion of Naval Bases, the Empire's Capital, and large towns." The game
resembled a paranoid form of chess in format. The instructions issued with
each set explained that

The chief object of the game is to get enough 'Ships' through to
any of the 'Naval Bases' of your opponent and land your 'Invading
Force' in such numbers that you are able to push 4 land forces
through to your opponents capital.²

See also 31 December 1914, p.; 2 January 1915, p.; 4 January 1915, p.;
22 January 1915, p.

² An example may be examined at the British Museum. Reference: N.L. Tab. l.g.l.
More traditional methods of propaganda and agitation also continued. On January 7, as soon as Parliament had re-convened, Curzon, leading the opposition in the House of Lords, delivered a powerful attack on the Government's handling of home defence. Curzon charged that the public's anxieties were not relieved and demanded that the Home Defence Army be constituted as a stable force under a single commander, free from fluctuations owing to drafts for foreign service. Aliens should be cleared from coastal areas. Although Germany had failed to achieve her two Western objectives of Paris and Calais, the future was uncertain. The next day, the Times gave full support to Curzon and expressed its severe displeasure over the Government's administration of home defence.

The dominant idea appears to have been, not to organise efficient measures, but to avoid causing alarm. The inevitable and unwholesome craving for mystery had full rein. The newspapers, the simplest and readiest media for communicating instructions to the people, were debarred from conveying information ... Most of us think invasion increasingly unlikely, but that is all the more reason why the Government should cease to treat the public as frightened children, and should tell them quite frankly and openly what they have to do. LORD CURZON rightly said that no mystery was made about these instructions in the days of NAPOLEON and there is no need for the covert warnings transmitted now in these areas more particularly interested. We agree with him that publication is necessary.

The Government continued to be influenced by the invasion propaganda in the first month of 1915. Hankey, who had been approached by the Archbishop of Canterbury on the subject, reported to the C.I.D. that

in which they have the advantage over their less fortunate sisters who have no home to go to. The removal of the latter, therefore, would seem to be out of the question. It has been suggested that an institution of this nature might be selected as the special prey of the libertine raider. ¹

Hankey went on to explain that fears on this point were not unconnected with another issue discussed in his memorandum; the destruction of intoxicating liquors. Some local authorities had ordered the destruction of liquor supplies in their jurisdiction on the ground that these would prompt the invading German troops to commit atrocities, pointing out that atrocities in Belgium had usually followed the capture of a brewery or bistro. Existing stocks in Britain were certainly sufficient to produce this feared result, but were so expensive that Hankey recommended that they should be destroyed only on a written order from the military authorities. He argued that the purely military advantage lay in keeping liquors stocks intact:² intoxication presumably would add to the atrocities committed by invaders, but it would also make the job of defeating them easier. Hopefully the Germans would befuddle themselves and be defeated before they had perpetrated too many outrages.

These questions were taken up at a C.I.D. meeting on 23 February 1915. It was decided that orphanages and girls' schools should be evacuated insofar as was possible. Inmates of hospitals and asylums were not so fortunate and were to be left to take their chances with the invader. In connection with anticipated invasion atrocities, Hankey had received a letter early in January 1915 from the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, which suggested that

². Ibid. pp. 3-4.
women should be encouraged to organize themselves in case of invasion, and that their organization should be recognized by the Committee of Imperial Defence... at each coast town liable to be raided, a certain quarter of the town should be apportioned as a kind of sanctuary where women and children left in the place should be collected. Further, that this quarter should be clearly defined to the Officer Commanding the raiding force, and that he should be invited to place a sufficient guard over the quarter to ensure the protection of the inhabitants.¹

In order to head off a formal deputation of Suffragettes, Hankey agreed to see two of them informally, found the proposal not unreasonable, and promised to bring it before the C.I.D. That body, however, was rather suspicious of female agitators and ignored the proposal for a Suffragette sanctuary, but did assign a role for women in the preparations against invasion. The Lord-Lieutenants were instructed to employ women for various types of work, including the housing of refugees.

But this was the last C.I.D. meeting of the war and Asquith had opened it with the observation that "the subject they had to consider was very academic." After January 1915 Repington was virtually the only writer who continued to present the possibility of invasion. On February 8 and April 19 he published long and detailed articles which demonstrated his exceptional capacity for ingenious inductive reasoning. In February he argued from history for the likelihood of an attack from across the North Sea, but he was forced to employ very remote history indeed to provide precedents. There remained the well-worn hypothesis of furor Teutonicus.

The madness of the German people, caused by the terrible disillusions through which they are passing, may very likely affect their strategy and lead to adventures which no sane leader would sanction in calm moments. We must expect desperate actions...

The Germans were known to be practicing embarkation in the Baltic; the danger would pass only "when the war on the continent redoubles its fury in the

¹ Cap 2/3 "Minutes of 123rd Meeting, 23 February 1915." p. 4.
spring.¹ Events in April prompted Repington to reiterate his warnings: the recent beginning of air raids on England he regarded as "reconnaissance pure and simple and "the arrival of a new commander at the head of the German High Seas Fleet" (Von Pohl had replaced Ingenohl following the German defeat at Dogger Bank) pointed to a coup which would "atone for its past failures."² But Repington was now unheeded and his message was unsupported by leading articles or published correspondence.

Another philosophy ad finally gained the upper hand in the realm of public opinion. Where Repington, like Kitchener, had to balance the needs of the Western front with an intuitive concern for home defence, there were others who felt no such tension and could consign home defence to a secondary priority without a qualm. Convinced "Westerners" of this persuasion were contemptuous of the invasion scare. A typical example was Leo Maxse, editor of the National Review, who at the beginning of the scare in October 1914 charged that:

... divisions have dawdled in these islands. They still dawdle ... shadow armies for shadow campaigns at shadow dates are a sinful waste of energy, time, money, and good material. Meanwhile heaps of officers and men, whose presence at the front is vital to the continued efficiency of our wonderful Expeditionary Force, are remaining at home in pursuance of these shadows.³

In April 1915 Maxse conceded that "it should be remembered in fairness to those who took invasion seriously that German strategy is subordinated to sentiment and dominated by Anglophobia. Wilhelm II would cheerfully sacrifice any number of Army Corps to effect a lodgment in these islands." But it had been suggested in the trenches that

there was a disposition to "starve" the Expeditionary Force in Whitehall on account of the "invasion Scare" which many intelligent men at the front were inclined to regard as a bogey skilfully organized by agents of Germany in this country.¹

This almost certainly was a fabrication. Trained men simply were not available in any event at the beginning of the war to reinforce the divisions in France. To the contrary, Kitchener is generally criticized for having sent trained men to the front that should have been used to train the New Armies at home.

As January passed into February, the invasion peril began to lose its hold on the public imagination, and for good reason. The strategic situation, which had been more threatening than most prewar anticipations, had now stabilized for some weeks and had assumed a familiar and predictable shape. The German advance along the coast had been brought to a halt. At home, the new Armies and Territorials were entering the final stages of their six months' training. At sea, the onset of winter militated against the success of a German landing. Beatty's mauling of German battle cruisers at the Battle of Dogger Bank on 24 January proved that the enemy's fastest ships could be intercepted and destroyed even under the adverse conditions of the North Sea in mid-winter. The first Zeppelin raids on British soil the same month directed public interest to a more substantial threat from a new direction. For all these reasons, the contingency of invasion faded from the public consciousness.

While it had lasted, however, the scare had reached an intensity unprecedented for a century. The German invasion propaganda of the previous

¹ National Review. April 1915. p. 231. Later published an article which "proved" that the Armada of 1588 had been a Teutonic conspiracy, planned solely and financed strongly by Germans, supported by German crewmen, munitions and invading troops. See: Ian D. Colvin. "The Germans and the Spanish Armada." Ibid. July 1915. p. 693 et seq.
decade reaped a rich harvest. Old novels were re-issued and were joined by the novel and evocative media of the film to bring home the horrors of invasion to a wider audience than ever before. What was previously conjecture became common rumour. Emotional and hateful reports were disseminated among the public in the vacuum of hard news created by the censorship, fed by exaggerated reports of atrocities perpetrated in Belgium and France. Like the Admiralty defensive measures, the instructions to the civilian population had to be hurriedly improvised in the opening months of the war, although the need for them was just beginning to be realized as war broke out. Although they were never required, they provided valuable precedents for a similar situation a quarter of a century later.

More than ever before, an ostensibly strategic question had assumed an avowedly political complexion. The bulk of the invasion agitation came from newspapers and journals politically right of centre and opposed to the Government; the Conservatives had established themselves as the party of national defence. The second development was newer and more significant. The violence and invective of prewar British political life formerly expended upon domestic controversies such as the Suffragette campaign, the impending General Strike, and, most of all, Irish Home Rule, was now refocused on an external enemy of the people. The right-wing press, if not the nation itself, underwent a period of temporary insanity in which humour, perspective, and proportion were suspended under the menace of impending attack and encouraged by reports of German atrocities carried out on the civilian population of France and Belgium.

In the popular conjecture over a German raid and mass rape of English women in order to produce a race of semi-Teutonic outcasts, in Hankey's
cool calculations of German terror attacks upon orphan girls, and in H.G.
Wells' incitements to a people's war of counter-terrorism against the
invader, may be discerned elements of credibility and hysteria which mark
a reversion of British public attitudes back to those of the Napoleonic
invasion threat more than a century before. Once again, involvement in
violence was no longer regarded as the prerogative of professional armies
or the state, but was seized upon as a right of the people. The traditional
certitudes and sanctions of nineteenth-century Liberalism — the sanctity of
treaties, international law, and usages of war — were regarded as irrelevant
and discarded. This was to be a war between peoples, not armies; and the
news from the continent seemed to confirm the most sanguinary prophesies
of the sensational invasion novels. It was not an environment in which
Liberalism could long survive. Within four months the last Liberal
Administration in British history had been toppled against a background
of emerging total war, slowly to be displaced by an alliance between the
representatives of Conservative militarism and totalitarian democracy.
Invasion, long associated with the themes of chauvinism and xenophobia, had
reached its natural culmination in public opinion; never again during the
war, nor for the next generation, would it seem so near.
After the momentous events of Fall 1914, the history of the invasion controversy for the rest of the war is anticlimatic. Invasion again became primarily an inter-service question and engaged the attention of the supreme command only incidentally.

The remainder of the war may be divided into three periods. First, following the flurry of activity in the first few months of the war, the situation reverted to that which had existed before 1903. Churchill, the most stalwart advocate of a systematic and analytical approach to invasion as a strategic problem, was removed from political power. Kitchener remained, to perpetuate a 19th century approach to home defence, which inevitably reverted to chaos, while the General Staff remained practically inoperative. But with the installation of Robertson as C.I.G.S. and French as Commander of Home Defence at the beginning of 1916, Kitchener was stripped of his responsibility for home defence and the reorganization of home defence on a rational basis was resumed. The first of several inter-service conferences on invasion was convened and the scale of estimated attack was raised from 70,000 to 160,000. Throughout 1916 and 1917 Robertson and the General Staff put increasing pressure on French to transfer divisions from home to France, while Admiralty confidence in its ability to halt invasion steadily decreased in the face of increased submarine attacks. The third period starts at the beginning of 1918, when younger Naval officers overthrew the timid conclusions of their superiors and cooperated with the Westerner Generals to decrease the scale of attack once again to the classic figure of 70,000, then 30,000 and
finally 5,000. The Western front had finally triumphed over home defence.

On 6 July 1915, Hankey printed a 24 page survey of home defence for the benefit of the Cabinet. On the basis of almost a full year of war, he judged that a raid was much more likely than a grand invasion, although he admitted that this raid might involve more than the 20,000 troops previously regarded as a maximum. The first year of the war provided no grounds for boundless confidence in expert estimates of future possibilities. The C.I.D. had incorrectly dismissed the possibility of the Germans bombarding undefended towns from the sea and air. The Scarborough raid of December 1914 was only one of a series of incidents which proved that savagery and "frightfulness" were component parts of German strategy and tactics. A "frightfulness" raid, Hankey warned, might be launched "in any one of the more densely populated areas along the coast." But even frightfulness would be limited by logistics, and the razing of a town or port would require much heavy artillery, the landing of which would slow the Germans considerably. The actual strategy of home defence was not to defend the hypothetical objectives of German terrorism, but instead protected strategic points, such as lighthouses, communications, wireless stations, and ammunition magazines.

Germany, Hankey continued, could now use Ostend and Zeebrugge as embarkation ports, but were unlikely to do so owing to the extreme hostility of the local inhabitants and the fact that both ports were within range of British reconnaissance aircraft. A Bolt from Belgium must therefore be ruled out. But it was still safe to assume that a sizeable expedition could be prepared with complete secrecy in the German

ports in the Baltic and North Sea. Nor would disembarkation provide an insuperable barrier, for Hankey's evaluation of the landings at Gallipoli two months previously did not encourage complacency. In one instance, with perfect weather but with determined opposition, 29,000 men had been landed in 13 hours. On this occasion, losses had been so heavy that the men could not advance, as the enemy had only to watch ten miles of beach. But in Britain there were 120 miles of beach suitable for a landing of this type. Although these could all be watched, it was impossible to provide a resistance on the scale encountered at Gallipoli. There were many places in the Eastern counties, especially in Norfolk, where the whole of the enemy forces could be brought ashore in twelve hours.

But this threatening picture of dispersed forces and feeble resistance was balanced by three factors that presumably would make Britain more defensible than the Dardanelles. First, the weather in these latitudes was more capricious and the tides of the North Sea certainly exceeded the 12" difference found at Dardanelles. Next, British command of the sea would redress the balance in favour of the defenders. Further, because much greater distances were involved for a decisive victory on land, the invaders would have to land vast stores of heavy artillery, materiel, and transport, which would take from 48 to 72 hours of extremely valuable time to land and an appreciable percentage of an already-limited force to guard. 1

The invasion theme enjoyed a slight revival in September 1915. The Chambers Journal dressed up the spectre in new clothes by claiming that the Germans might achieve surprise by building myriads of small ships and

trawlers which could slowly build up strength as it hid among the Frizian Islands. It was believed that "German shipbuilding resources are better able to cope with the rapid preparation of a fleet of unarmed small craft than with warships."¹ In that same month the last of the fictional invasions - this time set in 1925 - was published and dedicated to Kitchener. Its moral was implicit in its title "1925: The Story of a Fatal Peace."²

If success of invasion was more remote, Repington warned, the Germans' temptation to gamble upon it was stronger than ever before:

It is in the spirit of rage and despair that they contemplate a stroke against us at home ... It is not with the cold clear eyes of a Moltke that the Germans are regarding the problem of hitting us; but with the bloodshot eyes of furious passion...³

Repington believed that the Germans still had chances for success owing to certain advantages, including

- the possession of the initiative; the superiority of German long-distance strategic reconnaissance by dirigibles; the removal of our Grand Fleet from the Narrows and the Downs; the possibilities offered by modern science to deny us temporarily the use of certain maritime areas and channels by an extensive use of mines and submarines; the rapidity with which landings can now be effected if the operation is adequately prepared in advance; the anticipated inferiority of our staff, troops, and armament at home when our best armies are abroad; the want of a central authority controlling British home defence ashore; and, last but not least, the chances of war...⁴

Having constructed this awesome tableau of future possibilities, Repington employed the invasion issue to upbraid Kitchener. He described

4. Ibid.
the consequences of Kitchener’s failure to institute a proper home defence organization, and called for a public inquiry into the matter, to produce results acceptable to the General Staff. Many different commanders existed, Repington charged, but there was no single Supreme Commander on land as there was on sea. No one man was acquainted with home defence as a whole; co-ordination of effort was impossible. This “hopelessly illogical and improper state of affairs”, Repington remonstrated, “can only be founded on the extremely rash and ill-advised assumption that the enemy will never come at all.” An actual invasion would involve Draconic measures indeed.

... that would be for Lord Kitchener to take the field. He wouldn’t, doubt, act with the greatest vigour, but, not having had all the strings in his hand, he would act with grave disadvantage. Meanwhile his absence from the War Office ...(would produce) a general chaos which would affect our campaigns elsewhere, and everywhere injuriously. 1

What was really required was a Commander-in-Chief of Home Defence with a good staff and complete responsibility for defence ashore.

At the end of 1915 Repington was far from being alone in demanding an overhaul of home defences. In November the Volunteer movement was re-vitalised following a long debate in the House of Commons. 2 Soon thereafter the Government installed Repington’s friend General Sir William Robertson as Chief of the Imperial General Staff with broader powers than those of his predecessor, at Kitchener’s expense. Robertson was strongly encouraged by the Cabinet to draw up a list of conditions before taking the post, the seventh and last of which read “A C-in-C Home Forces should be appointed to command all army units in Great Britain. He should be on the same footing as a C-in-C abroad, and in the same relationship to the

C.I.G.S.¹ When in the third week of December Robertson became C.I.G.S., Field Marshal Sir John French became the first Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces.²

Both Robertson and French were dedicated "Westeners" and very early had cast covetous eyes upon the divisions assigned to home defence duties in Britain. Even before their arrival, Major-General Sir Laurence Kiggell, installed in October 1915 in the new post of Director of Home Defence, had been attempting to extract a statement from the Admiralty giving a fresh estimate of the scale of expected overseas attack.³ The official figure was still 70,000—an estimate established in 1902 in vastly different circumstances. Accordingly, the War Office contacted the Admiralty on 16 November 1915 to request an inter-service conference to discuss "the number and nature of troops it is necessary to maintain in the United Kingdom, and their strategical distribution."⁴ After fifteen months of war, the invasion problem was again to be subjected to a systematic analysis.

A "General Staff Memorandum on the Problem of Home Defence" was forwarded to the Admiralty. This reiterated Kitchener's concern of an attack on Great Britain following a stalemate on the Western front, but balanced this against the heavy disadvantage to us to keep locked up in the United Kingdom, awaiting attack that may never come, any forces which might otherwise be actively employed elsewhere. It is therefore one of the most vital strategic problems of the War to determine, from time

⁴ Adm 137/835/10 Measures to be Taken in Event of Invasion or Raid. Secretary, War Office to Secretary, Admiralty. 16 November 1915.
to time, both the quantity and the quality of the land forces to be maintained in England. The answer to this problem depends primarily on what the Navy consider it possible for them to undertake as regards protection of our shores from a hostile landing ... there is less risk in acting boldly on the carefully formed estimates of experts than in relying on any "hand-to-mouth" system, which is the only alternative. 1

For the first time since Kitchener had come to the War Office 15 months earlier, the General Staff had finally made its views known and censored Kitchener. From this point onward, actual responsibility for home defence was to be taken out of Kitchener's hands entirely and given to a new regime of Generals strongly committed to the Western Front, who found their chief problem that of reconciling their first desire to reinforce Haig in France with the inborn instinct of the professional soldier to provide sufficient protection for his homeland. But at least home defence was once again being considered on a rational basis, instead of the "hand-to-mouth system" which had been the main characteristic of Kitchener's one-man regime at the War Office.

The most eminent of the New Regime was Major-General Sir William Robertson, the only man ever to advance from the rank of private to Field-Marshall in the British Army. Robertson was a bluff and powerfully placed soldier whose energy, shrewd common sense, and gruff humour were all to be required in dealing with the morass of the home defences. More directly concerned was Sir John French, transferred from the command of the British Forces in France after alleged mismanagement of the Battle of Loos (September-November 1915). With a consummate, but unconscious, irony one of the greatest of the Westerners, strongly skeptical about the prospects of any invasion, had been removed from the premier command on the Western

front and put in charge of home defence. Something of the poignancy of
the move can be captured from a contemporary entry in the diary of Lord
Bertie, the British Ambassador in Paris: "It is all up with French. He
will probably become Commander-in-Chief in England. I am so grieved for
him!" 1

The essential paradox of the Westerner Generals in approaching home
defence was not avoided in the General Staff Memorandum. Even as appeals
were made to the Admiralty to establish some fixed standard of expected
attack, the General Staff was forced to admit that both the military and
naval situations which affected this scale of attack would fluctuate
almost daily. But the Generals continued to press for an official estimate,
upon which the quality, quantity, and strategic distribution of the anti-
invasion forces could be based. The memorandum specifically requested
that the General Staff

be told what parts of our Coast the Admiralty consider may be
regarded as immune from attack; what parts may be exposed to
raids (and in what strength) but not to serious attack; and
lastly what are the places where serious attacks may be
possible from a Naval point of view, and which of these seems
most suitable from the enemy's point of view. 2

However, the Admiralty apparently did not take as serious a view of
the question. The first letter from the War Office went unanswered, and

a second prompted H.F. Oliver, Director of Naval Intelligence, to comment:

This paper is being dealt with, it involves a great deal of
work as there are a great many former decisions to be taken into
account. The W.O. have a new Director of Home Defence who has
nothing else to do whereas we only can attend so it in our

1. Major the Hon. Gerald French. The Life of Field Marshal Sir John
But the Admiralty were not neglecting invasion. On 4 June 1915, four days after taking office, Admiral Henry Jackson, the First Lord, had sent Jellicoe the following supplemental instruction:

... occasions may arise in which the destruction of transports carrying a large body of the enemy's troops is a more promising and urgent necessity than any other, in which case the transports must receive prior attention even if the enemy's main fleet happens to be within reach of attack. Unless, however, a large invading force is known to be actually embarked the main battle fleet of the enemy must always be regarded as our principal objective.2

Similar counsels of pessimism prevailed in the first of the wartime inter-service conferences on invasion, which convened in the first week of January 1916. The chief naval delegate was Admiral of the Fleet Sir A.K. Wilson, who was now on the retirement list but working for the Admiralty voluntarily without pay. He, like Jellicoe, had drawn very pessimistic conclusions from the 1912 and 1913 naval manoeuvres. His military counterpart was Major-General F.B. Maurice, a close friend of Repington. The conference began on a completely different basis than the C.I.D. investigations: where previously the C.I.D. had calculated that the Germans would try to invade with as few troops as possible owing to the dangers of discovery, interception, and the difficulties of disembarkation; the inter-service conference began on the assumption that the only factor limiting the size of a possible German expedition was the total amount of shipping available in German ports. This important assumption led to conclusions strongly at variance with those

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1. Adm 137/35/17 Marginal comment, dated 1 December 1915.
of the C.I.D.

