

THE TERRITORIAL ARMY

SCHEME OF COMPLETE REORGANIZATION

NEW MOTORIZED DIVISIONS

A scheme for the complete reorganization of the Territorial Field Army was announced by Mr. Hore-Belisha, Secretary for War, at a dinner of the City Lieutenants' Club at the Mansion House last night.

Alderman Sir George Truscott, acting for the Lord Mayor, who had left for Prague earlier in the day, presided after the reception of the guests by himself and Colonel and Alderman Lord Wakefield, president of the club.

Submitting the toast "The Imperial Forces of the Crown" LORD WAKEFIELD said that a little more than a week ago they were on the verge of war. His own unshamed optimism gave him a strong conviction that they would avoid that terrible calamity. But, although events justified such optimism, there could be no doubt but that throughout those critical days it was only the faith and courage of one man, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, that stood between Europe and war. Out of danger some good had emerged. Even in the few short hours of the acute final crisis there began that flow of voluntary effort in recruitment to the fighting forces, in civilian effort, so reminiscent of another crisis in our history 24 years ago. While they thanked God for the sudden and dramatic ending of the tension, they were thankful also for this wonderful evidence of the unimpaired spirit of the British people and their courage throughout the crisis. London had been well to the fore in all this activity and the Lieutenancy rejoiced to see the enthusiasm which had been shown particularly in all branches of the Territorial Army.

MR. HORE-BELISHA, in reply, said that a toast which at many banquets in normal times took on the character of a formality this year and at this time had a most vivid and opportune significance. It was but a few days since the Fleet was mobilized for the first time in a quarter of a century, and—even more unusually—the Anti-Aircraft and Coast Defence units of the Territorial Army and the Fighter Squadrons of the Auxiliary Air Force were embodied; an historic occurrence, because never before had these forces been called out in advance of a general mobilization. Although Regular reservists were not recalled to the Colours, the order which it was his privilege to sign called out over 50,000 Territorial officers and men and dispatched them with their military equipment to their war stations.

The summons reached officers and men at their homes, in their offices, in their factories, in their clubs, at their places of amusement, or while they were on holiday, and without hesitation they presented themselves at their appointed posts. Within a few hours they were all in readiness for action, and they endured over many days such discomforts of situation and separation as they were called upon to bear in fields or in billets. Thus literally by a stroke of the pen men were transformed from civilians into soldiers and airmen. To all who contributed to this prompt and portentous achievement, including employers and those who helped the men on their war stations, the nation owed its thanks. The test had yielded valuable experiences, disclosing both the resources of our strength and the

evidences of our weakness; the former they could fortify, the latter they were resolute to repair.

When men who were not by profession military were assembled with such suddenness; when arrangements previously untried were with rapidity put into effect, it was to be anticipated that defects in the machinery would be revealed. In the matter of personnel, however, few of these were disclosed; in the matter of equipment, as the country knew, much remained to be done. It must be realized that a programme of ambitious proportions was, of its nature, progressive and not instantaneous in fulfilment. The programme proceeds.

A year ago at this time the anti-aircraft units were 23,000 strong. To-day they were double that number. By next year they should be almost doubled again. An expansion of this kind involved strains and stresses. Those who were responsible for it were conscious of their duty as well as of their difficulties. Those who, in their understanding, gave constructive help were stimulating. These events amply justified reforms which in that hall he announced a year ago—reforms intended to give scope to the ability and patriotism of citizen soldiers.

When he spoke last October there were no major-generals in the Territorial Army. There were two to-day. There were no brigadiers in the Territorial Army. Eight Territorials as colonels held what in the Regular Army would have been brigadiers' commands. To-day 18 Territorials now held, or had been designated to brigadiers' commands with the rank of brigadier. There were Territorials in the War Office, in the Staff College, in the Imperial Defence College—all for the first time. More still, however, was to be done to give full force and opportunity to the Territorial Army as a whole. They were to have five divisions of anti-aircraft—five anti-aircraft divisions instead of two—with a corps commander and a deputy chief of the Imperial General Staff.

NEW TYPES OF UNIT

"I am now in a position (Mr. Hore-Belisha went on to say) to announce the complete reorganization of the Territorial Field Army. This Army must, with modifications appropriate to its peculiar character, be given the same content and put on the same footing as the Regular Army. Look at it to-day! Nominally organized in divisions, it is deficient in many of the up-to-date units which the Regular Army has, and the necessary proportion of arms and services are lacking. These shortcomings must be made good. The reorganization which I announce is both a unit and a formation reorganization. The infantry will have both light and heavy machine-gun battalions. The Artillery—following the lines of the Regular Army—will have eight-gun batteries instead of four-gun batteries.

The following types of unit which do not exist in the Territorial Army will be provided:—Cavalry light tank regiments, anti-tank regiments, light anti-aircraft regiments, and tank battalions, and there will be added a kind of battalion, non-existent in the Regular Army but suitable to the citizen soldier—motor-cycle battalions. There will be three of these. They will be used in new motorized divisions, also to be created. We are able to supply these types of modern unit by converting all battalions which are surplus to the new divisional organization to which I shall in a moment refer. Our scheme is thus not only tactically sound but economical as well.

HORSES TO REMAIN

"Two Yeomanry brigades at present in existence and having their counterpart in the Regular Army will remain, and the 10 other horsed regiments will be held available as divisional cavalry regiments for use in suitable theatres of war. We have kept these regiments because there is thus at the disposal of the Army as a whole a reserve of horsed cavalry, now that so many Regular cavalry regiments have been mechanized. So much for the unit organization.

As regards the formation organization, infantry brigades will in future have three battalions, as in the Regular Army, instead of four. Employing the material that we have, we find that we can form nine complete divisions on the Regular model with their proper

proportion of arms and services, three motorized divisions, and a mobile division, also complete with their proper proportion of arms and services. In