The Admiralty calculated that the Germans had one million tons of shipping available, sufficient for the transport of 135,000 troops together with their transport and two months' supply of ammunition and stores. But the conference judged that the Germans would not encumber themselves with supplies on this extravagant scale, for the German General Staff would plan on a much shorter campaign than two months. The Admiralty then submitted a long and pessimistic appraisal of the invasion operation based on experience at Gallipoli. The naval representatives contended that all of the 135,000 infantry could be landed on the open beach in the daylight hours of a single day, together with a limited amount of artillery and supplies, before the Navy could effectively intervene. About ten to thirteen miles of beach would be required for the 200 transports required. Admiral A.K. Wilson argued, in contrast to Hankey earlier, that the landings at Gallipoli indicated the ease of an invasion of England. Although navigational and climatic conditions were much less favorable in the North Sea than in the Mediterranean, Wilson fixed upon the scale of shore resistance as the decisive factor and argued that the Gallipoli landings were successful in landing large numbers of troops in the face of equal or superior forces ashore. Britain could not hope to match the Turkish scale of coast defence, for her coast provided countless places where a landing was possible in comparison to the relatively few suitable sites along the Dardanelles coast. Wilson dismissed the 1904 Clacton Maneuvers results, which indicated the slowness of landing a mixed force on the open beach, as irrelevant.¹

¹ EQ 53/771 A194C "Note by the General Staff on Home Defence." pp. 10-13; "Report of a Conference between Representatives of the (contd. next p.)
Maurice calculated that the Germans could collect 10½ divisions or 170,000 men at any time when a vital military operation was not in progress, and embark them without warning. The conference modified this estimate to read "10 specially organized divisions, or approximately 160,000 men with a strictly limited supply of artillery, ammunition, and transport,"¹ and concluded that such a force could appear anywhere between the Wash and Dover without warning. The Navy guaranteed effective interruption of a German landing on "24-28 hours after the hostile transports are sighted from our shores."² At one stroke the sacrosanct figure of 70,000, which had resisted several attacks during the last decade, was multiplied by almost two-and-a-half times, to remain the established standard for the entire years of war. But at least a standard had been set and inter-service communication had been re-established.

As we have seen, the first inter-service conference on invasion represented only one aspect of a general re-organization of home defence. Its conclusions were to have a direct bearing on the new Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces, Field Marshal Sir John French.

Repington visited French shortly after the latter's installation as Hercules in the Augean Stable of Home Defence.

December 28, 1915 ... Sir John thinks that the P.M. really wants him, and had told him that home defence was in a state of chaos... he will only have 300,000 scratch volunteers, at present unarmed ... a motley crew, but, as ever, Sir John

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¹ (contd. from previous p.) Admiralty War Staff and the General Staff, held to consider the possibilities of Attack on the United Kingdom, January 1916." pp. 11-12.
² Ibid. p. 13.
3. Ibid.
disbelieves in invasion, and would send all his men to France if asked.¹

In contrast to his naval counterparts, the new Commander of the Home Defence Forces had not the slightest fear of invasion. In French's mind the necessities of France ranked before the necessities of Home Defence.²

French complained in his diary (28 February 1916) that

The Naval people have been worrying again about the possibility of invasion and saying that they can't undertake to intervene in a hostile embarkation for a considerable time. Rightly or wrongly I don't attach a great deal of attention to this ... Personally I hold the same views as I have always held on this subject. If I believed invasion, at the present juncture of affairs, anything but a very remote possibility I should feel far from happy, because we are certainly not adequately prepared to meet a landing on these shores ...³

It was just as well that French did not take the threat of invasion seriously, for the state of home defence was not such as to inspire confidence. French told Repington he

had found an immense mass of troops, something like a million and a quarter or a million and a half, but with no organisation worth the name, and most indifferently armed. Out of his Central Forces under Rundle, nominally 170,000 strong, he declares that there are only 30,000 armed.⁴

Something of the state of home defence when French took over from Kitchener can be gleaned from the fact that the number of the forces could be calculated only to the nearest quarter-million and that only some 20% of the elite mobile force was armed, and then "indifferently". Later it transpired that the figures that Kitchener had given to French of the home defence forces were out by half a million.⁵ Robertson agreed that "affairs

² Balfour MSS. (49704) Balfour to Hankey, 14 April 1916.
⁵ Asquith MSS. Box 16. Walter Long to Asquith, 16 March 1916.
in England are in a rare muddle...

It transpired that Kitchener estimated that there were some 1,600,000 men in England, of whom a million were fit to fight. On checking these figures, the Home Defence Directorate discovered the total ration strength in Great Britain was just over a million, of whom only 540,000 were combatants. The arms available for this force were about half a million rifles. Kitchener in addition had attempted to obstruct French's appointment of sound officers to Home Defence, until Asquith intervened. Sir Arthur Paget, Commander of the Southern Army based on Salisbury Plain, lamented that of his two 2nd line Territorial divisions one has Japanese rifles, with only 200 rounds per rifle, and no reserve; the other had the old Lee-Enfield, and no ammunition.

By March, French and his staff believed that matters were improving, though "They complained bitterly that they were not fighting the Germans, but the Home Office, the Treasury, and the Finance Branch of the War Office." Repington's campaign to have home defence put upon a rational and organized basis under a unified command had been realised. But although French had been successful in imposing a system upon home defence and a unified command over its variegated units, he remained handicapped by the low numbers and poor, quality of his troops. His divisions were composed of second-line troops, constantly emptied for overseas drafts, and always under the established strength. Ammunition also was in short supply, although French relied heavily upon the machine gun companies training in England to

2. Ibid. p. 139.  
5. Ibid. p. 138.
stiffen the defence if invasion occurred. With their help French believed
he could "take on 100,000 enemies." But after the Irish Republican uprising
in Dublin in April 1916, French's fourteen divisions were reduced to eight.
During the summer of 1916 friction began to grow between French and
Robertson as the latter transferred troops from England to France to
replenish divisions decimated by the Battle of the Somme. French resented
further reductions of his none-too-vigorous force and talked of resigning
unless "allowed to have his own way in Home Defence." Matters were not
improved when Lloyd George and Robertson, in late September, decided to send
five more divisions to France, and to create small divisions for Home Defence
consisting of men rejected for overseas service for medical reasons.1

The Admiralty had not waited for the conclusions of the inter-service
conference to dispatch new orders, entitled "Action to be taken in the
event of an Attempted Invasion" to Jellicoe for comment. The Admiralty
assumed that

the Germans have sufficient ships in their ports to bring a
force of at least 135,000 with a full complement of artillery,
ammunition, and supply trains for two months supplies. That
they could fit out the ships and put the troops on board
without our knowledge and might not be sighted before arriving
off our coast. They could land the men without our being able
to prevent them, but the quantity of supplies etc. that could
be landed would depend on the time available before the arrival
of our fleet. It is expected that the enemy will make use of
his whole fleet including destroyers, submarines and minelayers
to support the transports in some way.2

The Admiralty outlined the probable tactics to be employed by the enemy,
as Churchill had done in 1914.

2. Ibid. 187, 204, 218-19, 275, 292, 319, 347.
   Adm 137/835/43 4 January 1916.
It is probable that he will use his old battleships with a proportion of cruisers and destroyers to prevent our light cruisers from attacking the transports. These will be liable to attack from our submarines, but the risk from these latter will make him keep his more modern ships of the High Seas Fleet some distance off and so placed as to intercept any force they may send to attack the old battleships. In view of the difficulty which the enemy will have in obtaining supplies of coal, it is impossible for the High Seas Fleet to do us any appreciable injury by escaping out of the North Sea. So no time need be wasted in searching for it, and the Grand Fleet need not be prevented from proceeding with all dispatch to the place of landing, by any consideration of what the enemy's High Sea Fleet could do by avoiding it. The main object for the moment should be the destruction of the transports.1

Elaborate and detailed orders followed for the disposition of submarines, light cruisers, destroyers, minelayers, aircraft, and the Grand Fleet in the event of invasion.2

Jellicoe's reply of 16 January repeated his trepidations expressed in October 1914, but he was scornful of those who argued on the basis of the Gallipoli landings that men could be quickly landed on open beaches in large numbers. Although some 35,000 men had been landed on three beaches within 24 hours on one occasion naval conditions in the North Sea were vastly different from those prevailing in the Dardanelles.3 Jellicoe's arguments on this point closely paralleled those used by Hankey six months earlier.4 In addition, his experience as Commander of the "invading" Fleet in the Naval manoeuvres of 1913, where he was twice prevented from landing some forces on the beach, led Jellicoe to a "conclusion that invasion is much more likely to be attempted by entering into some of our east coast rivers.5

1. Richmond MSS. RIC/2/2 "Anti-Invasion Synopsis." p. 17.
3. Adm 137/835/61 Jellicoe to Secretary, Admiralty, 16 January 1916.
5. Adm 137/835/62.
Jellicoe stressed, as he had in 1914, that river estuaries, especially the Humber, were the most likely spots for future German landings. In the absence of adequate land defences (which were stronger than Jellicoe believed) simultaneous landings could be made at the many wharves along the rivers while small boats could ferry troops from the transports to the shore. The only local forces available to impede such an audacious attack were four submarines which would take six hours to reach the scene. But within 12 hours 16 additional submarines would be available, in addition to the destroyers based at the Humber. After dealing with other river outlets where he felt invasion might be attempted, Jellicoe predicted that the Germans would expect that there would be such a scare in this country as a result of attempted invasion that the Grand Fleet might be directed to proceed to sea immediately without any preliminary minesweeping... and ended with a plea that additional minesweepers be provided for the Fleet. He had made only passing references to the military defences against invasion, substantiating Repington's charge that the relations between the naval and military halves of home defence constituted a dialogue of the deaf.

On the broader front, the mid-year of 1916 brought the conjunction of several important events which bore on invasion. In both Lords and Commons, a massive debate was proceeding on the Government's conduct of the war for the first time since the outbreak of hostilities. In the Lords, an auxiliary force of volunteers was proposed for home defence and welcomed by Kitchener. The next day, Colonel Winston Churchill delivered his first public speech in the Commons since his return from eight months in the

1. Adm 137/835/63 A marginal note on Jellicoe's letter reveals that there were four 9.2" guns at the Humber, where he believed there was only one.
trenches. Churchill attacked the retention of a large home army and demanded that additional troops be sent to the front. Everything since 1914 had consolidated Britain's position against invasion. Britain's naval and military forces had increased enormously. But most of all, Churchill contended,

the kind of warfare which has developed in this War is that least well suited to an army throwing itself hurriedly on a shore and maintaining itself with a precarious line of overseas communication. What is the form of warfare? It has been shown in every theatre. In a few hours with trenches, with barbed wire and machine guns, a position can be created to force which you must bring up not field guns but great masses of very heavy guns, and of all the armies who rely on this method, Germany is the one which relies most and which would be the most helpless without it.¹

But Churchill had failed to recognize that military stalemate had been imposed on the Continent only after several weeks of advance and manoeuvring, by which time any campaign in England would probably have been successfully concluded. However, such were the force of his remarks and his estimate that there were a million men in Britain who had "never heard the whistle of a bullet", that Asquith himself was moved to reply. Asquith pointed out that this figure included many wounded, sick, and convalescent, as well as men training to go abroad.² Robertson, he said, would be glad to liquidate any existing surplus "to utilize it for fighting purposes abroad."³

Kitchener also defended himself on this point before the Commons on June 2nd, three days before his mysterious death at sea, stating that in the early days of the war, the efficiency of the Home garrison was a matter of vital importance, for a raid of a desperate nature, though obviously doomed to failure as

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². Ibid. 31 May 1916. cols. 2771-72, 2779-80.
an attempt at conquest, might certainly have paralyzed our industrial powers which are now playing so decisive a part in the struggle.  

Kitchener's words were hardly a honest reflection of his own policies early in the war, for his concern had not been with a small raid as here described, but with a massive invasion of a quarter-million men. He alluded to the continuing necessity for keeping the Territorial Divisions at home "intact and at their War Stations in day and night readiness for an emergency." To the end Kitchener took seriously the menace of invasion.

Even as the unprecedented debate over the conduct of the war continued, the German and British Fleets met in a series of unresolved confrontations known as the Battle of Jutland. After half a century Jutland still inspires controversy. To those like Balfour, now First Sea Lord, who believed invasion impossible, the Jutland experience appeared as a confirmation of that belief. Balfour told the British Imperial Chamber of Commerce the week after the battle that invasion remained the unsolved problem of every power striving to dominate the Continent. Jutland was the crushing proof that this problem was still unsolved: for the Germans "one of the many unfulfilled dreams which this war has dissipated forever." To Hankey also it seemed that Jutland signalled the end of the invasion threat. On the other hand, "invasionists" were inclined to see in the battle the confirmation of their theories. Had not Jutland proved the difficulty of locating

and following a hostile naval force and the ease with which the
Germans could evade the British defenders? On the same day that
Balfour buried invasion as a possibility, Lord Crewe exhumed it in a
speech to mayors of British cities, warning that "it would be folly
to ignore the possibility of a descent on the coasts of the British
Isles by a force which could not be described as altogether trivial
or contemptible. (hear, hear)."

At an Admiralty conference at the end of June it was decided
that the Grand Fleet would seek a decision with the High Seas Fleet
under only two contingencies: a German attempt to bombard the coast
or invasion. Meanwhile, an article in the Contemporary Review noted
that the battle had justified the Admiralty's policy in regard to
invasion. Ironically, the inner councils of the Admiralty were not
as confident of their capabilities as their public defenders.

It was in this climate of re-assessment which followed the Battle
of Jutland, Parliamentary debate on the direction of the war, and the
death of Kitchener, that a second inter-service conference on invasion
was convened. This time the inquiry was initiated by Lloyd George,
who had remarked in Cabinet at his surprise at seeing the figures of
160,000 rather than 70,000, quoted as the expected scale of enemy attack.
Although Balfour as First Lord offered a guarantee against invasion for

1965. p. 5.
   p.12.
warships—the matter again went forward to the two services. The General Staff made a second attempt to have the scale lowered so that more troops might be sent to France and sent a memorandum to the Board of Admiralty, which asserted that the Germans could not at present detach enough troops for an invasion owing to the fighting at Verdun. ¹

Admiral A.K. Wilson, again representing the Admiralty, replied that the Germans' experiences on the two occasions they had gone out to sea since the last conference "would on the whole tend rather to increase than to diminish the German estimate of the risks" involved in invasion. The second of these occasions had resulted in Jutland, and had led to heavy damage among that class of ships which must act as escorts to any future invasion flotilla. Additions to the Grand Fleet would enable the Third Battle Squadron to be brought further South, but this would decrease the risks of invasion only in the vicinity of its Thames base. The two services agreed to inform one another of any changes in the naval or military situation that would be of interest to the sister service in the joint defence against invasion. ² This undertaking, however, remained pretty much a dead letter. The conclusions of the conference were virtually unchanged from those of the previous January: the expected scale of attack remained at 160,000 and the Admiralty still could not guarantee interception until 24 to 29 hours after the first alert. ³

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1. Adm 137/835/203-206 "Notes by the General Staff for the Conference... assembling at the Admiralty on Saturday, 5th August 1916."


Robertson explained in a paper before the War Committee that the 70,000 figure was a prewar estimate which had been largely abrogated by the experience of the last two years. He called upon the War Committee to determine whether Britain was retaining more men against invasion than she really needed. Of the nine divisions in England, three were almost ready for despatch abroad and two others were located in dispositions better suited for training than the demands of national defence. As the Germans were now heavily committed on the Continent, especially at Verdun, Robertson recommended taking 24,000 of the better troops from home defence to replenish under-strength divisions abroad. He suggested replacing the nine existing divisions in Britain with five new divisions, formed entirely of Volunteers and men whose age or medical condition debarred them from overseas service. 1

Robertson's paper was discussed by the War Committee on August 30. French agreed to the proposals, providing that he could have 170,000 Volunteers for home defence, and extracted a promise that this number would be fully armed by the following November. Although Asquith believed that Robertson's conclusions were "over-cautious", the War Committee approved the proposals. The numbers involved in home defence went up, but the overall quality of troops went down. Overage men in the Volunteer movement would replace the regular troops now being sent abroad. 2 French, in preparing the public for this change in the composition of the home defence force, now began to deliver speeches declaring that the country must look

2. Cab 42/18/8 "Minutes of 110th War Committee Meeting." 30 August 1916.
forward to the day when its defence would be entirely entrusted to the Volunteers, stressing that "not one man who can serve in the trenches should be left at home." He promised the Volunteers that the Government would find them arms and equipment, including grenades and machine guns, which would compensate for their inferior numbers and conditions.

Otherwise, the invasion issue virtually disappeared from the public domain during the winter of 1916-17, in the face of more momentous events. Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister in December. In February, Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare; by April one out of four ships leaving British ports failed to arrive at its destination. The full consequences of the U-Boat campaign were known only to a small group within the supreme command, although some intimation of the Admiralty's anxieties filtered through to the public.

Therefore, fears of invasion revived in the spring of 1917. The Navy, disheartened by the inroads of the German submarine campaign, had diminished faith in their ability to intercept an invader. A similar pessimism enveloped Britain's military defenders. Repington, visiting French at the end of February, was told that little could be done if the Germans succeeded in getting into the country. His Chief of Staff said he had forces sufficient to oppose only "about 450" invaders. A week later Repington wrote Lloyd George, warning him that he was "dangerously weak on land at home, and a blow may be dealt at you in this direction." Fisher also was again worried

1. Times. 30 October 1916, p.9; 16 October 1916, p.8; 23 October 1916, p.5; 6 November 1916, p.5; 4 December 1916, p.5; 15 December 1916, p.5.
about a German landing. In early February he had warned C.P. Scott, the Editor of the Manchester Guardian, that "any moment a disaster to the Grand Fleet means the easy and sure invasion of England and the ravishing of our wives and daughters."1

Fisher, not oblivious to the fact that Lloyd George was considering appointing him as First Lord to strengthen his political position, penned a long jeremiad to the Prime Minister on invasion, which Lloyd George read to the Cabinet. Fisher warned that

the Invasion of these Islands is now, at the present moment, a far greater menace than starvation from German submarines, because I, Sir John Jellicoe is no longer in command of the Grand Fleet. II. The immense production of German 'long-distance' submarines renders now feasible what was formerly impossible, viz. invasion ... it may lead to a Trafalgar for England, but it gives the war chance of a German Austerlitz on the banks of the Thames, while the Battle of Trafalgar is proceeding off Jutland or further north. Germany, I am assured, has never had so many troops as at the present moment, and 40 per cent of the whole mercantile high-speed steamers is in the North Sea, instantly kept ready for transporting half a million German soldiers to the Thames before the Grand Fleet from its Trafalgar off the Scaw could prevent it - for our military force in England is admittedly totally inadequate ... Please remember Austerlitz immediately followed Trafalgar. Trafalgar did not stop Austerlitz! And Pitt said, notwithstanding Trafalgar: 'Roll up the map of Europe', and he died of a broken heart. You are a second Pitt! I pray you won't have a second Austerlitz.2

It is probable that Fisher was using invasion for political purposes,3 but the stratagem backfired. Lloyd George took Fisher at his word and initiated a full cabinet inquiry into invasion on the strength of Fisher's letter. The General Staff and the Admiralty War Staff were requested to "press Lord Fisher to explain fully the ground on which his apprehensions were based."4

The third inter-service conference of the war convened the following day. Admiralty confidence had decreased even further in their ability to halt a German landing. Jellicoe, now First Lord, postponed the Navy's commitment to interrupt invasion further, from 24-28 hours to 32-36 hours. The War Office was more optimistic. French stated that the military side of the question had actually improved in the year since the last conference, especially since machine guns had become available for home defence. But French was still concerned over the numbers and quality of his troops. He estimated that he required 60,000 additional men to defeat the official standard of 160,000 invaders; what troops he had were untrained and in poor condition. The two services eventually decided to refer the responsibility back to the politicians, for it was concluded that the central question was one of "balancing the advantages of strengthening our oversea forces against the risk of invasion" which "could only be decided by the War Cabinet after periodical review of the general situation."¹

It was in this atmosphere of general apprehension and despondency that French decided to hold a mobilization exercise for the entire home defence army, and sent out the code signal that an invasion attempt was imminent. As a result, a rumour circulated that the Germans had landed, which spread with surprising speed. Northcliffe telephoned Repington with the news that all the wires were blocked last night and that there was a panic at Broadstairs, Margate, etc. caused by a schoolmaster and a squire, and that all the population and schools had taken wing ... the rumours ... appear to have penetrated to the West of England. Later there came other inquiries from all sorts of quarters. What will it be like if one Boche lands?²

¹. Adm 137/865/253-54. "Conference ... held in room of the Secretary of State for War." 16 March 1917.
A few days later in the Commons, Bonar Law asked if there were any foundation to the rumours of invasion at Lowestoft and in Scotland, explained that French's alert was responsible and observed he had heard "a great many rumours of that kind" himself.¹

At the same time, the War Cabinet considered the report of the third inter-service conference. But Lloyd George insisted on hearing Fisher's views on invasion. Fisher was reluctant to appear before the whole Cabinet, for he had regarded his letter as a purely personal appeal.² But he nonetheless appeared at the Cabinet meeting of 28 March. Fisher gave seven reasons for believing that invasion was imminent, but his testimony provided nothing new. His confidence diminished because Beatty had replaced Jellicoe and as Commander of the Grand Fleet, because German submarines were more numerous, larger, and had greater sea-keeping capabilities. Gallipoli had demonstrated the practicability of landing, and supplying, an expedition in the face of fire. The fact that the German fleet was under the command of a military man - Hindenburg - meant that it might be ordered "to take risks which no naval officer would contemplate." The risk from mines, the recent increase in the size of the German army, and the fact that ample transport was available: all had converted him from his former strong skepticism regarding invasion.³

Robertson replied that previous conferences had been much influenced by:

by the consideration that the enemy would not be able to maintain his line of supply and communications. Fisher referred ambiguously to "the impossibility of maintaining surface craft in particular localities for any length of time under modern conditions." However, in a later flattering letter to Robertson as "the chief Military Authority in this Realm", Fisher expanded on this remark and sketched the path of future invasion.

Hindenbuxg will order out the German fleet to the farthest Northern limit to a possible Trafalgar ... In the progress South, after the Battle, of our (in any case) diminished Fleet, the Germans will assuredly strew mines and dispose submarines and destroyers in its path, so that (as Jellicoe wrote to me) the British Fleet would be greatly diminished on its arrival south - there again to face an imnumerable company of German submarines and destroyers and German submarine mine-layers. That would necessitate the retirement of our Fleet into a protected harbour.

So (and we now come to the point you raised) our surface vessels, in their endeavour to interrupt the German communications, would be utterly destroyed by the prodigious available number of German submarines ... So, in case of invasion, the German communications will be kept open and Hindenburg, to gain that end, will send out the German Fleet just as Napoleon sent out Villeneuve, against every naval consideration! The Gallipoli landing (and its shores never free from hostile gunfire till its evacuation) has tumbled down the Walls of Jericho of the Blue Water School, of which I was formerly Chief! I've been to Damascus, like St. Paul, and converted.

Fisher's reference to Gallipoli inspired French to compose a letter for the Prime Minister on Gallipoli, which was circulated to the Cabinet. French pointed out that only two, of all the landings in the Dardanelles, were opposed: "the system of defence bears no kind of analogy to that which is in force by us at the present moment all along the whole of our East Coast."

The Turkish system of entrenchments in the cliffs above the beaches gave great advantages to the attackers, who took advantage of dead ground the
defenders could not cover. The British had also undermined these trenches by shelling the cliffs from ships. French stressed that there was "no sound analogy between a coast defence properly arranged and conducted" and those at Gallipoli. The British home defence system differed in having the valuable support of various naval installations along the coast. Another aspect of the Dardanelles experience was positively encouraging: whenever the British landed and pushed inland, they were halted by concentrated enemy artillery. French was now organizing a new second series of trenches set back from the coastline with 6" howitzers and 60-pounders to frustrate a German penetration inland. ¹ Where the Admiralty had earlier drawn a rather pessimistic picture from Gallipoli regarding invasion,² the Chief of the military force providing against it was more optimistic.

Fisher's presentation before the War Cabinet met with resistance from other quarters. Balfour, Fisher recalled, had been "very nasty, as was French," although Curzon and Milner were impressed and Lloyd George and Bonar Law were "affectionate and sympathetic."³ The spectre of invasion, Fisher wrote Beatty, was "absorbingly appalling."⁴ Lloyd George, however, was unimpressed and promised Repington that he would eat a sausage for every German landed in England above the number of 50,000.⁵

The reversal of the position of the two services, begun in 1912-13, had now come full circle. The pre-war invasion agitation had been sponsored

2. WO 33/771 "Note by General Staff..." pp. 11-12.
by peers and retired army officers who wanted a larger army for home defence. Now that army existed in France and its very size served notice that the Navy was no longer the Senior Service. It was fighting continually, while the Fleet had had only brief and inconclusive engagements. The Admiralty under Fisher had guaranteed that it could handle invasion alone. But for several months the Navy had been steadily trying to diminish its responsibility to intercept or impede invasion. Fisher, the chief of the former aggressive policy at the Admiralty, was now the most affected by the submarine menace. The War Office now had the large army it had wanted and was making diligent efforts to get as much of it to France as possible. The Generals were caught in a trap somewhat of their own making. They had done little to contradict the message of Roberts and Repington that a large army was required for home defence. Now there would be a great public outcry if it became known to what extent this army was diminished by overseas drafts. The War Cabinet found it difficult to pare the Home Defence any further in the face of the Admiralty's retreat from earlier guarantees, but did so on the basis that risks had to be accepted somewhere and could more readily be accepted at home than in France.

Repington, for his part, continued to crusade for a better home defence. In a visit to Beatty's Headquarters in August, he discovered that the Grand Fleet was not in direct touch with a single military authority. Beatty knew nothing about home defence ashore or whether we have ten men or an Army Corps at one place or another. This after three years of war! Beatty has no real intelligence service of his own, and has to trust the Admiralty to keep him informed. Beatty hopes, however, that he will hear automatically if the German Fleet comes out. I am sure I hope he may. It might interest him.¹

Repington found inter-service communication was also lacking at French's Headquarters. Tyrwhitt, the commander of the cruiser force, had no direct way of alerting the home defence army in the event of invasion. Moreover, Tyrwhitt revealed, the home defence flotillas themselves did not enjoy the unity of command that prevailed on land: there were "lots of Rajahs along the coast each with his own domain." Tyrwhitt advocated that a single Admiral be given charge over the entire East Coast. As far as the defence ashore was concerned, he knew nothing and reported only to the Admiralty by telephone. Repington next visited Paget, Commander of the Southern Army where similar conditions prevailed: Paget was "not in touch with the Navy in any way" and knew nothing about so elementary a naval operation as the minefield in the North Sea.\footnote{Repington, Op. Cit. pp. 30, 38, 39, 44, 55.} Repington mounted an agitation for inter-service cooperation on the tactical level, and extensive plans finally were worked out between the two services.\footnote{Adm 137/866/278–296.} Robertson assigned a liaison officer to Beatty and the Admiralty established unity of command on the East Coast.

But elsewhere in the Fall of 1917 the credibility of invasion was disappearing. The last division of first-line troops in Britain was broken up in September.\footnote{Repington, Op. Cit. p. 55.} A House of Commons committee called for an inquiry into the large number of troops allegedly being retained in England. In November, when French delivered another speech warning of invasion, he was denounced in the House of Commons for alarmism. The Government was asked first to that dismiss French, and then to censor his speeches on the ground they would cause public despondency.\footnote{Times 8 November 1917, p.5; Hansard. (Commons) 14 November 1917, col.381.} Similar criticism was expressed within official
Corbett, who had been commissioned to write the official history of the war, complained to Richmond of Jellicoe's (his usual epithet was "Jelly") awe of the German.

But invasion is worse still. It makes me mad to see the soldiers giving wild exaggerations of the German man power in order to frighten us into giving up men essential to the vigorous life of the country and then keeping a vast force idle at home. It is awful hard to feel any enthusiasm for writing the story of the war...¹

The Admiralty performance at the inter-service conference of March 1917 proved similarly onerous to Beatty, Commander of the Grand Fleet, and a member of his Staff, Rear Admiral Roger Keyes, who had been second-in-command of the naval forces at the Dardanelles (later to attain fame as the leader of the Zeebrugge raid and as a theorist of combined operations). These two officers discovered in conversation their mutual antipathy to the invasion bogey and Beatty asked Keyes to write a paper analysing his experience at Gallipoli.²

Keyes welcomed the task and began by questioning the main conclusion of the inter-service conference: that 160,000 enemy troops could come ashore within 32 hours. Keyes pointed out that no allowance had been made for opposition to the landing, nor for any of the problems associated with landing on a beach in the North Sea, even if unopposed. Keyes attacked the arguments advanced by Jellicoe for the feasibility of a capture of a port.

In the 1913 Naval and Military Manoeuvres, a few transports were rushed into the Humber; and the operation was held to have been successful by some Naval and Military Authorities

¹ Richmond MSS. RIC 9/1 Corbett to Richmond, 24 April 1917.
All the experience of this war has amply proved this conclusion was entirely erroneous. It is inconceivable that the enemy would attempt to rush crowded transports into a port before the opposition had been overcome. The capture of the port could probably only be completed by military operations undertaken after a landing had been effected on neighbouring beaches.

Keyes, like French earlier, argued that experience at Gallipoli had proved the difficulty of a beach landing.

On one occasion a few machine guns had held up a landing for 24 hours and even heavy bombardment from guns up to 15" in calibre had failed to end resistance. The lesson had not been lost on the Germans, who had witnessed the entire operation.

Since it was possible for the Turk to organise such a formidable defence in the early days of the war, how easy it should be for us, in the light of our added experience, to make, with a comparatively small force, every available beach absolutely impregnable with the aid of deep trenches, well concealed and protected machine guns positions, and a few guns and howitzers, well inland, registered on the beaches. Our experience showed how difficult it is to deal from seaward with guns so placed, though we were able to attack them from much more favourable positions than will be available to the enemy ships.

Keyes concluded that the Germans also appreciated the grossly unfavourable conditions of a North Sea landing: they would not be "so mad as to undertake such a forlorn hopeless enterprise."

In September 1917 Keyes was appointed Director of Plans at the Admiralty, and was enabled to counteract the conservatism of his superiors. Once in London, Keyes found powerful allies, including Major-General F.B. Maurice, the D.M.O., Rear-Admiral Rosslyn Wemyss, the second Sea Lord, and Rear-Admiral William R. Hall, Director of Naval

Intelligence. Contact was quickly established between younger officers of both services who were convinced that the established official estimate of the invasion danger was overly diffident and another inter-service conference was arranged between them for December 1917. Maurice wrote in advance to Wemyss that the 160,000 scale was unrealistic and suggested it might be undercut by stressing the uses of increased air reconnaissance and other means. Keyes, commenting on this communication, noted that improved reconnaissance would permit an interruption of a German landing within 12 hours and recommended that submarines, and even the Grand Fleet itself, could be deployed toward this end. He further asked that a determined attack by British aircraft be organized as an additional defense against invasion, while the stationing of eight American battleships at the Humber would provide a further deterrent. The Home Defence Directorate had come to similar conclusions simultaneously. All previous studies had been undertaken on the basis of evasion: how large a force could elude the Grand Fleet. But the far more important element of time had been almost completely overlooked.

Wemyss and Keyes, encouraged by these arguments, recast the whole frame of reference of the forthcoming inter-service conference. It was to consider invasion, not on the basis of the greatest number of troops the Germans could embark, but rather on the basis of the

largest number of ships that are likely to sail in one convoy from the German ports'. This was a more realistic recognition of the existing naval conditions of 1917. It was calculated that the Germans could organize 160 ships in five convoys of 32 ships apiece, but that this would require long practice, which would attract attention to the enterprise. Only one short portion of the coast (Aldeburgh to Southwold) could be used for a beach landing for a force marching on London. The defenders would command the air over the invasion beaches, which would in any case be "strongly defended with barbed-wire and machine-guns with mobile troops close at hand in reserve."

Even were the landing successful, the victory march to London would not be rapid: it had taken the Austrians 16 days to cover 65 miles after Caporetto unopposed, and the German advance to London would be heavily contested.2

The fourth inter-service conference on invasion met on 17 December 1917. The military representatives, headed by Maurice, maintained that the Germans could still assemble and land 160,000 troops in the 32 to 36 hours before the Admiralty would arrive in force. The only new factors on the military side were the expansion of the air services and the continual improvement of the shore defences. The naval officers established themselves as the real activists, and argued that several factors had developed during 1917 to Britain's advantage. America's entry into the war had added new ships of all types and brought an increased supply of mines. Further

1. Adm 137/865/278. Keyse to Wemyss. 4 December 1917.
extensions to submarine patrols and minefields meant increased chances of advance warning of invasion. Both services agreed that the most promising factor was the development of the British air forces, which meant increased facilities for reconnaissance, but most importantly, overwhelming air superiority over the British coast.\(^1\) The conference, however, was most strongly influenced by Wemyss' argument that invasion would by necessity come by convoy.

The conclusions, signed by Wemyss, Keyes, and Maurice, were as follows:

1. In view of the amount of preparation required, the size of the convoy and the length of the sea voyage, warning of an attempted invasion would be obtained, thus enabling the necessary naval dispositions to be taken.
2. The difficulties of assembling and moving the number of ships required to transport or 160,000 men within the time which would be at the enemy's disposal are so great as to be practically insuperable.
3. Although an absolute guarantee cannot be given against the arrival of one convoy - maximum size 32 ships - the Conference consider that it is impossible for subsequent convoys to reach our shores without such action on our part as would ensure the complete failure of the expedition.
4. The maximum force with which the land forces may have to deal is therefore limited to that which can be carried in one such convoy, i.e. 30,000 men, with a strictly limited proportion of transport and artillery.\(^2\)

The conclusions were a direct challenge to the standard of 160,000 which had now been in force for almost two years; the new standard of 30,000 was indeed a radical reduction. It was also a challenge to the men who had framed the previous standard, a revolt of the younger officers against their superiors, the significance of which did not escape them. One General, while signing the report, remarked laughingly that there were "lots of lamp-posts in Whitehall." Keyes replied he was willing to swing, if only to release 100,000 men for the army in France.\(^3\)

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2. Ibid. p. 4.
It now remained to obtain the consent of the General Staff and Admiralty to the revised scale of attack. This was not forthcoming. The Board of Admiralty considered the question at its next meeting, but were generally of opinion that, without further consideration of the matter, they could not commit themselves to a definite view that the land forces might not have to deal with an enemy force amounting to 70,000 men before the Navy could effectively intervene ... before enemy forces in excess of that number could be landed, effective intervention by the Navy might be relied upon. However, "having regard to the great importance of the subject", the Board decided to continue the discussion at a Special Meeting held Sunday, 23 December 1917, which would have the advantage of Beatty's ideas. The reports were forwarded to Beatty for his consideration, who presented his views in writing. On this occasion the Board hedged even more, refusing to give any guarantee whatsoever against any hypothetical number of invaders, or to say how many could land before they could effectively intervene. The Board commented only that if a great reduction of the Home Defence army was carried out, the Southern Battleship force would require strengthening. Mining of the Heligoland Bight must increase and additional submarine reconnaissance patrols be mounted. But the initiation of such steps was largely determined by the efficacy of advance warnings from the Intelligence Department.

At this point Hall, the D.N.I., saw his chance. Hall had been among the more stalwart campaigners against the inflated estimate of invasion and guaranteed five days' notice of any enemy preparations for embarkation. Meeting with skepticism from the Board on this point, he prepared a dossier of the reports received by the N.I.D. of the German attack against Riga in August 1917. On that occasion he had had warning of the attack a month

in advance and had detailed reports on different aspects of the attack
weeks in advance. Hall was confident that Naval Intelligence could give
early and accurate warning of any German preparations to invade England.\(^2\)

The two services achieved a compromise on the classic estimate of
70,000. The War Cabinet was advised at the beginning of 1918 in a paper
signed jointly by Wemyss as First Sea Lord and Robertson as C.I.G.S. that
The Board of Admiralty and the Imperial General Staff are also
of opinion that, in view of the experience of landing operations

gained during the war; of the Admiralty statement that an attempted
landing between the Wash and the Straits of Dover can be effectively
interrupted by naval action within 32 to 36 hours; and of the fact
that we may expect to receive warning before a landing is attempted;
a landing by a force of 70,000 men with such a limited time at its
disposal before interference takes place should be defeated,
provided that the possible landing places are suitably entrenched
and held by sufficient Military Forces to oppose the landing
until naval intervention can take effect.\(^3\)

The inter-service role in defeating an attempted landing was fully apparent.

Robertson prepared a paper for the War Cabinet on "Troops Required
for Home Defence" which admitted that the two scales of 30,000 and 70,000
had been in competition. But now French was willing to accept a smaller
home defence force if it was comprised of better quality troops, with
increased mobility and better equipment, including machine guns for coast
defence. He would accept the reduction of his force from eight to five
divisions, which would transfer 38,000 of his best mobile troops to
Flanders. Robertson and the General Staff, however, wished to send four

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   of C.I.D. called for by Board Minute 153. Note of Intelligence Received
   Prior to German Attack on Gulf of Riga." W.R. Hall. 27 December 1917.
2. Adm 167/53 "Board Minutes of 10 January 1918." p. 64.
divisions of 50,000 troops abroad, leaving 140,000 troops in Britain.
Robertson considered this an ample force to defeat 70,000 invaders, but
French pointed out that the bulk of his troops were made up of men who
could not be sent abroad, having not yet reached 19 or judged medically
unfit to go abroad. But he would accept reductions and rely on his coastal
trenches and machine guns, backed up by reinforcements of mobile troops.¹

The Westerners had triumphed almost completely over the advocates of
home defence. Russia was known to be on the verge of making terms with
Germany and this would free the German Armies in the East to cross to the
West, where they would achieve numerical superiority for the first time in
the war. It was imperative that Haig's worn and under-strength divisions
be reinforced. However, Repington and Paget were beside themselves when
they learned of the decision. Paget had visions of 30,000 Germans landing
in a smoke-screen with steel shields to foil French's machine guns and
believed "30,000 Boche would be in Maidstone by the third day." Repington
thought only 15,000 Germans could take Canterbury and destroy the docks
nearby, vital for the provision of the B.E.F.²

The devaluation of the invasion contingency by the General Staff
and Admiralty in January 1918 had its counterpart in the careers of those
who had been most alarmed over the possibility of a German attack. Even
as the Board of Admiralty deliberated, Jellicoe resigned as First Lord,
one of the reasons being that he could not accept the new estimate of the

¹. Cab 3/3 90-A. "Troops Required for Home Defence" by C.I.G.S., 3
January 1918.
invasion danger. He was replaced by Wemyss, who was the most eminent of the naval officers behind the new standard. Shortly thereafter Repington, the civilian high priest of invasion, joined Jellicoe in limbo. The Times had not been in sympathy with Repington's views on invasion for some time and was now finding him generally intractable. Repington's last warning on invasion, and almost his last article for the Times, was published on January 3rd.¹ The bitterness of the rupture was recalled later in the official History of the Times.

He transferred at once to the Morning Post, with which he had previously concerted terms advantageous to himself ... There he spent the rest of the war industriously destroying the reputation for intelligence which Dawson had preserved for him while he worked for the Times.²

French likewise thought the new estimate "absurd" and wanted 500,000 men for home defence. But before the month was out, both he and Paget had been replaced.³

Even as invasion receded as a probability during the last months of the war, it continued to be stressed in official propaganda. One advertisement for National War Bonds in the Morning Post pictured a pretty young woman holding a child in one hand and a shovel in the other being herded along by an armed German soldier for forced labour. The accompanying text rhapsodised on the consequence of invasion.

The Huns would lord it over us - England would become another Belgium. With what glee would the Germans train their guns upon London! With what unholy delight would they see our great city laid in ashes! And not only London but also Birmingham, Liverpool, Newcastle, Manchester, Bristol, and every other of our cities and towns would be burned, looted and ravaged.

In the towns of Belgium they ranged up the civilian population in front of the churches and mowed them down with machine guns.

³ Ibid. pp. 176-177.
Fancy such a scene in front of Westminster Abbey! They herded the Belgian civilians and under the lash made them dig German trenches. Imagine the citizens of London driven along the lanes of Essex and Buckinghamshire to labour under German task-masters!

**THEY ROBBER THE BELGIAN BANKS.**

Think of the joy with which they would loot the Bank of England.¹

The ad went on to explain how these horrors could be avoided by the purchase of War Bonds.

But by far the most ambitious variation on the theme for patriotic purposes was undertaken by the Ministry of Information later in 1918 when a "Great National Film" entitled The Invasion of Britain, was planned and produced. The project had been conceived by Lloyd George and sponsored by Beaverbrook as Minister of Information. Famous actors of the period were featured, such as Ellen Terry. Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling wrote anthems for the epic, which were set to music by Sir Edward Elgar. Sir Hall Caine, a popular novelist who wrote the scenario, explained that the purpose of the epic was

—to show the British working man that his home is in peril from military force, military tyranny, and military brutality. We have brought the war home to his own house and asked him to consider what he would do if the war came to England.²

Under the leadership of the American director Herbert Brenon, scenes were enacted based on reports of the German performances in Cambrai and St. Quentin in 1914. Caine recounted that the local population became completely involved in the making of the film.

When our imaginary German army came riding into Chester the inhabitants ran into their houses in fear as before a real invasion, and when the brutal Huns were flung out of it, they

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shouted with joy as at a real deliverance.  

Although the film was never publicly shown and no print appears to have survived, some appreciation of the plot and treatment of the subject can be gained from contemporary descriptions, which stated that it is a story of what would be likely to happen were the Germans to invade this country. It is a chronicle of events, or rather crimes, that have made history during the last four years — crimes for which the perpetrators can never atone. Try to recollect if you can all the foul deeds to which the huns have stooped, and you will have some idea of the incidents which have been reproduced to the minutest detail and woven into an enthralling drama.  

Scenes included the women of the city going down on their knees to sing "Nearer, My God, to Thee" while the Germans bombard the city as a preliminary to its occupation. Eventually the Hunns arrive on horseback with bayonets and drawn swords, with which they disperse the women "in their most hunnish manner." A sub-plot featured a variation of the Nurse Cavell incident, in which a beauty is shot by order of a German officer who secretly loves her and thereafter becomes "a monster without a soul." Further vignettes featured the women of the city being dragged from their homes to be deported via cattle-car for forced labour.  

Despite the great effort and multitudinous talent expended in the making of The Invasion of Britain, the film was never released. The end of the war came before its completion, and the Ministry of Information was already under severe criticism in the Commons. But the first major film effort by the British Government featured invasion as its theme. A private effort,  

2. "Making the National Film." Ibid. 12 September 1918, pp. 76-77.  
entitled The Warrior Strain, produced in 1918, depicted an English officer cadet foiling invasion by stealing the aeroplane of the German advance party, who are then trapped and imprisoned. 1

A similar use of "continue the war" propaganda is found in the last of the invasion novels, published in September 1915 by Edgar Wallace. The message of the novel, which was dedicated to Kitchener, was implicit in its title: "1925" — The Story of a Fatal Peace. It was designed "to bring home to readers the inevitable consequences of ending the present war in any other way than by the complete subjugation of Germany and the destruction of Prussian militarism." Wallace outlined a story of future Prussian perfidy as propaganda against a negotiated peace. After a decade of peace, British war veterans are lured to Germany under the pretence of a "Peace Festival" and are imprisoned; the Germans also torpedo 83 ships of the Royal Navy sent to Hamburg for a friendly joint review while a hidden invasion army crosses the North Sea. As the book closes, 250,000 Germans have landed in England by night and are deploying across the British countryside, where only two British army corps are available to oppose them. 2

While invasion receded as a military possibility, it had not lost its hold completely on the public imagination. The British Government, once scornful of the exploitation of the invasion bogey, by the last year of the war was the chief manufacturer of invasion propaganda.

Some concern still remained at the higher levels whether invasion was such a remote contingency after all. Would the Germans use the divisions now being transferred to the Western Front to mount an attack on Great

1. Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly. 19 September 1918. pp. 83-84. The Warrior Strain was viewed at the National Film Archive.
Britain? On January 8th the War Cabinet had a lengthy meeting with Maurice, Director of Military Operations, to discover whether the German divisions allegedly concentrating at Holstein were being prepared for overseas attack.¹ At the same time, the Admiralty were trying to suppress or postpone the publication of the full report of the Dardanelles Commission on the ground that excerpts of the landing orders and descriptions of the operation would be of great service to the German General Staff.² When the Ludendorff offensive began in March, it appeared for a time that the Germans might achieve their forgotten objective of 1914; a break-through to the Channel Ports. Keyes, now Admiral in charge of the Dover patrol, prepared for demolition of the French Channel ports should the Germans advance that far,³ and invasion rumours began to re-appear.⁴ Haig's famous Order of the Day of March 21st ended with the appeal that "the safety of our homes ... depends upon the conduct of each of us." The War Cabinet continued to send home defence troops to France and considered mobilizing the Volunteers as a reserve. Privately, Repington and Robertson, convinced that home defence was non-existent, discussed the possibility of withdrawing from the continent entirely and waging a maritime war.⁵ But the Ludendorff offensive did not inspire another invasion scare. The main explanation is that by the spring of 1918

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¹ Cab 23/5 "War Cabinet Papers." January 1918. No. 318.
⁴ Ibid. p. 276.
a fairly sophisticated aerial defence against invasion had been evolved. As early as August 1916, provision had been made for the training formations of the Royal Flying Corps to undertake reconnaissance in the event of invasion. In January 1917 the role of aircraft in home defence was considerably expanded by fitting training aircraft in Britain with bombing equipment for use against enemy transports.¹ Bomb dumps were established at different points on the East Coast. By the beginning of 1918, the role of air forces in home defence had expanded to include

(a) Reconnaissance. (b) Bombing and machine gun action against Transports before and during disembarkation of troops and bombing for destruction of jetties, etc. which would be aids to disembarkation. (c) Bombing and machine gun action against troops who have disembarked. (d) Contact patrols. (e) Prevention of effective action by Hostile aircraft. (f) Co-operation with Coastal batteries. (g) Photography.²

When the enemy were reported to be within ten miles of the coast, reconnaissance aircraft would locate the approaching armada and provide rough estimates of its size and the strength of the force aboard. If the landing was already in progress, they were to report its location and the disposition of British troops in the area.³ Every effort was to be made to bomb enemy troops while they were still concentrated in the transports; success on this point would decide the fate of any German enterprise against England, presumably because the land forces were so weak. Where trained troops were lacking, British superiority in the air would provide the decisive factor. Both Army and Navy bombers would take part, with fighter escorts to deal with any aircraft the Germans might launch from the sea or the decks of ships, or fly over

³. Ibid. p. 374.
from Northern Belgium. Desperate improvisation characterised many aspects of the scheme: at one point, six different types of planes constituted the bombing force. Standards of performance between the various types differed considerably and two of the types had ceased to be first-line aircraft by this time.¹ But even trainers were fitted with bomb racks and sights, ready to be used "at the shortest notice"² for duties which surely would have carried them beyond their capacities. The aircraft and pilots used for the scheme were the training brigades of the two air services, which could hardly have been in combat-ready condition. Their employment in such a demanding operation as the precision bombing of ships with obsolete aircraft and half-trained pilots reflects a desperate expedience.

At two of the advance airfields in Kent, plans were made for the evacuation of all aircraft and personnel and the systematic destruction of all buildings with petrol. Demolition parties would be left behind to deal with the wireless and repair machinery with "sledges and mauls." Once their work was complete, they could leave by seaplane or escape overland to join up with advance British units.³

Each squadron of military bombers would be led to its target by a naval bomber, whose pilot had been trained in precision bombing and was more conversant with various types of ships. The Navy was deeply concerned lest Army pilots, in the stress and confusion of a German landing, sink British defending warships by mistake. Because of this the written orders emphasised repeatedly that bombers should attack transports only, and these

1. Adm 137/866/361.
2. Ibid.
only when led by a naval pathfinder aircraft, which would fire a red flare and begin its bombing run. The bombers were then to bomb the enemy transports continually until all the ships were sunk or the bombs had given out, while the fighter escorts would strafe the ships and beaches once German fighters were dealt with. Fighter pilots were warned to select their targets ashore carefully, as "the opposing forces are likely to be engaged at short range on an irregular and badly defined front" for which experience in France provided no guide.  

The official British estimate of German capabilities at this time seem more evocative of 1940 than 1918. The scheme in force throughout the last year of the war assumed that "Courses open to an enemy carrying out an invasion" included

Aeroplane Raids by Day or Night, and Airship Raids by night combined with or followed by landings of small bodies of troops at several points widely distant, such as simultaneously on West Coasts of Scotland, Ireland and England with the hope that troops will be dispatched to deal with these landings, then after an interval or simultaneously, a landing in force... covered by ships and submarines and it is also possible that an extensive mine field would be laid to protect the transports from our warships. In addition to this, sea-planes or land machines might be launched from the deck of a ship with the object of:

i. Reconnaissance of movements of our Warships and troops.

ii. Prevention of reconnaissance by our aeroplanes.

iii. Prevention of bombing attacks by our aeroplanes.

The question of the number of hostile aeroplanes with which we should have to contend would depend to a very great extent upon the locality chosen by the enemy for the attempted landing. If the venue should be North of the Wash it is highly probable that the only machines he would be able to put up would be sea-planes or land machines flown from the deck of a ship. South of the Wash, however, it is to be expected that other hostile aeroplanes would co-operate with his troops, flying over from his advanced Aerodromes in Belgium.

1. Adm 137/866/368-89.
It was believed that a landing on the coast of Norfolk or Essex would be the best from the German point of view.

It is highly contentious whether Imperial Germany could have delivered an attack of the above complexity in lieu of the Ludendorff Offensive in the spring of 1918. The most interesting aspect of the plan is that it shows the extent to which command of the air had largely displaced manpower in British home defence by the last two years of the war. Its tactic was to destroy the German Expeditionary Corps while it was still imprisoned within the confines of vulnerable troopships. It is noteworthy the extent to which the defenders were preoccupied with maintaining air superiority over the area of invasion. Frankly improvisatory measures had been moulded into a plan of complexity and sophistication to meet a situation for which no precedents were available. Even as these preparations against invasion reached their fullest stage of development, the R.A.F. became a separate service in its own right. Thus the air force made its own contribution in the defence against invasion, at a time when the Army was short of troops and the Navy was fully committed elsewhere.

Other modern weapons were adopted for home defence late in the war. In October 1918, as the first signs of German collapse began to appear, a scheme came into operation to use tanks against German invaders. Base depots for 48 tanks were established at Colchester, Canterbury, Dorking, and near Norwich, each of which had two days' supply of ammunition and petrol. If the Germans were successful in breaking through the British defences, the tanks were to drive into the enemy and relieve British strong-points still holding out. They were also to be used to attack enemy
concentrations preparing an attack and to strengthen weak British defensive positions. But their role was offensive and their proper place among the enemy troops sowing discord and despondency. Tanks were always to withdraw in the face of enemy field guns. But little allowance seems to have been made in the tactical plans for British conditions of closed country.¹

But by now it was apparent that any German overseas attack would shorten the war rather than prolong it, as it would siphon off German troop strength from the continent, where it was desperately needed with the Americans now arriving in strength. In recognition of these changed conditions, the Army called for the fifth and last of the inter-service conferences on invasion. The meeting, on September 30th, was mainly conducted by the military. The naval representatives saw no changes in the situation since the beginning of the year, but the General Staff represented that the enemy no longer had troops available even for a large raid, owing to insistent demands upon her manpower by her allies and the exigencies of the Western Front. The military representatives estimated that no more than 5,000 troops, without supplies or artillery, could be landed. This was accepted by the Conference and became the final standard of attack of the war.² Sir Henry Wilson, now C.I.G.S., forwarded this report to the War Cabinet observing that no gain a raiding force could achieve would be worth the loss of the necessary troops. Wilson recommended further reductions among the

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¹ WO 33/899 "Scheme 'T'. Emergency Arrangements for the Mobilization of Tank Companies..." A2161 October 1918.

100,000 defence troops in the island, especially the 6800 cyclists who were of the top physical standard.¹ By the end of the war the risk of invasion had been progressively discounted by both services to almost an imperceptible quantity.

The problem of home defence and the invasion question during the First World War has been almost completely neglected by the historians, in strong contrast to the abundance of material produced on the question for the Second World War.² The various official volumes - Jones' The War in The Air and Corbett's Naval Operations - devote only a few disjointed paragraphs to the subject, while Professor Marder's three published volumes contain only a few pages on the earlier inter-service conferences. Military histories of home defence between 1914 and 1918 do not exist. What information is available is found in sparse and scattered sources.

Yet the wartime history of the invasion controversy embraces several significant issues. The one which has inspired the most controversy has been the allegation that large numbers of men were kept at home out of fear of invasion who could have brought decisive results in France. This charge


2. Besides the interesting general information in Churchill's The Second World War, Volumes II and II (Cassells, London, 1949-51), Basil Collier's Official history The Defence of the United Kingdom (H.M.S.O., 1957) provides exhaustive information on home defence while eucrowing controversy; Ronald Whetley's Operation Sea Lion was an early and sound account of Hitler's invasion projects, while Peter Fleming's Invasion 1940 describes both British and German preparations on a popular level. A more recent study, Telford Taylor's The Breaking Wave (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1967) places the German invasion plans in their strategic context and analyses their importance. Where the invasion theme once inspired alarmist prophecy, it has in recent years prompted retrospective speculations. The earliest of these was C.S. Forester's "If Hitler Had Invaded England", serialized in the Daily Mail in 1960, which had the invading Generals decimated by British snipers and the German Panzers halted in confusion before they reached London. Contemporary treatments have been more pessimistic: life in a Nazi England has
seems to be much exaggerated, for it appears that sizeable forces were retained in Britain only for a limited period. This was between February-March 1915, when the first of the new Armies completed their training until the beginning of 1916, when Robertson and French discovered over a million troops in England and began transferring them overseas. Yet statistics are misleading, for only half of these were fighting troops, the balance being made up of rear echelons. The question is additionally complicated by the many training and supply cadres, headquarter units, and divisions undergoing training, all of which existed in widely varying numbers in Britain throughout the war. Throughout 1916 and 1917 the General Staff succeeded in sending most viable combat troops abroad, and by the beginning of 1918 what troops remained in England were, as contemporary inspection reports attest, almost militarily worthless and would certainly have proved a military liability abroad.

The Admiralty bears a heavy part of the responsibility during 1916 and 1917 for exaggerating the possibility of invasion, in setting up the 160,000 men standard, and cutting its commitment to intercept and impede a landing. During these two years the General Staff was anxious to devalue the possibility of invasion; for better or for worse, the Admiralty hindered them in this. This timidity on the part of the Admiralty cannot be explained solely in terms of strategic developments such as the U-boat campaign. After the departure of Churchill, the Admiralty seems to have undergone a crisis of confidence in its capabilities under a series of less

2. (contd. from previous page) been described in Giles Cooper’s play, The Other Man (also available in book form) and in Kevin Brownlow’s grim and harrowing film It Happened Here.

than dynamic administrations. There certainly was no momentous change in the strategic situation at the end of 1917 to account for the sudden revision of the scale of attack downwards from 160,000 to 30,000 (later changed to a compromise figure of 70,000). The decisive element was a change in leadership and the displacement of war-weary older men by a more vigorous and confident group of younger naval officers.

But the most significant and arresting development during the later years of the war is the sudden emergence of air forces in British national defence. By 1918 both the military and naval arms had delegated a sizeable portion of their responsibility for the defence of Great Britain to the new Royal Air Force. The new concern of British planners for "command of the air" over Britain represents a watershed in the history of the invasion question. The development of air power and an aerial defence against invasion in the last two years of the war transposed the invasion problem to a new dimension. The recognition of air power as the new decisive factor in home defence brought an end to the long history of invasion as a two-dimensional strategic concern. From the dawn of history Britons had looked to the sea and sea power for their first defence against invasion; now they were beginning to look to the sky and air power. It was the end of an era, for the perspectives of 1940 are implicit in the preparations of 1918.
CONCLUSION

Few projects preoccupied the pre-1914 European military imagination more than the invasion of England. French and German General Staffs spent years in considering the means of successfully conquering the British Isles, while British naval and military experts were even more diligent in their search for means to frustrate such an attempt. Rulers and statesmen took a personal interest in the project far beyond the call of duty. Kaiser Wilhelm II inspired the German staff studies on invasion, and directed that periodic reports be made directly to him regarding the progress of the planning. Civilian authorities in England, including Balfour, Asquith, and Churchill, personally studied which the problem in great depth in memoranda/are still remarkable for their depth and power of analysis. Civilian strategists such as Corbett and Repington analyzed its complexities in exhaustive detail. The possible invasion of England was an enigma which fascinated a wider constituency than the professional military planners, the statesmen, and the civilian experts; it was also a preoccupation of the populace.

Novelists and journalists in France, Germany, and especially Britain, turned to the theme of possible invasion repeatedly. Britons especially, mindful of the growing naval, military, and industrial power of their potential rivals, purchased millions of pamphlets and novels describing the perils of a future enemy landing in their homeland and suggesting how these might be
prevented. The very breadth and quantity of source materials which survive confirms that fear of German invasion was a major preoccupation of Edwardian England.

Invasion, as the central problem of British national defence, inspired the foundation of the Blue Water School of naval strategy in 1888 and fostered that heightened appreciation of the mechanics of sea power which characterized English thought in the quarter century before 1914. The various navalists were united on this basic point. That invasion was a naval problem, preventable only by supreme sea power, was the unifying doctrine of the Blue Water School, the one point that admitted no debate nor allowed subtle distinctions. This emphasis upon the overwhelmingly naval character of British national defence was the first principle of all British navalist writers and thinkers for a generation.

The history of the invasion controversy in the thirty years from 1888 to 1918 is closely related therefore to the rise and decline of the Blue Water School. Its appearance in 1888 meant that invasion, the fundamental problem of British defence, the most complicated of all military operations, could for the first time be subjected to the methods of modern scholarship, based on painstaking analyses of historical precedents and exhaustive studies of its tactical components. The intellectual rigour which characterized navalism won influential converts among that important minority of Englishmen who thought critically about defence problems, and encouraged a growing skepticism regarding
invasion which diffused downward through British society.

But the pedagogy of the navalists was a political liability as well as an asset. The Blue Water Schoolmen over-estimated the power of logic to overturn the deeply rooted and intuitive fear of invasion which affected the general public. The process of converting the nation to navalism proceeded slowly for over twenty-five years, and with many setbacks. Powerful vested interests associated with the military establishment, such as the Volunteer movement, national defence associations, and advocates of conscription, conducted a vigorous and skilful counter-attack. But in the last years of peace, navalist teaching on invasion reigned supreme in British public opinion. Those who still believed in invasion were an isolated and discredited rump, whose sole remaining activist of intellectual stature was Repington, Military even Correspondent of the Times. Yet, as navalism reached the peak of its public influence, it was rapidly becoming obsolete as a strategic system.

"Invasionists" who for various reasons asserted that overseas attack was not a remote naval contingency, but rather a military probability, argued that the navalists relied too heavily upon logic and historic precedent and had discounted the element of surprise, the accidents of war, and the accelerating pace of change in military technology. All these factors bore directly on the invasion problem, and in time the "invasionists" were substantiated by events. The initial premise of the navalists
was that steam had not invalidated the principal of naval
strategy that had evolved in the age of sail. This statement was
ture, but its corollary— that naval strategy could not be over-
turned by technical development— was not. As Professor Gerald
Graham has noted in another context,

It is an interesting commentary on human affairs that
Mahan's exposition of the influence of sea power on
the course of European and American expansion should
have occurred at the very time when new instruments
of the Industrial Revolution were beginning to erode
principles and theories upon which his doctrines were
based. Under the impact of scientific and technological
advances, British command of the sea... had already
begun to disintegrate. With the coming of the aero-
plane... control of the sea was no longer possible.
Battleships and cruisers were not sufficient of
themselves to maintain maritime communications. Mahan's
dictum had lost its validity within two decades of its
pronouncement.¹

The outbreak of war in 1914 revealed what a few had sus-
ppected: that technical developments undercut the validity of many
strategic arguments based on surface seapower. Almost overnight
assumptions were overthrown which had prevailed in British public
opinion for a generation and which had been the foundation of
government defence policy against invasion for twelve years.
Incidents such as the sinking of three British cruisers by a
single U-Boat on 22 September 1914 had a traumatic effect on
the formulators of British British defence policy. (Churchill makes no
reference to this event in The World Crisis.) The pre-war strategic
principles and reference points appeared to be swept away, and the

¹. Gerald S. Graham. The Politics of Naval Supremacy. Cambridge
security of the home island threatened by the submarine and torpedo, a combination of weapons for which no suitable defence then existed. British statesmen and strategists were suddenly made aware that the arguments of navalism no longer corresponded to the real strategic situation, and with great energy sponsored all kinds of programmes and experiments to cope with a possible invasion.

This sudden awareness of vulnerability accounts for the severity of the invasion scare of 1914. The discovery that the surface fleet was susceptible to submarine attack inspired prodigious efforts on the part of the Government to prepare for a hostile landing. Only slowly did the realization dawn that German invading craft would be subject to the same liability, and by the spring of 1915, both the Cabinet and the press had recovered their original skepticism regarding invasion. It was in the Admiralty, which for a generation had been permeated with ideas now suddenly clouded with uncertainty, that professional confidence never completely returned. Only in the last year of the war, after continual prodging by the Cabinet and the military, did the naval authorities downgrade the official estimates of overseas attack. Caution and a healthy respect for the submarine replaced the spirit of initiative formerly associated with the traditions of the Royal Navy. After the departure of Churchill in May 1915, the Admiralty reacted chiefly to outside pressures regarding its invasion policy. The roles of the two services were reversed: now the military authorities wished to downgrade official estimates of
the likelihood of invasion, while more timorous Admiralty representatives strenuously resisted them.

By 1914, Blue Water doctrine, based on surface naval strength, had become a dangerous anachronism. Its weakness was its two-dimensional basis, its superficiality. Events soon indicated that invasion, as a strategic problem, had been raised to a third dimension. Britain could no longer be guarded by warships floating on the surface; rather, these "guardians of the deep" were themselves increasingly vulnerable to attack from the heights and depths, by submarine and aircraft. This marked a strategic revolution of the first magnitude: for the first time in British history, surface seapower in itself was not sufficient to guard against invasion. The key to Admiralty timidity for most of the war is expressed in the classic query *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Only at the end of the war was a partial solution found for this strategic imbroglio. By 1918, air power was displacing seapower as the first line of British defence, and an elaborate system deploying fighters and bombers against a possible German landing indicated the passing of seapower as the decisive element in British national defence.

Although the allegedly immutable principles of naval strategy remained valid for only a generation, this does not mean that the Blue Water School left no permanent achievement. The development of an internally consistent navalist doctrine educated the general public in the fundamentals of national defence strategy,
and later provided a theoretical framework for the Committee of Imperial Defence, the first British official body to concern itself exclusively with higher strategy. The insistence of the Blue Water Schoolmen upon starting with first principles lifted the invasion issue out of the realm of intuition and prejudice into the sphere of modern strategic analysis. The navalists imposed their methods and terminology upon even their opponents, and their methods and conclusions were adopted and upheld by successive British governments of both parties. One of the greater achievements of the Committee of Imperial Defence—to construct a national defence policy and to impose it on both services—is inconceivable without the pioneering work of the Colombas and their associates. The Blue Water School was no partisan philosophy; it was a climate of opinion accepted generally by all men who thought critically about British defence.

Blue Water insistence upon the insuperable difficulties of invasion had perhaps even greater consequences outside of England. For a decade after 1939 French and German General Staffs were actively weighing the problems involved in invading England. Whether such a project was ever physically possible involves the pursuit of intangibles beyond the disciplines of historical research. But what is evident is that invasion had become psychologically impossible for England's potential adversaries. The influence and prestige of the Blue Water School predominated not only in the higher counsels of the British defence establishment, but also in
the Reichsmarineamt and the German General Staff. When German policy makers began to construct a High Seas Fleet in imitation of Britain, they also employed British strategic concepts to guide them in their use of it.

Invasion was rejected by the Reich as a feasible military operation, in spite of the Kaiser's enthusiasm for the project, because Tirpitz followed the ideas of Mahan and the Colombs. The message of seapower and invasion ruled imperiously over the minds, not only of Englishmen, but also their enemies.

Yet invasion was not purely a naval issue, as some service partisans asserted. For at least twenty years after 1888 it stood at the core of a bitter and unrelenting struggle for predominance between the British army and navy. Almost all other defence responsibilities could be rightfully claimed by one service or the other: the fleet could not defend the Northwest frontier of India, nor the Army the imperial trade lanes. But invasion, owing to its complexity as a combined operation involving both services, was by its very nature ambivalent, and the natural prestige associated with defending the home island intensified internal competition. Both services initially regarded defence against invasion as their own eminent domain. Since 1860 the War Office had been inspired by a fortress mentality which visualized military bastions dotting the coast, surrounding the naval ports, and, above all, protecting London. But the prestige and influence of the new navalism slowly displaced this view, even within the War Office.
itself. Military officers studied Blue Water doctrines in order to refute them, and ended by being converted to them. By 1895, we can see even the very army officers engaged on planning the fortification of London doubting the wisdom of this policy and turning to the Blue Water School.

But only ignorant extremists claimed a monopoly for their service in the invasion controversy: what was really at stake was the proper proportion of responsibility between the two departments. Admiral Colomb quite early, in 1889-90, worked out a formula which eventually served as the basis of reconciliation. Colomb distinguished between invasion, as a naval responsibility involving an expedition that could not evade the fleet, and a raid, as a military responsibility involving smaller expeditions which could. This was an important strategic distinction which also had great political value: it justified limited War Office preparations against invasion on land, but at the same time subordinated these to the predominant and more active role of the fleet. Fifteen years later this solution was adopted by the Committee of Imperial Defence and imposed upon the two departments.

But this devaluation of the military approach to invasion was bitterly opposed by powerful elements in the War Office, and even more implacable interests closely connected with it. Additional invasion inquiries after 1903 saw attempts to overturn official defence policy and enlarge the army's responsibility against invasion. Military interests made their target the official estimate of 70,000, the largest possible raid: the enemy force
which could evade the fleet and land in Britain. This figure governed the extent of the military defence establishment in Britain, and these repeated assaults upon it were largely motivated by military ambition.

However, War Office zeal for attacking the navalist-inspired official policy faltered appreciably in the decade before 1914, as can be seen in a study of the invasion inquiries. The first in, 1902-03, witnessed strong and consistent opposition on the part of the military authorities to Blue Water principles. After the government's conclusions were announced, both Nicholson, Chief of the General Staff, and Brodrick, Secretary of State for War, personally prepared long papers in protest. With the passage of time, however, military officials of this mentality were slowly displaced by a new group of younger officers who saw a more promising role for the British army. Men such as Grierson, Wilson, Haig and French, filling important staff positions from 1905 to 1914, became enthused by the possibility of British military intervention on the Continent, in alliance with France and against Germany. The impact of this Continental Strategy upon the War Office is apparent by the time of the second invasion inquiry of 1907-08, when the active opposition to the government's invasion policy is led by Roberts and Repington, both retired officers outside the war office. Divided counsels are apparent within the War Office, as these "invasionists" receive official cooperation from only a few low-ranking officers. One of the official military witnesses at the inquiry, Wilson, believes invasion to be an issue beneath contempt and much of his testimony is instead subtle propaganda
for the Continental Strategy. The last pre-war invasion inquiry of 1913-14 was apparently inspired, not by any army source, but by Churchill at the Admiralty, concerned over the ramifications of the torpedo. The wartime inquiry late in 1914 followed a perplexing series of blows which undercut navalist assumptions. Overall, the decade saw the military transferring its interest from invasion to the Continental Strategy, while the outbreak of war found Kitchener trying to fulfil both commitments. Concurrently, the Admiralty's official attitude moved from belligerent confidence to doubt and perplexity.

The very success of the navalists in convincing authoritative opinion of the remoteness of invasion led directly to the great expansion of the rival service in World War One. Navalism, in emancipating War Office planners from their obsession with invasion, encouraged them to develop a new interest in military intervention on the Continent. The Continental Strategy became the military corollary of the Blue Water School and the navalist critique of invasion was inverted to become the initial premise of the interventionists: if a lesser naval power could be prevented from conveying a decisive military force from the Continent to Britain; the supreme sea power would succeed in carrying over a decisive expedition in the opposite direction. Once committed, the initial British force naturally expanded in size and power to contend with the relatively vast armies of its allies and enemies. The fleet, already undeniably supreme, had no need to expand further. By the latter stages of the war the British army was the chief military
force of the allies, while the Royal Navy remained relatively inactive in its sheltered anchorages. By this strange process of causation the Blue Water School, originally conceived as an argument for a supreme British navy, resulted in the subordination of the navy by the army in the British defence establishment.

The roots of this reversal in the position of the two services can be seen in the last years of peace. The emergency meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence held on 23 August 1911 during the Agadir Crisis saw the Continental Strategy take precedence over naval plans for British strategy in a possible European war. This development led to the final decision for military intervention on the Continent in August 1914, after the Admiralty gave elaborate assurances that Britain was safe from invasion. The commitment, once made, saw the British army expand from a small professional field force to a mass army sustained by conscription, while Great Britain itself for the first time became a true "nation in arms." The Blue Water predominance in the British defence establishment was only temporary: the awareness of the naval defence inspired the development of the military offensive.

The policy-makers had other concerns beyond the manoeuvres of service partisans. Outside the official defence establishment, the invasion issue appealed to many alert and sensitive elements of British public opinion. Supporters of both services, home defence enthusiasts such as the Volunteers, and conscription campaigners exploited the invasion issue and exerted a continuing
pressure on the political leadership. Cabinet records testify that public reaction to official invasion policy was a powerful influence upon the evolution of that policy. The close relationship between public concern and official policy can be seen in the parallel history of the invasion scares and the various Cabinet inquiries. The agitations of 1888, 1900, 1909, and 1914 either inspired or paralleled exhaustive Cabinet studies into the possibility of invasion.

Invasion agitation never assumed a strongly partisan character, though most "invasionists" gravitated naturally to the Conservative party, which had a traditional interest in defence questions. Bipartisan accord on invasion policy, symbolized by the close collaboration of Balfour and Asquith in the C. I. D. inquiries, prevented the agitation from becoming a party issue. The "invasionists" instead were isolated into small groups outside the Parliamentary power structure. It was the Conservative press, therefore, which played the central role in focusing and developing their case and bringing it to the notice of the general public.

A powerful editor, such as Strachey of the Spectator, (the most influential Edwardian weekly) could exert pressure on the government by publishing his own programme for dealing with invasion in a series of leading articles. Strachey's personal friendship with Cabinet ministers gave him additional influence upon invasion policy. A shrewd and well-placed military correspondent like
Keington could force a lengthy and exhaustive re-examination of official defence policy from the Cabinet and sabotage the careers of ministers through disclosures of negligence. Pepington's articles on invasion inspired repeated outbreaks of contentious correspondence in the Times letters column, which became the chief platform of public debate on the subject.

The new journalism, represented by Northcliffe's Daily Mail, also publicized the possibility of invasion. But where the traditional journalism, such as that of the Times, attempted to instruct its middle-class leadership in the subtleties of national defence, the new journalism frequently exploited public fear of invasion for less noble ends. Invasion articles and prophesies were used to boost circulation or to mount agitation for increased defence expenditure. Many of these journalists also wrote invasion novels, and the flood of their output helped to foster irrationality regarding invasion. Some of the invasion propagandists later became their own victims. Northcliffe spent the last months of his life under the care of a psychiatrist, sleeping with a gun under his pillow to protect him from imaginary Germans. His acolyte, the novelist Le `ueux, persuaded Scotland Yard to assign him a bodyguard on the outbreak of war and carried a revolver day and night. Keington, the intellectual leader of the "invasionists", saw his influence diminish after 1914 and the soundness of his judgment was coming to be questioned even before he severed his relationship with the Times in 1918. Even the more
upright Stracy suffered a breakdown in health in 1915 owing to his over-exertions on behalf of home defence, and was forced to resign from the Editorship of the Spectator.

But these invasion propagandists were highly successful in their immediate object. The extent of British public concern with invasion, especially during the Edwardian years, is apparent in the variety of the surviving source materials. Besides the volumes of official documents, learned articles, books, serial stories, novels, films, poetry, drama, satire, - even parlour games - centering on the invasion theme testify to the fact that it was a subject of widespread interest. Over a hundred invasion stories were published, many with repeated reprintings, indicating that novelists regarded it as a literary subject with a broad and lucrative appeal. Invasion, therefore, was not only a preoccupation of the governing elite, nor a concern of the military and naval authorities; it was a question of compelling interest to the common man. For the pre-war generation, a possible invasion was nothing less than a national obsession.
Ironically, officials of the Imperial German navy and the German General Staff turned their attention to the conquest of England at a time when British planners and public were almost exclusively preoccupied with an attack from France. By the time that the German "menace" had become an important theme in British political life, both the German army and navy had rejected invasion as an operation far beyond their capacities, out of the same considerations for sea power and naval strategy which were to prevail later in the C.I.D. German naval planning against England was first taken up in 1895. Offensive projects were first considered and when it was clear that these were impracticable, defensive operations against the British fleet were worked out.  

The audacious project of the invasion of England was first studied by the Staff of the Commanding Admiral of the Navy, with the full knowledge and patronage of the Kaiser, against a background of German naval expansion and diplomatic tension between Britain and Germany. The Kaiser Wilhelm Canal, which joins the North Sea and the Baltic and effectively doubled the strategic strength of the German fleet, was completed in June 1895, while the first great increase in the German Navy was foreseen in the Budget announced in the Reichstag.


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in December 1896. At the same time tension between the two countries was high owing to the Kaiser’s despatch of a telegram to President Kruger of the Transvaal following the Jameson Raid, congratulating him on having remained independent “without appealing to the help of friendly powers.”

Consciousness of rapidly-growing economic and political power is implicit in even the earliest German official studies of an attack on England. In January 1896 Baron von Luttwitz of the General Staff published an article on “The Invasion of England” in the semi-official Militär-wochenblatt. He declared that the only way England could halt invasion was through destroying the approaching army during its passage or embarkation. His aim was to destroy the illusion of Britain’s invulnerability, as steam and the telegraph provided for the rapid assembly and transport of an invading force. Luttwitz’s article came quickly to the notice of the British military, for it was translated and reprinted in the R.U.S.I. Journal the following month, with the comment that this misreading of British history was symptomatic of thought in military circles on the Continent.

But, unknown to the British, similar ideas were circulating officially in the German Navy. In May 1896, a naval staff captain examined possible alliances which would provide a framework for war between Britain and Germany. He argued that if an alliance could be effected with France, this would constitute a serious menace to

Britain's existence. It would also facilitate the occupation of Belgium as a preparation for an invasion of England. Antwerp would provide a convenient base for the German Fleet and the invasion army which would already be there in a state of readiness. However, if France were hostile, he stated, this meant German naval operations would have to be completely defensive, as the focal point of effort in such a war would be the defeat of France on land. Once this was accomplished, however, the surrendered French fleet could be requisitioned and used as a bargaining point with England. Other staff officers expressed agreement with these points: one remarked that although a landing in England was certainly "adventurous enough", its results would certainly be more decisive than a German raid on British shipping in the Thames, an alternative project then under consideration.1

The basic features of an offensive against England were presented to the Kaiser on May 31, 1897 by von Knorr, the Commanding Admiral of the Imperial Navy. This plan was based on a pre-emptive strike on the British Fleet on the fifth day of mobilization, for it was believed that the small but efficient German Navy could reach full battle effectiveness long before the more ponderous Royal Navy would be fully mobilized. If this attack proved successful, it would be immediately followed by a German landing in England, and Dutch and Belgian ports might be considered as embarkation points. But there were considerations opposing the forcible capture of harbours in the Low Countries: Germany

was a guarantor of Belgian neutrality, and the occupation of the Netherlands might tempt England to annex the Dutch overseas Empire. The Kaiser approved these points and authorised von Knorr's staff to study the following questions:

- Where in England are the troops to be landed?
- Where are the troops to be embarked?
- Which units, how many troops, and what transport will be necessary?
- What manner of communications are to be maintained with Germany?

The order of the questions is instructive as to the wishful and unanalytical thinking of the Kaiser and the naval staff: they are not posed in the logical order that would follow in the actual invasion operation (concentration and embarkation of troops, the transport across, and the landing), but rather they begin with the assumption that the German troops are already approaching the English shore and work backwards from this point. But the work went forward, under the patronage of the Kaiser, who received regular periodic reports on the progress of the planning.

While this paper was forwarded to the General Staff for their comments, the naval staff continued their studies. A paper of September 1897 argued that an alliance was almost indispensable in a war against England.

Should we be forced to war against England without allies our chances of overthrowing the enemy are extremely unfavourable. Only if particularly favourable conditions coincide can we strike at the heart of the British State, i.e. bring over a large invasion army to England.

In a war involving Germany alone against Britain alone, Germany should go over to the defensive in the North Sea and pursue a policy of "watchful waiting." A fleet of transports should be prepared while one awaited a favorable chance for invasion. Another study worked out the occupation of the chief Dutch and Belgian harbours as a preliminary for the invasion of England. The staff captain responsible argued that invasion would have the best chance if the length of the sea voyage could be minimized for maximum security and surprise. He calculated that the shortest voyage from a German port to a British port, Wilhelmshaven to Great Yarmouth, involved a crossing of about 270 sea miles. But if Germany seized the chief harbours of the Low Countries, the distance, and implied risk, would be reduced by two-thirds.

The distance from Vlissingen to Dover or Sheerness, both useful points for large-scale troop landings, is approximately 80-85 sea miles; in other words, less than one-third of the time would be required. The distance from Ostend or Kiewert is even less, only 60 sea miles, but because of the military and hydrographic conditions of these ports...they would be less suitable...(Yet) the chances of launching a successful invasion of England are improved in the number of jumping-off places which are available.

Other staff officers did not receive this plan with unreserved enthusiasm. The officer in charge of tactics pointed out that secrecy would be impossible in such an operation; another said that the preparations would take weeks, and dissented from the main contention of the plan that "the nearest place to the English coast was necessarily the best place to launch an invasion." The author of the scheme replied

that the invasion could be launched from several ports simultaneously, which would increase surprise, and pointed out that the General Staff shared his opinion that Antwerp was the best base of operations against England. He admitted that surprise and secrecy remained the most important problem of the plan, but thought this might be covered by holding frequent and ostentatious amphibious manoeuvres near the Dutch border. This inspired a comment that the only sure result of such a move would be to send France into the ranks of the enemy.¹

While these various schemes had been evolved by von Knorr's staff, the anticipated comments of the General Staff on the offensive plan had not been forthcoming. Although the plan had been sent in early June, 1897, it was only after the Navy had sent a reminder in November that Gen Schlieffen, Chief of the Army General Staff, supplied his comments on December 14, 1897. Because six months transpired between the Navy's first request for military reactions to the offensive plan and their reply, it is safe to say that the General Staff hardly considered the invasion of England a priority project at this stage.

Schlieffen, in reply, worked on the assumption that the British fleet would be hit on the fifth day of mobilization, and that troops could be landed in England up to the fifteenth day, when the remainder of the British Fleet would appear on the scene. He advised that the best place for the landing of German troops would be in the Thames Estuary or

hortherly, in view of the fact that English reinforcements would come from the Channel. As for the best embarkation port he recommended Flushing, on a near-island in Southwest Holland, for it could be captured quickly without the need for a siege that would prove expensive in time and money. However, this port was connected to Germany only by a single railway line, which would not suffice for the concentration and embarkation of an entire army. A better alternative would be to employ a number of German ports simultaneously, in spite of the greater distance, such as Emden, Bremerhaven, Cuxhaven, Hamburg, and the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal. As for the number of troops required for the project, Schlieffen emphasized that every available soldier should be sent, as success could only come through the total defeat of England.

The limiting factor here was not the number of troops, but rather the transport arrangements to ferry them to England. Schlieffen said:

Transport should be created for as many troops as possible. It would be an inexcusable mistake to leave behind even one battalion if a single ship is still available for transport. The number of available troops will be limited only by the amount of shipping and the potential of the railways.

He went on to suggest that further studies be set up to determine which harbours should be used for the embarkation, taking into account their respective capacities. Calculations must determine how many troops could be moved to and embarked from these harbours in the available time, remembering that the crossing of all the ships and the landing itself would have to be completed by the fifteenth day of mobilization, when British command of the sea would again be asserted. Schlieffen believed that the intervention of the British fleet would be only temporarily effective, for he wrote
After the landing, communications with Germany should be broken only for a short period. If the navy is not in a position to maintain communications, then the enemy country must be subdued with the utmost speed allied with a great show of strength. In this manner the enemy will be forced to accept peace.

But the Chief of the General Staff was not blind to the perils of the invasion operation, and summarised the project in the following words:

The Government of Great Britain will not be easily forced to issue an order for the Fleet to surrender. Yet this is the sole means of bringing the undertaking to a successful conclusion. If we set ourselves any lesser target than the capitulation of the British Fleet, then there is no knowing how we, even as victors, could return to our homeland. As long as the British Fleet exists and keeps command of the seas around her coast, the victorious German Army is a prisoner in the land it has conquered... Its position will be similar to that of a surrounded fortress. It will be starved out, not through lack of food - as long as the British have food, the army will find enough to eat - but because no replacements in men and material will get in. When the last round has been fired, the conquerors will have to lay down their arms. Only one thing can prevent this and that is the defeat of the British Fleet, before our ammunition is completely exhausted.

The naval comment at the bottom of Schlieffen's letter by the naval Chief of Staff was that this confirmed his views regarding war with England for the next ten years: only if the countries of Europe moved against England would such a war be possible, but for this very reason the matter must be studied in advance.

Other considerations had appeared which revealed the difficulties of invasion and during this same month - December, 1897 - the Navy informed the Kaiser that all offensive planning against Britain was being abandoned, owing to the sending of ships to the Far East and the British reinforcing their Channel Fleet. This cryptic statement reveals that after two years of visionary projects and discussions, von Knorr's staff

1. German Naval Archives. Fr. 109. S.160 "Notum zum Operationsplan..."
2. German Naval Archives. Fr. 110.
was getting to grips with reality. The Channel Fleet had indeed been strengthened in later 1897. When the German offensive planning had begun in 1895, the British Channel Fleet numbered only four first-class battleships. But following the magnificent display of British sea-power at the Jubilee Naval Review at Spithead in June, 1897, this number was doubled. The Channel Fleet was given eight first-class ships of the most modern and homogenous types, and was in fact the most powerful and effective single naval squadron in the world. At this time the entire German Fleet had no more than five first-class battleships, and these were all smaller than the new British craft.

The second, and more forceful, collision with reality, had been the experiences which had followed the Kaiser's decision to send a Battalion of German marines to seize the Chinese port of Kiao-Chow in August, 1897, which was graced by the Kaiser's famous "mailed fist" speech. This had provided sobering lessons in the complexities of combined operations and had shown conclusively that an expeditionary force could not be fitted out quickly or secretly, for news of the German preparations had filtered out and attracted international notice. Even more important, the modest operation of equipping and sending a single Battalion had exhausted German transport facilities and weakened German naval forces in Europe.

This experience augured ill for any project based on surprise and secrecy, and in fact was cited as evidence against the plan to seize harbours in

the Lowlands.1

A third factor behind the abandonment of the offensive planning was the rising power and influence of Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, who became State Secretary of the Reichsmarineamt in June, 1897. The Reichsmarineamt was a rival to von Knorr's staff organization, and Tirpitz himself, the forceful creator of the future German Battle Fleet, was very much von Knorr's personal competitor. Tirpitz, who was fluent in English, had read Mahan and the other writers of the Blue Water School, and subscribed to their doctrines, especially the one which taught that transport of troops over contested seas was at best a hazardous operation. In his memoirs Tirpitz castigates the "reckless advice" given by von Knorr's staff to the Kaiser2 and his own attitude to the invasion issue is caught in a diary entry written by the Reichs Chancellor shortly after Tirpitz had visited him.

The idea of an invasion of England is insane. Even if we succeeded in landing two army corps in England, it would not help us, for two corps would not be strong enough to hold their positions in England without support from home. Tirpitz concludes that all hostile activity towards England must wait until we have a fleet as strong as the English.3

From the beginning Tirpitz refused to hear of any military attack on England for the reason that the German force would never return.4

1. Steinberg. "A German Plan..."p.106.(Comments of"A.V."on Operational Plan)
Yet in spite of these strong reasons, staff considerations of the problems involved in invasion still went forward, as there was still hope that the German Navy might attain a strength that would make the operation feasible, and the ever-shifting diplomatic scene gave promise that a powerful ally might someday appear. Several detailed studies, moreover, were still uncompleted, and it was deemed best to complete these as preparation for that policy of "watchful waiting" which the Blue Water School assigned to the inferior naval power. The planning therefore continued throughout 1898. In January, the German Naval Attache in London forwarded plans of the fortifications and minefields of various British harbours, including Cardiff, Liverpool, Portsmouth, and the Thames. But von Knorr doubted the accuracy of these reports and sent one of his staff officers to find out what he could. This officer received contradictory information, as it later transpired, from the same informant, who was thus revealed as unreliable.1

In February a study made by one of von Knorr's staff noted that Schlieffen had assumed that the British Fleet would be hit on the fifth day and that invasion troops could be sent up until the fifteenth day of mobilization. But now a later study had indicated that unless Germany had all preparations in readiness by the outbreak of war, no troops could be landed in England until the eighth day of mobilization. Schlieffen had also requested that studies be made as to how many troops could be embarked from German harbours. Here the naval staff felt two separate studies were required: first considering the German merchant fleet alone,

and secondly, the merchant fleet plus ships under foreign flags. One naval staff officer warned that no plans should allow for the seizure of all shipping in German harbours on the outbreak of war, as this would be against international law: only vessels of allied or enemy nationality could be so employed.

In any event, statistical surveys of German harbours indicated that the embarkation of the invasion army would take three days. It was established in April 1898 that 145 ships and 2 Army Corps would have been available for such a project at that time in the event of a sudden mobilization. But the General Staff estimated in May that at least six to eight Army Corps, or from approximately 240,000 to 320,000 men, were necessary for the subjugation of England. This estimate carried some important implications. Such was the size of the army deemed necessary that the possibility of surprise and secrecy was eliminated. It was equally obvious that it would be many years before German harbour and merchant marine facilities could cope with the landing and transport of such a force. It was also unlikely that such a formidable force could be spared from Germany in the event of a two front attack by France and Russia in a war against the Dual Alliance.

The question of invasion was taken up by von Knorr during his private audience with the Kaiser on February 21, 1898, and the Admiral

2. German Naval Archives, Fr. 309; S. 65 ff. "Allegemeine Übersicht."
emphasized that only close cooperation between the two services could ensure success. The Kaiser then empowered him to contact Schlieffen to arrange combined manoeuvres focusing on "regular, full-scale practices in loading and unloading troops." The Admiral wrote to the General Staff and suggested that an interservice commission be established to work out the administrative side of the manoeuvres, asking how many troops and ships would be required for the exercise and where it should be held. Schlieffen's reply is not known, but the exercises took place later in connection with coast defence preparations. On another part of the invasion considerations, Von Knorr's chief of staff informed the General Staff (25 March 1898) that as the expansion and naval build-up of Dover Harbour would soon make any large scale landings in the Thames or the Channel out of the question, he planned to make a survey of the English coast from the Thames to the Humber, using J. Olga. But later this plan fell through. The more detailed and exacting the inquiries, the more abundant the evidence was that the invasion of England was virtually impossible under prevailing conditions. Finally, in May 1898, von Knorr's staff was ordered to prepare contingency plans for a strategic defensive.

But by now the General Staff was interested in the problem of the invasion of England, for it was in this same month that a military attaché after a lapse of several years, was gazetted to the German Embassy in London. The officer chosen was Baron von Müttwitz, who had achieved a

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certain notoriety the year before by publishing an article on "German Havel Policy and Strategy" which in part contended that

The unassailability of England is a legend. Through the introduction of steam and electricity the situation has much changed since 1805, to the disadvantage of England. The assembling and the rapid surprising transport of invading armies has, in consequence, been essentially facilitated. 1

Lüttwitz had gone on to argue that the only obstacle to such an attack was the British Fleet: therefore Germany should build a supreme and powerful Navy. When these facts were brought to the attention of Beaumont, the Director of Naval Intelligence at the Admiralty, he commented:

The appointment of this particular officer cannot be mere coincidence - his attention having been so recently directed to showing how the invasion of England can be made possible, he will now have full opportunity of judging the practical application of his theories - There is, in my opinion, more fear of an attempt at invasion from Germany than from any other nation - their home fleet is eventually to be 17 Battleships - their transport resources will be abundant, and they will pass their troops through Belgium.

The last phrase of this is interesting: had Beaumont got wind of the project to seize the lowland ports for an invasion? It is also significant that at a time when most Englishmen anticipated an invasion from France, if at all, that the M.I. foresaw the German threat in their ambitious naval programme. Richards, the First Sea Lord, termed Lüttwitz's appointment "an offensive procedure but one which cannot be noticed," for him the question of real concern was the German naval expansion. 2 Goshen, the First Lord, could not understand the German attitude, which seemed to him to overlook the simple fact that a

powerful Britain was in the German interest.

By September 1898, von Knorr's staff had finally reduced the question of invasion to its elemental state: was a landing possible at all? A long study entitled "War Strategy Against England" stated:

Germany on her own simply cannot consider a planned naval offensive against England. The chance of carrying out an unobserved invasion is even less, i.e. it would be impossible to carry out preparations in secret. Our better war preparation should be used immediately war broke out for an offensive sortie and if this was successful, it should be followed by immediate invasion ... The landing should be carried out by the 8th day at the latest. Any later the command of the sea would be lost... If, as is at present maintained, an army could not be embarked by the evening of the 8th day, the whole plan falls through."

Von Knorr went on to enumerate three basic factors which would determine whether the project could ever be carried out. First, there was the possibility that the fluctuating international situation might throw up allies in the future and in this context various combinations against England were examined: the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy; a Russian alliance, alone or supplemented by agreements with Turkey or Denmark, etc. But the coalition of France, Russia and Germany against England seemed to offer the brightest prospect of all, for it was asserted that Turkish neutrality could be ignored while the armies of the allies met with successes in Egypt and India."

A second and more mundane consideration dealt with Germany's ability to provide a transport fleet of sufficient size for the invading force.

1. German Naval Archives. Fr. 185; S. 175. "Kriegsführung gegen En." 12 September, 1888.
2. German Naval Archives. Fr. 191; S. 186.
3. Ibid. Fr. 168-174; S. 159-165.
This question was still being studied: one officer wrote that it could now be assumed that the merchant fleet was large enough for the purpose, but this assumption was questioned from several quarters. The role of the Fleet against England, however, was dependent on many factors: the situation of the harbours and the transport of the army and its ability to use the harbours. All depended on whether Germany could assemble and prepare a transport fleet quickly which would carry over troops as well as material. At the moment this was undoubtedly beyond German capabilities (a marginal note at this point read "Impossible") as the Kiao-Chow operation had shown. The preparation of this expedition had caused much commotion abroad and surprise attacks would have to be reconsidered in the light of this experience. In any event, planning of this type was really more the concern of the Army than the Navy, which was only the means to the end.  

If a clear-cut operational plan against England is ultimately to be drawn up, then direct cooperation between the higher authorities of the army and navy is essential. As long as this cooperation does not exist, there would be little point in one side preparing such a plan.2

The third problem of vital importance was to decide on possible landing-points on the English coast. Von Knorr's staff had prepared an 18 page survey of the east coast of England which noted the hydrographic features of various ports and beaches. A landing south of Dover was rejected out of hand, for most of the British coast defences against invasion were already concentrated here. But north of the Thames, the

1. German Naval Archives. Fr. 175-171.
2. German Naval Archives. Fr. 202; S. 189.
studies were more detailed and dealt with the capacities of various
harbours and their proximity to various British forts in great detail.
Harwich, for example, was especially recommended as a disembarkation
port, for it could accommodate ships of almost 15' draft, was
unaffected by tides, could be closed off from the open sea by a mine
field, and was out of range of any defending forts. This study was
based partially upon reconnaissances of the English coast from
Orfordness to Scarborough, the second and final of which had involved
two officers of the Great General Staff. Landing places and stretches
of beach were chosen for embarkations, being determined from "special
maps", which were almost certainly Admiralty coastal charts.

On the basis of this reconnaissance von Knorr's staff chose the
following stretches of the English coast as the most suitable for a
landing for technical reasons, such as ease of anchorage, and beach
approaches:

1. Flamborough Head, with Bridlington Bay to the South,
   and Filey Bay to the North.
2. The Humber Estuary, below Grimsby.
3. The Southwold coast as far as Lowestoft or Yarmouth.
4. Orfordness to Southwold.

From a technical point of view, these areas were the most suitable for
a landing, but this was at variance with the General Staff's stipula-
tion that a landing must take place as near to London as possible but
the Naval Staff were set against any landing in the South or Southeast,
for British defences were concentrated here, which made it impossible
to land an army of several thousand men. Even if the British Fleet

   an den Kommandierenden Admiral der Marine." 17 November 1898.
2. German Naval Archives. Fr. 226; S. 212.
were contained by Germany or her allies in the Irish Sea, the British still had adequate patrol and guard ships available to prevent a disembarkation, not to mention her home defence forces.¹

This memorandum was put before the Kaiser in November 1898, who agreed to discuss the possibility of embarkation exercises with his war minister. At the same time the paper was forwarded to the General Staff for their comments, and Schlieffen replied on November 17th. To him the distance of the sea-voyage remained the most critical aspect of the whole operation, and he agreed with the Navy's conclusion that British coast defences were too strong to permit a landing South of Orfordness. He also criticised the Navy's choice of landing-points north of the Humber, because these were too far from any worthwhile objective. Schlieffen recommended that future planning be concentrated on the third of the Navy's choices, the stretch of coast between Great Yarmouth and Aldeburgh,² which had the advantage of being closest to Germany even if conditions for landing were not as favourable as those found further north. This was later to become the stretch of coast where British defence planners thought a German invasion most likely during the First World War.

A naval comment on Schlieffen's letter directed that no further studies were to be undertaken until the results of the transport exercise were evaluated. On 10th January 1899, von Knorr wrote to the General Staff, enumerating the important arguments against an invasion attempt as follows:¹

1. The impossibility of assembling a transport fleet unobserved

². German Naval Archives. Fr. 228-229.
and quickly enough to exploit the advantage of Germany's rapid mobilization.

2. Neither now nor in the foreseeable future could Germany without allies hope to achieve unlimited command of the North Sea even for the essential minimum seven days.

3. Germany alone must for the time being abandon all idea of attacking England on her own soil.

But there were still some theoretical studies to be worked out in cooperation with the General Staff and it was hoped that these could be completed in the course of the winter in order to prepare for a meeting with the Kaiser,¹ who still maintained a deep interest in the invasion project.

According to Professor Ritter, both staffs recognised the impossibility of a project against England in 1899,² but General Staff interest in invasion revived as a result of the Boer War. Lieutenant-General Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, who commanded the Engineer Corps of the Prussian Army, was one of the strongest advocates of invasion and wrote in his diary just before the Boer War broke out (24 September 1899) that

we must be ready and prepared in alliance with Holland to launch out from her coast at a favourable moment toward the coast of Albion, like William the Conqueror or the Third of Orange.

In the following months, as the British Army met with a series of defeats in the field and as the transfer of British guns and troops to South Africa reduced her home defences to the lowest level in modern times, other General Staff officers began to reconsider the invasion.

¹. German Naval Archives, Frs. 228-229.
². Gerhard Ritter, Strategie und Kriegshandwerk. Vol. II.
In March 1900, when only four battalions of British Regulars remained in the home island, von der Goltz published an article in the *Deutsche Kundscha" which noted that there was practically no military force on the other side of the Channel. He contended that a clever and quick sea commander could gain temporary command of the Channel and land troops in England. Similar ideas were being considered behind the scenes. Two General Staff officers took part in an interservice conference on a North Sea offensive and overseas operations on March 20.\footnote{1}

Eleven days later, von der Goltz forwarded to the Admiralty Staff an invasion plan based on the use of sea-going barges towed by tugs. Goltz contended that these shallow-draft vessels could be run ashore directly onto English beaches, thus expediting the hazardous embarkation operation. The Admiralty Staff, in the person of Admiral Azler, replied that this plan at first seemed to have several advantages. But these disappeared on a closer examination of the problem. It was true that barges could approach quite closely to the enemy coast, but the tugs which were necessary to tow them could not. Either rowboats or paddle-wheel steamers would be necessary for this task. Barges had several other disadvantages. They were utterly dependent on tugs for their motive power, which meant doubling the number of vessels used in the invasion operation. The precariousness of the connection - the tow rope - was an

additional factor of risk. Barges were also limited to a low speed, had a relatively small size and hence an insignificant troop capacity, and were completely dependent on favourable weather.¹

The Admiralty Staff estimated that 85 large sea barges and 85 tugs would be required to transport a single mobilized division. Did von der Goltz still believe that this was a suitable means of launching a surprise attack on a superior sea power such as Great Britain? The Admiralty Staff offered some comments on his plan. First, he had planned to land an Advance Division before command of the sea was obtained. Yet it was uncertain that Germany would ever go to war with England. Von Schlieffen, the Chief of the General Staff, had estimated that four to six Army Corps were necessary for the conquest of England, so this Advance Division would have to be quickly reinforced by seven to eleven others to fulfil this task. This was obviously impossible without command of the sea: the Advance Division would be wiped out before it could be reinforced. It was also erroneous to assume that the barges could be loaded with troops without prior preparation, especially in view of the great numbers of tugs and barges required. All the barges would require special internal fittings, such as horse stalls, and the indispensable ventilation just didn’t exist.²

If a rapid and secret attack on England was desired, the best method was to employ the large Trans-Atlantic liners which lay available

2. Ibid. (46-48.)
at Bremerhaven and Hamburg. These had double the five to seven knot speed of the barges and lay ready on a permanent stand-by basis. Six steamers could convey a division of troops in any weather at a speed of 13 to 14 knots. If barges were used, 170 vessels would be required, which would take two to three times the time and would be utterly dependent on good weather. In short, the Admiralty Staff did not share the optimistic views of von der Goltz and his staff, but his work and suggestions had at least served to clarify the question. An intended trial, scheduled for the Fall of 1900, would confirm the views of the Admiralty Staff.¹ This presumably was the last heard of a barge project in German official circles, although echoes of the idea are very strong in a 1903 invasion novel written by the Irishman Erskine Childers, entitled The Riddle of the Sands.² British naval authorities were equally scornful of the barge plan.³

The German authorities did carry out further studies to confirm their theories. In the Fall of 1901 several modest amphibious exercises were carried out by the combined services. In the largest of these, Prince Henry of Prussia led a group of 1700 marines in a landing on the Vistula from the sea during the annual manoeuvres. The British attaché who witnessed this operation was not impressed with its magnitude or

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authenticity, and described it as a theatrical advertisement for German
sea power in which the defending forces were held back for effect.¹

Further evidence as to thinking in the General Staff in 1901 when
another General Staff Officer, Lieutenant Baron von Edelsheim, published
a technical treatise entitled Overseas Operations. The leaflet, which
was almost immediately suppressed by the German authorities, reproduced
several of the arguments used in the earlier official considerations;
a Russo-German alliance would prevent a German defeat; a Franco-German
alliance would seriously menace England's existence. Because England's
weakness in troops was Germany's strength, Germany's best chance lay in
throwing an army into England, thus circumventing British naval strength.
To Edelsheim, the invasion of England was a simple operation: there were
many stretches of British coast that were only thirty hours by sea from
German ports. He foresaw a German expeditionary Army of four infantry,
and one cavalry, divisions living off the country and advancing upon London.
Its first objective would be the destruction of the British field force,
and the fall of London would probably follow its surrender.²

However, similar ideas had long been swept into limbo in the
guiding counsels of the German Navy. Tirpitz was not dissembling in his
memoirs when he stated that he had made no plans for the invasion of
England, for these schemes had been sponsored by his rival, von Knorr.
Moreover, Tirpitz was as avid a partisan of the Blue Water School as his

¹ I.D...O., 1902. pp. 29-34.
² Freiherr von Edelsheim. Operations on the Sea. Outdoor Press, N.Y.,
1914. Operations Uber See was first translated into English the year
it appeared, 1901.
counterpart Fisher, and he steadfastly refused to consider an overseas attack over contested waters. An excerpt from an official paper of October 1908, when British fears of a German invasion were at their height, expresses the true spirit of the Tirpitz era of the German Navy.

This maintained that

...large-scale landings on English soil are impossible, so long as the British Fleet still exists, and these would perhaps be completely superfluous in the almost inconceivable event that the enemy fleet would be destroyed, and the uncontested command of the sea fell to us. 1

In other words, the German Navy would sooner launch a blockade in the approved Blue Water School style than attempt the military conquest of the British Isles. It is ironic that Germany should be the first of the principal European powers to examine the invasion of England as a strategic problem, and then to reject it even before the British Government analysed the invasion operation. It is likewise noteworthy that the German studies were completed long before Germany had a formidable fleet and long before most Britons saw a threat to their sea-supremacy from Germany.

Divided counsels persisted throughout the evolution of the planning, and paralleled somewhat the personal rivalry of von Knorr and Tirpitz. But the real motivating force behind the studies was the Kaiser himself, for whom the project of an invasion of Britain seems to have held an appalling fascination. When a novel appeared in England in 1906 which gave a detailed prophesy of the German conquest of England, the Kaiser

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ordered both the Army and Navy staffs to make formal evaluation of each installment. This may explain many of the cross currents in the German considerations of the problem, and possibly the revival of interest by the General Staff after the Navy had rejected the operation. But this was no dove and hawk debate, for there were no counsels of moderation. The only limiting factor was Germany's inferior position at sea, and the debate centred around how the limited means at the disposal of the German Imperial Navy might be employed most effectively in a war against Britain.

The German offensive planning in the immediate context of actual naval power, seems extremely unrealistic if not visionary, in character. But these discussions and studies manifest a spirit of determination which anticipates a future time, when Germany would be a very considerable sea power indeed and when the policy of perpetually watching for favourable chances for invasion might indeed find fulfillment.

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Naval and military officials of the Third Republic also gave serious consideration to the possibility of mounting an attack upon the British Isles. A French General Staff study of June 1897 proposed that France detach some 60,000 troops from her field force even in the midst of a general European war, if these could effect some relief by attacking England. This French expeditionary force was to be composed of three infantry divisions, reinforced by 1,500 cavalrymen and possibly some cyclists, served by some 19,000 horses and 3,700 transport vehicles, roughly half of which would be appropriated from the English countryside. It was further recommended that an additional division of 15,000 be kept at the beach-head to keep the line of retreat open. As in the German plans, it was emphasised that the actual assembly and disembarkation of the force would have to take place before the 15th day of mobilization, when the British navy would be fully embodied. After this it would require a transport fleet of double or treble this size to accomplish the same end. The force would be landed in England by nightfall of the ninth day of mobilization, provided British forces did not interfere with the operation. The actual crossing would be screened by a light squadron of cruisers and destroyers. A landing South of the Thames was considered most auspicious for French fortunes, as this

involved the shortest possible sea-voyage and would land the French Army in that area of England where livestock, horses, and means of transport were most abundant. A detailed study of all possible landing places from Land's End to the Thames singled out the beaches near Dover and Newhaven.¹

A landing at Newhaven was examined in detail. The guns of the escorts would first silence Newhaven Fort and rake the beach, if defended, and then screen the landing from intervention by the British fleet. Three regiments of cavalry would be embarked as an advance reconnaissance force and occupy Newhaven and the surrounding area. One detachment would occupy Brighton and a second would push inland into the countryside as far as possible. Meanwhile, the main force would be landed, form up on the beach, and begin its march for London as soon as convenient. It was remarked "what follows depends on the enemy." In addition a fourth Reserve division would be landed at the mouth of the Cuckmere, a small river ten miles east of Newhaven, to cover the right flank of the landing and later to guard the coast after the departure of the main force for London. It was calculated that the entire operation would take 36 hours from the fitting out of the transports until their return to France.²

But it was admitted in the summary of the plan that

The greatest, perhaps insurmountable, difficulty, is to obtain either by force or ruse, the freedom of the sea for the necessary time; in our present situation, the cooperation of an allied

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2. Ibid. p. 23.
fleet would appear to be almost indispensable. In any case, the only chance for success from the viewpoint of both land and sea operations, would be to attempt the enterprise ten days after the beginning of preparation for war. In order to be prepared in time, it will be necessary to plan long in advance. This will follow through a silent perseverance of research, defence preparations, and the necessary operations.1

The entire plan depended on speed, as the British Fleet could intervene in force after the fifteenth day of mobilization. Once this was accomplished, the strategic dimensions of the operation would be entirely changed. New decisions would have to be made as to the landing-place, size of the force, and the possibility of diversionary landings.2

The plan does not seem to have allowed for the proximity of a British fleet at Portsmouth nor for the presence of the Channel Fleet.

This plan, or something similar to it, was apparently circulated to the chief Admirals of the French Navy during the Fashoda Crisis of September-December 1898. Admiral Fournier, the Commander of the French Mediterranean Fleet, inveighed against the proposal in a long letter to French Naval Headquarters on October 2, 1898. Fournier pointed out that British cruisers and destroyers would wipe out any such expedition.

Even if by an off-chance, a first landing can be made, would not the lines of communication and retreat of troops thrown thus on English soil be undoubtedly cut? I do not fear to say such an operation appears to me chimerical in the present circumstances, which are quite different than those which inspired Napoleon the First.3

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2. Ibid. p. 13.
Fournier added that even to simulate preparations for invasion would not make any impression in Britain: it certainly would not prevent the junction of the British squadrons from the Channel and Mediterranean.

He summarized:

... to carry out this operation today would be a folly which would lead only to a naval disaster. Its preparation would only waste our time and money, paralyze our Fleets, and immobilize our Army in the North by useless concentrations of troops and riverboats in our Channel ports.

Furthermore, the plan would expose the transports to the bombardments of the British Fleet, which would incontestably remain mistress of the sea.¹

However, because the Fashoda crisis had revealed that the French Navy had no war plans against England,² a two day meeting of the Supreme Naval Council was convened early in January 1899. This body was called only for questions of the highest importance and met very infrequently.³ The Fashoda crisis was still not completely resolved, and it was thought advisable to determine the role of the French Fleet in the event of war. Fournier had modified his position to the point that he now considered a simulated invasion the "most efficacious means of intimidating England, if all measures were taken simultaneously and openly to make them fear a landing." A demonstration for the benefit of English public


³ Ibid.
opinion which included a massing of troops on the coast and the
concentration of the Northern Fleet off Brittany would have a most
salutary effect. The greater part of the British public, ignorant of
naval doctrine, would be terrified of invasion, and "the fear of a
landing of our troops would produce such an effect that English would
perhaps hesitate to push matters to extremes."

But most Admirals were agreed that the surest result of such a
manoeuvre would be an English declaration of war the next day. The
uncertainty of Germany's attitude in event of war was another source
of concern. It was pointed out that the plan implied an alliance with
Germany or Russia and many Admirals and most Generals were agreed that
this possibility should be examined. Nothing had been prepared for this
eventuality because of the 25-year-old delusion that France would never
declare war on England. Admiral Gervais pointed out that 60,000 were
hardly sufficient to attack England, which had 200,000 home defence
troops. The difficulties of the operation were immense; only if France was
victorious at sea could invasion be contemplated and then only after it
had been prepared in advance down to the last detail. One should not be
hypnotised by invasion.

Only one Admiral opted for an actual attempt at invasion as opposed
to a demonstration. Broun de Coulston asked if a purely naval war, in
which millions of French soldiers would do nothing, was really acceptable
to France. The Minister of Marine, Lockroy, replied that the army was
completely prepared, should the occasion arise, to help the Navy. The
only question was how. The Minister of War promised to concentrate troops
on the coast as part of a demonstration, but beyond that he was skeptical.
A serious operation such as the transport of troops to an enemy coast and their subsequent supply raised great difficulties. Could the Navy guarantee the almost daily revictualing of such a force? It was no secret that the French Navy was in an advanced stage of disorganization, so the matter did not go beyond the planning stage. But at the same time the French Army became interested in amphibious operations. In the Fall of 1898, combined manoeuvres were held for the first time under the command of Colonel (later Marshal of France) Ferdinand Foch, and the institution of a course in Combined Operations at the École Supérieure de la Guerre in 1898-99 was an indication of continuing interest on the parts of both services.

The coming of the Boer War brought a great revival of French public and official interest in the project, for British military power at home had sunk to an unprecedented low owing to the demands of the war in South Africa. In March 1900 the entire issue of Le Monde Illustré was given over to an illustrated prophecy of a Franco-Russian conquest of Great Britain. Captain Houette of the French Navy, in the course of a public lecture in Paris in April, hoped to use tugs and fishing boats to throw 90,000 French troops into England, with artillery, baggage, ammunition, and four days' supplies. All that was required was 16 hour's command of the Channel. Another journal outlined a similar project based on a transport equipped with a ram which would sink its British adversaries. In August La Patrice proposed the lending of a French force


in the Thames Estuary, which would then be mined to prevent interference by the British Fleet, while the invading flotilla glided into the city of London on the crest of the tide. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* outlined a scheme involving the mass production of armoured landing craft which would be impervious to any shore resistance. In December, General Mercier, a former Minister of War, rose in the Senate during a debate on the French naval estimates to propose an invasion of England and to describe his personal plans for the operation, which would constitute "a Damocles' sword to be drawn or not at discretion" over England.¹

Official considerations of an invasion project evidently continued throughout the Boer war. In January 1901 the Supreme Naval Council, in discussing cooperation with the Army in the event of war with England, hoped to determine the principle points of agreement between the two departments regarding invasion. It suggested that the Navy appropriate the merchant marine for such an attack in time of war, while concentration points were fixed for the troops and transports in the period of political tension preceding the declaration of war. A bonus was proposed for vessels which fitted themselves out in advance for troop transport.² These activities did not escape the notice of the British naval attache, who compiled a special report on French preparations for invasion for the Director of Naval Intelligence at this time.³

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² Archives Marines, C.S.M. 1900-04, "Session de Janvier 1901."

³ Adm 1/7444 "Naval Policy of France: Report by Captain Gamble, Naval Attache." 17 February 1900. It has proved impossible to locate Gamble's report, but it was sent between February 1900 and December 1901.
French interest in invasion led to a series of amphibious exercises in the course of the French army manoeuvres in the Fall of 1901. It seems likely that these operations were organised for propaganda as much as for military purposes, for the promotion of an invasion scare in England was an avowed part of French policy at this time.¹ A French Colonel published an article in an English magazine on the manoeuvres, complete with pictures depicting French cyclists rushing through surf, "hastening to meet the enemy". He described a series of rapid practice landings, designed "to show our neighbours on the other side of the Channel that we are thinking about them," and quoted a French Admiral to the effect that "to land in England is the work of a moonless night."² But the British virtually ignored these significant exercises, presumably arranged for their benefit.³ A confidential report on the manoeuvres by British military intelligence was suspicious and skeptical.

The disembarkation appears to have been more theatrical than practical, and the chief instruction to be derived from it is to regard the experiment as an example of how a thing should not be done. No effort was made to carry out the operations under conditions that would prevail in war. The disembarkation was not covered by the fleet; there was nothing in the way of surprise; the troops were very slow in getting ashore; and there was great confusion in the way they were landed, the boats coming up haphazard, without any system.

About 6,000 men had been disembarked in four hours, without reserves of ammunition, food, or transport. The troops had landed and planted flags

in the face of point blank fire from the defending troops on the beach. In short, the exercise had failed to have any propaganda value in Britain and it held out little promise of operational success for the French.

A later study undertaken jointly by the French Army and Navy during the Boer War, established that sufficient steam-ships were available in the Channel ports to embark an army of 75,000 men with horses and corresponding supplies at short notice. This, it was said, was "a force quite superior to that which could bar the road to London to us, at least in the case where England, surprised at the beginning of a war, could only use her active army against us." Encouraged by this preliminary study, the Minister of War ordered the study and preparation of an expeditionary project, complete down to the last detail. It was decided to prepare an improvised concentration of an expeditionary corps at a point along the French Channel coast which could be carried to any area of the English coast. Speed and surprise were stressed, and the entire operation was designed to be carried out "at a stroke of the pen". The expeditionary force, composed of troops withheld from the Reserve, would be first concentrated in inland garrisons which lay adjacent to railways leading to the Channel ports. Their transfer en masse to the coast was designed to be completed in one night. The force of approximately 48,000 men, 5,200 horses, and 24 batteries of artillery, could be transported to the

sea in six hours, arriving at midnight. If they were all on board trains for the coast at six in the evening, it was estimated that the army would be on English beaches selected as suitable for a landing the following morning. Previous experiments had ascertained that landings could be made without piers directly onto the beach and with sufficient speed to avoid the intervention of the British navy against the French screen of escorts.¹

The French General Staff agreed that such an attack would succeed only in certain circumstances, such as those which prevailed during the Boer War. But a comparable opportunity might occur again. France must be prepared to profit from any difficulties in which England would find herself, until Britain had a truly national army on the scale of France and Germany. For the moment, England's army, made up of mercenaries and replacements and without seriously organised reserves, was only an imperfect provision against an adversary with a powerful navy and a solid army. The French suspected that the Germans had also recognised this Achilles' Heel of British power and saw many indications that they too were considering "the possibility of attacking England at home, as it is there alone that she is vulnerable." The French concluded, however, that they were much better placed to launch an attack of this type and noted that "it is well that we should be prepared, in the event of a naval war, to use all the resources of our military organisation."²

². Ibid.
Little reference, however, had been made to the reality of British seapower. As a further example of official French interest in the problem, the General Staff commissioned a massive study of the Napoleonic invasion plans which eventually ran to four volumes under the title Projets et Tentatives de Débarquement Aux Îles Britanniques. The first volume, which appeared at the end of 1900, concluded significantly:

These studies confirm once more that historical law that the result of a war depends essentially on the precision of preparations for it, on the moral and material value of the adversary, as well as the degree of preparation of the forces, which must be continually such that the policy-makers can choose the most opportune moment to begin hostilities.¹

The French did indeed continue their study of the invasion operation for some time. Ironically, when the French military attache in London returned to Paris in January 1906 with the important news that the British were willing to begin staff conversations, he found his colleagues on the General Staff deeply engaged upon the elaboration of an academic plan for the invasion of England, and when he told them of the friendly British invasion which some of us contemplated, their jaws dropped, their pens fell from their hands, and they were positively transfixed with surprise.²

Some details of this scheme were later presented as evidence before the C.I.J. inquiry into invasion in November 1907. Repington described material which he said had been passed on to him by the French military attaché.

According to him, the French hoped to pack in men and horses more tightly than usual for the short voyage across the channel. With this system they


had found it possible to unload 1,000 men on a pier from one ship in four hours, to be joined by 200 horses and 11 vehicles in another hour-and-a-half.

The plan, based on surprise, involved the landing of 100,000 troops on the open beach on a southern beach early one Sunday morning. All the equipment required for a rapid embarkation had been collected and stored at the French Channel ports. The transports used were to be considered expendable; their ultimate fate was regarded as unimportant. But by the end of 1907 the French Navy was allegedly proposing new uses for this embarkation equipment, which had been made redundant by the changed diplomatic situation.1

The British Government was somewhat skeptical regarding Repington's testimony, and letters were received from past and present attachés in Paris indicating that no such stores existed.2 At any rate, that section of the French planning which dealt with the invasion of England was officially suppressed in July 1908 for the reason that "in the present state of our foreign relations such a plan no longer corresponds to any plausible hypothesis."3

It is remarkable that both France and Germany began their serious


consideration of the problem of invading England at about the same time. References were frequently made in both sets of plans to the value of an alliance. In this contest it is noteworthy that either of the German operations - the early plan for a landing in the Thames and the later one for a landing on the Norfolk coast - could have been run simultaneously in concert with the French descent on Newhaven. But all suggestion of collusion between the two countries must be discounted, as Franco-German relations at this time were severely strained by the repercussions of the Dreyfus Affair. It was also extremely unlikely that the two nations would cooperate as long as Germany held Alsace-Lorraine.

It is noteworthy that German planning was brought to a halt in 1901 owing to an appreciation of British sea-power and the requirements of naval strategy; but most of the French planners, like the contemporary British "invasionists", calculated with only a few casual references to the British fleet, the most decisive strategic factor bearing on the invasion problem. Both French and German plans were initiated in the stormy European diplomatic climate of the late '90s and were accelerated by specific diplomatic crises involving Great Britain: the Germans by the Transvaal Crisis and the Kruger telegram; the French by Fashoda. Both countries were inspired by the British home defence crisis of 1900 to re-examine the project more exhaustively, and both carried out amphibious manoeuvres in 1901. Ironically, Germany ceased planning an attack on England at the time she was beginning to be regarded as a future enemy in British public opinion. France, the future ally, continued to plan an invasion of England for three years beyond the consummation of the Entente Cordiale of April, 1904.
The invasion of England was a project as fascinating to the
strategists, amateur and otherwise, of the Continent as of those of
England. The French and German invasion plans reveal that British
fears of invasion during 1900 and 1901 were not without foundation.
In these official considerations of the conquest of Britain,
continental hostility to England stands revealed in concrete form.
APPENDIX C: INVASION AND THE CHANNEL TUNNEL, 1906–1916

When in the early 1880's, it first appeared that the Channel Tunnel could become a commercial possibility, opposition to the scheme was led by General Sir Garnet Wolseley, who argued in an 1882 Memorandum that the project would constitute a virtual invitation to the French to invade England, as the mouth of the tunnel could easily be seized by a treacherous coup de main. A petition against the tunnel was signed by such disparate notables as Herbert Spencer, the Duke of Cambridge, Thomas Huxley and Queen Victoria; and the project died as an effective political possibility when an investigating commission from both Houses of Parliament voted against the continuance of the project in 1883.

By 1906, however, the tunnel advocates believed that conditions were ripe for a re-opening of the question. The Entente with France had eliminated the possibility of a treacherous attack from that country, and a Liberal Government had recently been voted into office under the leadership of the Radical-and peace-minded Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. The tunnel enthusiasts therefore mounted a powerful propaganda offensive, publishing tracts and pamphlets and sponsoring public discussions and speeches in favour of the project.

Simultaneously, the battle behind the scenes began in June 1906 when George Sydenham Clarke, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, introduced a memorandum to that body. Clarke had been an advocate of the project for many years and, as a Navy man, pointed out that the Committees of 1882 and 1883 which had condemned the scheme, had not included a naval representative for what was essentially a naval
question. He demonstrated that during the first thirteen years of the project, the government had failed to oppose the project and had intimated their general approval, even entering into an agreement with France for joint development. Furthermore, there had never been a government inquiry into the possible economic advantages the tunnel might confer upon the country. Since the heated controversy of the 'eighties' had subsided and because "our relations with France have been placed on a satisfactory footing, and the idea of French aggression no longer haunts the imagination of the public", conditions were favourable for a dispassionate review of the question. Previous arguments brought against the tunnel were very involved and frequently irrelevant. But it was futile to consider every imaginable contingency and the Committee should distinguish between what was feasible and what was purely visionary. 1

The coup de main theory of a sudden seizure of the tunnel without warning could be unhesitatingly rejected, as its proponents had never seriously thought out the nature of the operation this involved. Even Wolseley, its most eminent supporter, had in evidence testified that fifty men at the tunnel mouth could prevent an army of ten thousand from emerging from it, so it was obvious that the question of risk reduced itself to one of time. The arrangements which Wolseley proposed for guarding the works against an invasion attempt were, Clarke thought, more elaborate than was justified by reasonable requirements. Forts with drawbridges would command the entrance of the tunnel; a portcullis or iron grating could be lowered from Dover Castle onto the railroad tracks.

directly beneath. The line could be cut at the exit and the fortress garrisons would be in a position to drop explosives on trains passing directly underneath. The tunnel ventilating mechanism could be stopped, and hordes of invaders asphyxiated. The tunnel would dip for a mile at the British end, and this could be flooded with water by means independent of the Dover fortifications, in the unlikely event that these had been over-run by the invader. As a last resort the tunnel could be destroyed by fitted explosive charges. If all the above measures proved ineffective, the railway line issuing from the tunnel might cross a bridge which could be destroyed by naval gunfire from ships in the channel. A further precaution not dependent upon strictly local and military means of defence would be to construct a light-house tower which would serve as a ventilating shaft in the sea. If all else were lost, "A few rounds of heavy naval gun fire at low tide, or a torpedo, would wreck this tower and admit the sea." Clarke reasoned that if the above measures were taken and the normal working conditions of frequent trains in both directions were remembered, it would be impossible to suggest a reasonable plan for seizing the tunnel. No excessive expenditure would be required, since existing fortifications could be employed with only small modifications and no increase in the garrisons. He pointed out that he did not really contend that all these measures were necessary, and that some were justifiable only on the basis that France would attack without warning in a period of profound peace, an assumption baseless in experience, but one which exerted a certain fascination on the military mind.

In reference to the argument that the existence of the tunnel would produce panic among the populace, which was then quite frequently used, Clarke retorted that it was "impossible by any measures of precaution to prevent alarms on the part of uninstructed persons. The possession of a navy about two and a-half times the strength of Germany does not suffice to prevent attempts to raise the scare of German invasion." Such panic campaigns had only temporary effect; once the public became accustomed to the tunnel, panic would diminish and disappear. The project would only strengthen the good relations with France. Italy had not been afraid to construct a tunnel to France. The project created no new military risks which could not be obviated by simple measures of precaution.¹

Clarke's detailed catalogue of defence precautions apparently made little impression upon his naval and military colleagues on the Committee of Imperial Defence. Major-General J. S. Ewart, Director of Military Operations, agreed after a long conversation with Clarke on the subject that the tunnel would indeed be of great aid in a war of alliance with France, but wrote a "frankly hostile paper" on the idea. Ewart expressed in his Diary what many other soldiers presumably felt.

I have an insular prejudice against it, not on military grounds for it is easy to exaggerate the danger - but on sentimental grounds. I am prepared to admit that with France friendly or in alliance it might be a military advantage - but its completion will Europeanise us. I hate Cosmopolitanism. I stick to my insularity.²

2. Ewart Diary. 8 January 1907.
wart later elaborated on this point.

... I really do believe that the construction of the tunnel would destroy some of the splendid characteristics of our race and hasten our gradual deterioration by a still larger influx of undesirable aliens.¹

The Admiralty also remained unconvinced, stating that nothing at the present time had changed their point of view first expressed in Admiral Cooper Key's letter of January 1882 - that the basis of British defence was her insularity, defended by the supremacy of the Royal Navy. Indeed, the development of Dover as a war port since that time had emphasized the dangers of the project, which was a threat to national security. Bridging or tunnelling the sea separating Britain from the Continent would introduce her to the military burdens of the Continent: the tunnel would increase the Army estimates while it should not allow one penny to be taken off the Naval ones. It would increase the national liability to raid or invasion and would require forces to be kept at home that were urgently required elsewhere.

The Navy admitted that a vast improvement had been made in relations with France, but argued that the tunnel once made will be made forever, while all history goes to prove that international friendships are not based on such secure foundations that they are able to stand the shock of a conflict of international interests or a wound to national pride.²

Also, France was not the only possible enemy. The Duke of Cambridge had

¹. Swart Diary., 13 January 1907. we know only of Swart's paper through his diary reference - it does not appear in the War Office 'A' papers list. The Admiralty memo of 1907 was reproduced in 1914 and the citations are from this version.

pointed out a quarter-century earlier that Calais was closer to the
Low Countries than to Paris and that any Power which could invade France
could invade England via the tunnel as well. The Admiralty, fearful of
Germany, believed in 1907 that this was a stronger possibility than it
had been previously.¹

Further, once the tunnel was made, it would prove exceedingly
difficult to destroy and it would be very hard for a single officer to
make the terrible decision to do so with the necessary promptness to
prevent invasion. This argument, of course, betrayed the Admiralty’s
ignorance of the latest devices which would close the tunnel without
permanently damaging it. The Admiralty revived all the older arguments
against the tunnel. It would introduce new sources of danger which would
not be compensated for by commercial gain. The Admiralty summed up: the
defence of the channel had been for centuries the duty of the Royal Navy,
but the construction proposal would introduce
divided responsibility, increased danger, and diminished
security...in the opinion of the Admiralty the balance is
altogether in favour of non-interference with the natural
sea frontier, which has been one of the main factors in
the creation and maintenance of the British Empire.²

Clarke prepared another paper outlining the legal steps that should
be made if the Channel Tunnel Bill were passed, providing for the building
of defences at the expense of the Company, conferring upon the government
powers to close, block or flood the tunnel at any time without liability,
and granting powers to take over the installation for national purposes,
such as passage of troops.³

¹. Cab, 38/26/15, “Strategic Aspects of the Channel Tunnel.” 23 April, 1914,
   pp. 1-2. The actual situation in June 1940.
². Cab. 38/26/15, p.2.
Simultaneously, anti-tunnel propaganda revived in reaction to the efforts of the Company publicity. In February 1907, Sir James Knowles, who as editor of the Nineteenth Century had led public opinion against the project in the 1880's, reprinted in that journal a 136-page supplement which embodied the earlier protests against the scheme by various authorities and notables. The old emotive appeals to British instincts of insularity and isolation were predominant. Knowles protested that

To un-island England and join her soil to the soil of the Continent while Europe is seething with unrest and complexities and perplexities and to do this at the invitation of private company-promoters for their own (problematical) profit, sounds like the plot of a comic opera.¹

Major General John Frederick Laurice, an old anti-tunnel warhorse, provided the military point of view

"When once the Channel Tunnel is made, the defence of the kingdom passes over from our supreme navy to our wholly inadequate army. The further advantage which our fleets have always given us, that, even if a force landed on our shores, it could not maintain itself, will be gone."²

Laurice resurrected Wolseley's vision of a sudden attack without warning, arguing from military history. The Russian fleet at Port Arthur showed the dangers of trusting to the perpetual vigilance of the defenders of a vital point, and the actions of the British Government immediately before the Boer war broke out, showed the difficulty of a democracy taking precautions in an atmosphere of impending danger. The public would argue that any preparations for an attack would only serve to irritate the enemy and precipitate a war.

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2. Ibid., p. 175.
One British officer wrote a play, which featured great historical figures debating on the merits and dangers of the Channel Tunnel scheme. Not surprisingly, Hannibal, Julius Caesar, Frederick the Great, and Napoleon all applaud the scheme, while Nelson and Wellington reject it on the grounds of insular sentiment.¹ Knowles, while claiming that public opinion on the issue had changed but little in the last thirty years, used arguments calculated to appeal to the pacific - and economy-minded - Liberal Cabinet.

...at a time when every effort is being made to limit our defensive forces, both naval and military, to a point which many consider too risky, these promoters have the assurance to ask for a serious and quick voluntary increase in them. Nobody - not even the promoters themselves and their sympathisers - denies that elaborate and costly and permanent precautions... must be taken...To avoid the public panics alone and their ruinous expenditures, such precautions would be indispensable.²

...hen a United States of Europe existed, then England might be willing to modify her reliance on a sea frontier and adopt conscription.

Maurice echoed these sentiments. In his mind, all that had happened since 1882 showed the increased danger of the scheme. It would introduce England to the grievous perils of Continental militarism and conscription, and prove the graveyard of English liberty.³ The political argument was set forth by Herbert Paul, a Liberal L.P.

If the Channel were tunnelled, the Army and Navy estimates would speedily grow beyond the control of the most resolutely prudent financier, old-age pensions would dwindle out of sight, and a shilling income tax would soon be regarded as a distant dream of an Arcadian past. Do the Labour Party want to exchange old-age pensions for conscription? If so, let them

¹ Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett. The Immortals and the Channel Tunnel. (1907)
² Nineteenth Century. February 1907. p. 175.
³ Ibid. p. 178.
vote for the Channel Tunnel Bill, and they will soon be gratified... But we do not want to become a Continental nation, with compulsory service and taxes that crush.1

This was the argument that carried the day. Although the C.I.D. never discussed the problem, to Clarke's regret,2 Campbell-Bannerman decided that policy on the Channel Tunnel should be governed by its naval and military aspects.3 Noting that both the General Staff and the Admiralty were opposed to its construction, the closing of the question was announced to both Houses on 21 March 19074 on the rather curious grounds that the completion of the project might lead to increased armaments expenditure.

Even supposing the military dangers involved were to be amply guarded against, there would exist throughout the country a feeling of insecurity which might lead to a constant demand for increased expenditure, naval and military, and a continual risk of unrest and possibly alarm, which, however, unfounded, would be most injurious in its effect, whether political or commercial. On the other hand, there has not been disclosed any such prospect of advantage to the trade industries of the country as would compensate for those evils.5

Lord Lansdowne employed the same line of reasoning in the Upper House.

As may be able to convince ourselves that we should run no risk, but I do not believe that we shall ever convince the public that is so. And if that is true, it follows that we should, by allowing this tunnel to be built, occasion not only a new source of anxiety in time of peace but a grave additional cause of anxiety when war was going on, or when war was imminent.6

4. Hansard. (Commons) 21 March 1907, col. 1203.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid. (Lords) 21 March 1907, cols. 1210-11.
The Liberal government rejected the project in 1907 because, in Gladstone's earlier words, it was not afraid of the tunnel but because it was afraid of those who were afraid of the tunnel.

The "tunnelites" kept up a last-ditch fight in the House of Commons, asking the government whether it would lay out papers bearing on their adverse decision and whether or not communications had been received from the French government expressing their surprise and disappointment. Could the House be assured that the Entente could remain unimpaired after such a manoeuvre? Sir Walter Runciman, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, replied for the government that the French wholly sympathized with British reluctance towards the idea. The tunnel pressure group, conceding the battle but not the war, withdrew their Bill after its second reading in April 1907.

The next year their cause gained an ally in the unexpected shape of the French General Staff, which commissioned Georges Viernot to write un grand problème internationale et militaire: Le Tunnel sous La Manche. (Paris, 1908). This was a long and detailed resume of British military thought and public opinion on the issue. Viernot reported that the French General Staff had thrown up their hands at the prospect of transporting 150,000 men through the tunnel if it was defended and that they felt, even with British cooperation assured, that such an operation would take fifteen days. "Olseley had estimated that 20,000 troops could pass through the tunnel in four hours; Viernot calculated instead that this

1. Hansard. (Commons) 26 March 1907, col. 1673.
2. Ibid., 8 April 1907, cols. 15-16.
would take two entire days, observing that "the noble lord was not conducting a campaign in the Sudan against the Fuzzies" and had neglected to allow for the transport and equipment required for the invading host.¹

The French General Staff marvelled that anyone could seriously fear a campaign conducted at the end of a single railway line, in the light of the horrible confusion that had followed attempts to do so in the Franco-Prussian and Russo-Japanese wars. The French General Staff was quoted as saying

in all truth, we give up trying to understand how any competent man of good faith and sound judgment could have any doubt as to the fatal results of trying to invade England by the Channel Tunnel.²

Not all the public agreed. During the German invasion scare of 1909 an English tourist wrote with alarm to an English paper that during a visit to Hamburg his attention had been arrested by "a heavy and regular noise, such as that made by a tunnelling machine, coming up from the depths of the ocean." He asked if it were possible that the Germans were in the process of digging a tunnel under the North Sea, presumably for the invasion of England.³

By 1913 the tunnel lobby had organised itself into a Channel Tunnel Committee of 90 L.P.'s. A deputation from this group called on Asquith, the Prime Minister, in August 1913, and extracted from him a promise that the C.I.D. would reconsider the scheme. On this occasion, the issue did

¹ Barnett and Slater. The Channel Tunnel. p. 98
² Ibid., p.99.
not cause as much public debate as had been the case earlier, but the official inquiry and the manoeuvring behind the scenes was as intense as it had been in the original government considerations of 1880-1883.

The *Nineteenth Century*, while recording its "hereditary opposition", printed only one new article hostile to the project and admitted that many military and naval authorities had been converted to the scheme.\(^1\)

Even the writer, an enemy of the tunnel, admitted that many new factors had come into play. French friendship, the possibility of using the tunnel to send the Expeditionary Force to Europe and for receiving food supplies imposed new conditions in discussing the question. But the fatal result of the tunnel ultimately would be to weaken the Royal Navy without strengthening the Army. Certain officials were accused of using the tunnel as a scare device to foist conscription on the country: first, the nation would be sold on the tunnel and then would be panicked into accepting conscription once the tunnel was complete, to, the advantage of the military.\(^2\) Fisher shared this suspicion, noting that the scheme "would play into the hands of the Major-Generals, who want our army in Flanders" and was an "artful dodge towards conscription."\(^3\)

Lord Sydenham (the former Sir George Clarke) spoke to the Channel Tunnel Committee in the House of Commons in June 1914. He attacked ASELEY'S hypothesis that the tunnel could be seized by surprise attack in a time of profound peace; this was not a military operation but a

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political forecast. Such an operation was not the simple action Wolseley had thought it was. With the defences now proposed, the enemy's task was now to capture instantly and simultaneously two strong fortresses and an electrical power station some distance from each other. He could not regard as serious the proposals that hordes of men could hide in the hotels of Dover and suddenly appear to capture extensive fortifications. Likewise, it was plainly preposterous that bogus "tourists, with rifles and ammunition under their waterproofs, will arrive by steamer, and proceed to attack the Dover forts."¹

Clarke demonstrated that warnings of danger would always be forthcoming; in 1914, the danger was always to exaggerate threats, not minimize them. Surprise would be impossible, owing to telegraphic communication with Calais and the presence of many British subjects in France. On any declaration of war, traffic would cease as it did across borders in previous wars. If necessary, the tunnel could be cut off, much as the bridges across the Rhine had had one span destroyed as the opening act of war in 1870. No surprise descent from the sea was possible unless the Navy were completely destroyed. Besides, the tunnel route could only be used by the French, a possibility he characterized as "peculiarly improbable". In all other cases, a long warning would of necessity be provided.²

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, one of the few men before the war to take the submarine menace to shipping seriously, argued in the Fortnightly Review that the tunnel would provide an unassailable food supply: "The

². Ibid., p. 19.
tap (via Marseilles and the tunnel) the whole food supply of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea." The expeditionary force could be rushed to France in a much shorter time and Franco-British reinforcements could pour back through the tunnel in the event of a German raid. Because the Germans had made great works like the Kiel Canal in anticipation of war, Britain's answer, Doyle argued, must be the Channel Tunnel, linking us closer with our French ally.¹

So, for much of the last year of the Great Peace, the Committee of Imperial Defence reconsidered the merits of the Channel Tunnel estion. It soon became obvious that the Admiralty had changed their ground considerably since the 1907 Inquiry. A memorandum of February 1914 claimed the tunnel would offer "various important strategical advantages, including a great assurance for our food supply", although insisting on the condition that it should be destructible by naval gunfire without military assistance even if both ends were already controlled by enemy troops.² Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty since 1911, sickly emerged as a strong protagonist of the scheme, arguing that even if strategic conditions had not changed in favour of the tunnel, public opinion had, and that the general improvements in mechanical contrivances postulated new conditions.

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² Cab. 38/25/9, "Channel Tunnel" 27 February 1914 p.2.
In a memorandum of June 1914 Churchill outlined the Navy's version of the ideal Channel Tunnel, capable of being destroyed by the fleet alone. The tunnel, he suggested, should be brought to the surface of the sea not less than a quarter-mile from the shore, where the railway line would rise to run along a bridge to the shore, then to turn and run parallel to the shore for a half-mile, so as to be open to ships' fire. The bridge would be equipped with a drawbridge.

In strained relations, or on any sign of danger, the lifting of the drawbridge, coupled with a warning to suspend traffic, would afford absolute security for the time, and the question of the flooding of the tunnel could be considered at leisure. If by treachery the drawbridge was rendered inoperative, or the English end of the tunnel seized, there would be no difficulty in cutting the communication. The guns of a single small cruiser could break down the bridge and absolutely prevent the passage of trains or troops along the railway line by night or day.1

However, in the more likely case of a friendly France, the command of the sea gave Britain the power to keep the tunnel open. The Navy believed itself to be able to sink and destroy any enemy ships that would dare traverse these waters, and in fact, would welcome any attempt on the tunnel as a preliminary to the great naval battle that would destroy the enemy's fleet.

Because Churchill ended his memorandum with an implied challenge "to hear of any combination of circumstances not covered by the above-named precautions", it is interesting that none of the eminent naval and military figures who criticized his scheme on other grounds did not consider the possibility of an enemy submarine surfacing at night and destroying the projected bridge with its deck gun.

Critics of Churchill’s scheme were not wanting, however. Field Marshal Sir William Nicholson observed caustically that the proposals implied that no other nations possessed war vessels, and could use them for the same purpose as that proposed for the Royal Navy – in a surface raid on the bridge. The War Office pointed out that

If a few shots at a tower, bridge, or viaduct are to suffice to destroy communication by tunnel, and it is the interest of the enemy to destroy, overwhelming naval force will not prevent those shots from being fired.

Any viaduct or bridge destructible by sea was destructible by air, and the German air forces had made considerable progress. It was certain that part of this force would be despatched to destroy the bridges and installations leading to the tunnel on either the French or British side, or both, once it became obvious the tunnel had military value. Nicholson had doubts about an enemy naval raid using surface ships, stating that “so long as the enemy had ships, and a temporary command of the Channel waters, he could also destroy the tunnel, and that, too, at a time when it might be most necessary to us to maintain it intact...”

The Board of Trade sounded a chilling note on the possibility of the tunnel providing an extra source of food supply in time of war. According to their calculations, only France, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland could supply Britain through this route, countries that at the present time provided no cereals and little meat for British markets.

3. Cab. 38/27/23, p.5
Their memorandum conceded that practically all the nation's food could be brought in through the tunnel on the condition the tunnel was devoted solely to this purpose. But it was doubtful if the French railways could provide for this tonnage, especially during war conditions. It would be an expensive arrangement and one that would save little time. The Board concluded that the effect of a tunnel on the food supply in time of war was likely to be small.¹

The Army's argument against Churchill's scheme was that if it was justifiable to assume that the Navy could destroy the railway line at any moment, the enemy could seize the tunnel for his own use by sinking ships detailed to guard it. It was doubtful that the Admiralty would expose a number of ships in this manner, especially in the early stages of a war.² Asquith thought this "a formidable reply" to the Admiralty proposal.³

The C.I.D. reaffirmed its former conclusion that the possibility of a surprise attack in a time of profound peace was not too remote to be ignored. If treachery would make the difference between a success or a failure in the enemy's attack, he would resort to it. It therefore followed that "any scheme designed to remove the objections to the Channel Tunnel must provide against the possibility of a surprise attack during normal diplomatic relations."⁴ In actuality, this was a misreading of the earlier conclusion.

Critics of the Churchill version of the tunnel were not wanting on the naval side, either. Fisher flirted briefly with the idea of a tunnel as a means of bringing oil for the fleet into the country, but he gave it up, as he thought the conception would work to the detriment of the navy. Sir Julian Corbett shared this view.

I feel the tunnel - either as a line of supply or attack - could hardly be a factor that would change the course of a war. The new element - concerning passing an Expeditionary Force through - also had little weight with me. To do that would fix its line of operations...that is the last thing we ought to do with it. As soon as its line is known, half its power is gone.

In response to an inquiry from Asquith, Fisher wrote that he considered the Admiralty position of 1907 "impregnable", a line of reasoning that was evidently influential in Asquith's final decision.

The issue had therefore split both services, with advocates of the scheme in both camps demanding a different version of the proposal to meet the requirements of their service. The soldiers in 1914, as a rule, were more lukewarm to the idea. Their ambivalent position might be summarized in Major-General Sir Henry Wilson's comment: "if we are going to take part in European wars, the more tunnels we have the better, if not, then the fewer we have the better." Nicholson and the General Staff submitted memoranda that were mildly favourable to the project. They were prepared to accept the argument that a railway tunnel to France would provide a quick passage of the Expeditionary Force to Europe, a convenient means of supplying that force in a future campaign,

2. Ibid.
3. Wilson Diary, entry of March 1914.
and an unfailling source of food for Britain in the event of a future blockade. But, militarily, these advantages would be more than offset if the tunnel could be interrupted. The Admiralty condition of destructability would make the position worse, as this would enable the enemy to cut off the food supply or maroon the Expeditionary Force at the worst possible moment.

Churchill countered that the principle underlying the Admiralty condition of destructability was the maintenance of British insularity. The Navy's responsibility for maintaining that insularity was evidently zealously cherished, as he "was wholly opposed to the tunnel if it was made indestructable from the sea".1 Nicholson, speaking for the Army, noted that the Admiralty had abandoned its undertaking to guarantee the safety of commerce at the C.I.D. meeting of February 1913, owing to the possibility of submarines operating off merchant ports. The Channel Tunnel appeared to him to offer another possible source of food supply under the new conditions.2

Owing to interservice rivalry and suspicion, the discussion on the tunnel project in the C.I.D. hung on the unresolved points of view of the two services. The Admiralty wanted a tunnel that could only be defended or attacked by naval means; the War Office would only accept a tunnel that was impregnable from the sea and which could be defended by orthodox means. Even in the twilight world of contingency, neither service was ready to surrender responsibility or prerogative.

The inordinate affection of the soldiers for an impregnable tunnel found its ultimate expression in a paper by Field Marshal Sir John French,

2. Ibid. p.7.
who would be commanding the British Expeditionary Force in France a few weeks later. In a revolutionary memorandum, French predicted that the advent of submarines and aircraft would completely change the conditions of British national defence.

...the Straits of Dover, regarded as a military obstacle to the invasion of this country, will in the not too distant future altogether lose their maritime character, and the problem of their successful passage by an invading force will present features somewhat resembling those involving the attack and defence of great river lines... The only reliable defence against a powerful attack by hostile aircraft and submarines in vast superior numbers, is to possess a strong bridge-head on the French coast with an effective means of passing and repassing across the Straits, which would only be secured by the projected Channel Tunnel.1

The tunnel bridgehead, completely fortified and secure from any sudden attack, would serve as a French rallying point and would prevent any French collapse. Because France was always interested in completing the tunnel, the Field Marshal believed that it might be possible to negotiate with France to obtain permanent control of the French end of the tunnel, which would allow a strong British fortress to exist permanently at Calais.2 With such an installation France would never be disastrously overwhelmed. In retrospect, one wonders what role this installation could have played in the debacle of Spring 1940, first as a means of threatening the flank of the German advance into France and also as a means of extricating the British Army without abandoning all its heavy equipment, both of which had been foreseen by French as possibilities in a future Continental campaign.

2. Ibid.
However, the scheme assumed a perpetually friendly France. It was difficult to conceive of a France reconciled in any age to the concept of a British bastion permanently established on her sacred soil. The Field Marshal admitted that the installation would have to be rendered ineffective in the case of an unfriendly France, but did not suggest how this was to be accomplished.

Nicholson found himself unable to agree with French on this issue, on the ground that if the French coast were occupied by an enemy in possession of the French fleet and air force, a fortified bridgehead of this type would be very dangerous unless it was held by a huge garrison, which would be impossible under the hypothetical conditions postulated.\(^1\) Asquith agreed with French on the point that if a tunnel were constructed for the purposes of state security and for sending a force to Europe, the less destructible it was the better.\(^2\)

Kitchener was more pessimistic, and there is reason to believe that Fisher was responsible. Hankey recalled that

The first time I ever saw Kitchener strongly moved was was in July 1914 when he called to see me on his return from Egypt and for at least half an hour inveighed against the construction proposal.\(^3\)

Kitchener registered his opposition to the tunnel unless it could be shown that it offered a safe route for food supplies through France in time of war, and expressed all the insularity and conservatism of the military profession.

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2. Ibid.
when considering the desirability of altering artificially a geographical feature which, once altered, could not be restored again, it was essential to take account, so far as was possible, of what the future might have in store.1

This was not a completely accurate presentation of the case, for all of the suggested tunnel defence schemes provided for the "restoration" of British insularity by the destruction of the tunnel in the last resort. But, to Kitchener's mind, it was unthinkable that a private railroad concern should embark on an enterprise which would endanger the safety of the nation and give Britain a land frontier. Once it was constructed, the tunnel would have to be completely destroyed on intimation of an attack, because partial damage could be quickly repaired by zealous invaders. In his opinion, it was folly to talk of sending the Expeditionary Force through the tunnel, for he doubted whether the country "would ever feel sufficiently confident to send the Expeditionary Force abroad" once the Channel Tunnel was constructed. Kitchener's arguments showed he was unaware of the many new conditions affecting the problem and his viewpoint was not greatly different from that of Wolseley in 1882.

At a meeting of the Committee of Imperial Defence on 14 July 1914, the various officials had their final discussion on the question. Between the navy, which wanted a destructible tunnel, and the soldiers, some of whom wanted an indestructible tunnel, one who wanted a fortified beach-head in France, and some who wanted no tunnel at all, affairs had reached an impasse. Asquith judged that the Admiralty had not presented a strong enough case to reverse their negative verdict of 1907, as the destructability of the tunnel would constitute an additional and

unnecessary danger. The army's case for the tunnel as a source of food supply was weakened by the fact that the tunnel could possibly be destroyed, and if all arrangements had been made to feed Britain in this manner, the result would be chaos.

Therefore it was concluded that "strategic conditions have not so altered as to justify a reversal of the conclusion reached by Her Majesty's Government in 1907." On this occasion, however, the decision was not unanimous, Churchill, French and Bettenberg, the First Sea Lord, recording their dissent from the verdict.1

Three weeks later Britain entered the First World War, and the campaign for a Channel Tunnel was eclipsed by more momentous events. But soon promoters of the scheme realised that the war had introduced conditions naturally favourable for a revival of the scheme. Britain was allied to France and maintained a large army upon her soil which could be supported only over a long and precarious supply line which led across the Channel and employed large quantities of valuable British shipping. Taking advantage of the wartime atmosphere of patriotism, friendliness towards France, and increased interest in better cross-Channel communications brought on by the war, the tunnel advocates re-opened the question in the summer of 1916.

The Chairman of the Channel Tunnel Committee of the House of Commons declared in reviving the project, that had it existed during the war they could have transported 30,000 troops and 30,000 tons of material per day...At home the opposition of military authorities had almost entirely disappeared. Shortly before his death Lord Kitchener declared to Sir Francis

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Fox that he was keenly in favour of the tunnel. Lord Roberts came to the same opinion towards the end of his life and the same view was held by Lord French.  

Sydenham supported the lobbyists in a pamphlet, noting that the Royal Navy had

proved perfectly able to guard the country against invasion - effectively prevented the landing of a boat's crew on our shores, and the views of the Blue Water School which were based on the teaching of war, have been triumphantly vindicated...

it was inevitable that "like the baseless fabric of a vision", the alleged military objections should have disappeared into the limbo of loose thinking from which they emanated.  

Shortly thereafter, the Tunnel advocates had a huge dinner to mobilise support, in the course of which it was announced that the construction of the large naval base at Dover eliminated all previous military objections to the scheme.  

In October, Asquith agreed to convene the C.I.D. to reconsider the problem in the light of wartime experience, in the face of representations by the lobbyists that the Army, their French allies, and the whole country wanted the tunnel. However, many officers in fact remained opposed to the project. Hepington and Maurice, Director of Military Operations, agreed in conversation that the tunnel should not be built until the politicians had promised to provide the nation with an army on the continental scale in peacetime. Robertson, however, had not made up his mind, Balfour believed the Admirals would now be happy to have a tunnel, as they "were so upset by the German submarines."

4. Ibid. 27 October, 1916. p.5.
Asquith appointed Hankey to examine the possibility of the project. A letter from the General Staff, probably inspired by Repington, argued that the tunnel would be advantageous for only one set of conditions: a friendly France. The General Staff was not willing to saddle itself for the responsibility of national defence on these terms.4 At the same time, Hankey warned Asquith privately that to publish the results of the inquiry of 1914 would be to reveal that Churchill, Battenburg, and French actually were in favour of the tunnel's construction.5 Hankey summed up the arguments for and against the project in a C.I.D. Memorandum later that year. It was conceded that the tunnel offered strategic advantages, as it guaranteed the national food supply and would release ships now engaged in cross-channel trade for trans-Atlantic

3. Repington. *World War I.* 313, 322. No trace of the article appears in the Times or is mentioned in the index.
4. Cab. 17/139. Secretary, War Office to Hankey, 2 September 1916.
5. Ibid. Hankey to Asquith, October 1916.
service. This was a very telling point, as Britain now was really beginning to feel the full fury of the German U-boat campaign against British trade. On the other hand, Hankey continued, it was not certain that the abnormal conditions which had prevailed during the war were really a safe standard upon which to judge the economic advantages of the tunnel. Hankey thus neatly sidestepped the main argument of the tunnel advocates regarding its advantages in wartime, by pointing out that war conditions were not permanent.1

But Hankey was being counselled by bodies essentially antagonistic to the project. Hepington's ideas had prevailed in the General Staff, for the Army Council informed the Cabinet that the proposal could not be considered until the Government's postwar military policy was established, especially regarding the size of the peacetime army. Hepington had earlier advised the General Staff to make common cause with the Admiralty against the tunnel, as "united opinion was a great strength."2 This was now forthcoming. The Board of Admiralty advised that the project be examined in peacetime in the light of the experience of the entire war. This proved the prevailing counsel, for after reiterating some of the traditional military arguments against the project and predicting that Germany would always be sufficiently treacherous to seize the tunnel unless the entire nation underwent a moral regeneration, Hankey wrote Asquith that

In view of the unanimous opinion expressed separately and independently by the Admiralty, the War Office, and the Board of Trade, it is submitted that the time is not ripe

2. Ibid. p.9; Hepington. World War I, pp. 308-309.
for the reconsideration of the Channel Tunnel Project.¹

Three times within a decade the tunnel had been defeated on the
grounds of insular insecurity. The tunnel question was essentially an
extension of the invasion controversy, for it aroused the same
prejudices. Those disinclined to believe in invasion - Jydenham, Kaser,
Battenberg, Wilson, French, and Churchill - were partisans of the
tunnel; whereas those who took invasion seriously - Nepington, Fisher,
Hankey, Kitchener, and Nicholson - constituted its most powerful
opposition. Although the tunnel scheme was to be revived periodically
in the years after 1918, the issue of invasion was never again to be
associated with it in such force. The advent of airpower and other
strategic developments was to give the issue of the Channel Tunnel, as
well as that of invasion, a new dimension.

¹ Cab. 3/3/2. p. 10.
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Cd. 5979. "Preliminary and Further Reports (with appendices) of the Royal Commissioners Appointed to Enquire into the Civil and Professional Administration of the Naval and Military Departments and the Relation of those Departments to Each Other and the Treasury." 1890.

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A. BRITISH, according to the classification of the Public Record Office, London.

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CABINET

Cab 2. Minutes of the Committee of Imperial Defence, 1903-1914.

Cab 3. Memoranda of the Committee of Imperial Defence relating to home defence, 1903-1918.

Cab 4. Miscellaneous memoranda of the Committee of Imperial Defence, 1903-1914.

Cab 12. Home Ports Defence Committee Minutes and Memoranda, 1908-1914.


Cab 17. C.I.D. Papers relating to home defence and the Channel Tunnel, 1914-1916.


Cab 22. War Council and War Committee Minutes, 1914-1916.


Cab 38. C.I.D. Minutes and Memoranda, 1903-1915.


Cab 42 War Council and War Committee Minutes, 1915-1916.

P.R.O.

P.R.O. class papers refer to collections of private papers held by the Public Record Office. See PRIVATE PAPERS.

WAR OFFICE

WO 32 Manuscript Memoranda, correspondence, and printed papers relating to home defence, 1889-1914.

WO 33 Printed "A" Papers relating to home defence, 1886-1918.


WO 105 Memorandum by Secretary of State on Invasion, 1903.

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III. UNPUBLISHED PRIVATE PAPERS

A. MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS.

Amery MSS. The papers of the Rt. Hon. Leonard S. Amery, c/o


This collection contains more significant material in the period
1907-1950, but it provides several illuminating insights into the
inner policy of the National Service League and the Unionist
Party from 1907 to 1914.

Ardagh MSS. The papers of Major-General Sir John Ardagh.

The Public Record Office.

Chiefly valuable on War Office administration and home defence,
during Ardagh's tenure as Assistant Adjutant-General 1888-90
and D.M.I. from 1900-01.
An interesting collection regarding War Office administration 1903-1905, often controversial, always opinionated.

Asquith himself apparently had little to say on the invasion issue, but his correspondence with Balfour, Hankay, Churchill, Kitchener, and others, contains several valuable documents of the 1913-14 invasion inquiry, and official action in the Fall of 1914.

Balfour's steadfast interest in defence and strategic questions makes this easily the most valuable manuscript collection for our purposes. It provides valuable correspondence from the founding of the C.I.D. in 1902 until Balfour's tenure as First Lord in 1915-16.

Virtually nothing of value for our purposes relating to Brackenbury's tenure as D.M.I. Confined mainly to material on Indian defence and Artillery.

Campbell-Bannerman MSS. The Papers of Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. The British Museum.
Like Asquith, Campbell-Bannerman seems not to have concerned himself overly with strategic questions. Here again the chief value of the collection are the letters from those involved in defence questions, such as Balfour and Fisher regarding the 1907-08 inquiry.

Corbett MSS. The Papers of Sir Julian Stafford Corbett, LL.M. c/o Mr. Brian Tunstall, 34 Dartmouth Row, S.E.10.
Corbett's papers and correspondence are chiefly helpful for their insights into Admiralty administration and conduct during the 1907-08 inquiry and also during the war. There is a Corbett biography by Professor Schurmann based on this collection in progress.

The Diary's most interesting passages coincide with Ewart's tenure as D.M.I. For our purposes its chief help was providing insights into the military side of the invasion controversy during the 1907-08 inquiry.

A very few scattered references relating to our topic, restricted mainly to the wartime invasion scare of 1914.
This collection, only recently released, was especially valuable for additional insights into the effect of the 1912 and 1913 Admiralty manoeuvres on Admiralty policy. Jellicoe's correspondence with the Admiralty as C.I.C., Grand Fleet, is equally valuable and provided much new and significant information. The collection contains the only known copy of Churchill’s invasion order of 12 November 1914.

Kitchener's papers provide insights into his attitudes which are usually absent from his rather opaque remarks in Cabinet. Our interest in them is restricted to the years 1914–1916.

Kitchener–Marker MSS. The Papers of Major-General R.S. Marker, Kitchener’s Secretary. The British Museum.
Chiefly concerned with Egyptian and Indian defence, this collection contains only scattered and occasional references to invasion.

This collection has much of general interest to the naval historian. For our purposes, it parallels the Corbett collection in showing Admiralty attitudes to the invasion inquiry of 1907–08. It also contains scattered references to the invasion question in 1914–1915.

Roberts MSS. The Papers of Field-Marshal Frederick Sleigh Roberts, Earl Roberts. Ogilby Trust, Northumberland House, Northumberland Avenue, W.C.2; also The Public Record Office.
An extremely useful collection, the value of which extends from Roberts’ years as Commander-in-Chief (1901–1903) until his death in 1914. Probably the largest surviving collection of letters from Repington. Roberts' correspondence reveals the manoeuvring that brought about the 1907–08 inquiry, and as well provides insights on the formation of policy in the National Service League.

There is little or nothing here dealing with Robertson's period of service in Military Intelligence, 1901–1902. There are, however, scattered references to home defence just before and during the First World War.

There is surprisingly little dealing with invasion in the Salisbury MSS., which were in process of organization when they were examined in 1965.
Slade Diary. The Diary of Admiral Sir Edmund Slade.
Slade's Diary complements the Corbett and Richmond MSS. in
providing a picture of Admiralty administration at the end
of the Fisher period. Reading it is a rather daunting
experience, as his handwriting is demanding and the
collection is on microfilm.

Strachey MSS. The Papers of John St. Loe Strachey.
The Spectator, 99, Gower Street, W.C.1.
A valuable, but little-used collection, providing insights
into the attitudes and activities of one of the chief home
defence advocates during the years 1899 to 1915.

Sydenham MSS. The Papers of Sir George Sydenham Clarke, Lord
Sydenham. The British Museum.
Sydenham's career as the first Secretary of the C.I.D., 1904
to 1907, provides the material of the most value for our
topic, although there are occasional pertinent letters in
the early wartime correspondence.

The Ogilby Trust, Northumberland House, Northumberland
Avenue, W.C.2.
Although Wilkinson was one of the chief apologists for the
Volunteers, his papers contain surprisingly little of value
on the subject of invasion and home defence.

Wilson Diary. The Diary of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, Bart.
c/o Major Cyril J. Wilson, Northington Hill House, Alresford,
Hampshire.
The Wilson Diary was examined for the years 1910 to 1915 and
contains many interesting insights into inner War Office
administration and attitudes for this period. It is an
eminently quotable, and occasionally venomous, document of chief
interest to us for passages relating to the 1913-1914 invasion
inquiry.

Wolseley MSS. The Papers of Field-Marshal Sir Garnet Wolseley,
Viscount. The War Office.
The Wolseley MSS. were another disappointment and contain
little relating directly to invasion, other than printed War
Office "A" Papers.

Repeated enquiries have proved fruitless regarding the whereabouts,
or even the survival, of the Repington MSS. Mary Repington's Thanks
for the Memory (1938) has passages which imply that the papers were
still in existence at that time and that she had access to them.
Repington's daughter is still alive, but reportedly knows nothing of
the whereabouts of her father's MSS. The last reliable information
is that they were in the custody of a London theatre manager just
before the Second World War and it seems most likely that they were
destroyed during the war. The Hankey MSS. are in a disorganized
state and it seems likely that it will be several years before
scholars will be granted access. The Churchill MSS. are being used for a multi-volume work by Mr. Randolph Churchill, which shows promise of publishing most documents of major interest and value.

B. THESES CONSULTED.


C. NOTES AND MANUSCRIPTS.

Mr. John Goode's Notes on Esher MSS. contain information on Esher's correspondence relating to the Invasion Inquiry of 1907-08, which was not published in the Journals and Letters.

Professor Donald M. Schurmann's typescript, "Invasion, 1907-1908.", which forms a draft chapter of his forthcoming biography of Sir Julian Corbett, has provided much helpful information for Chapter VI regarding the relationship of Corbett, Slade, Richmond, and Fisher, and the Admiralty in 1907-1908.

IV. MEMOIRS AND BIOGRAPHIES


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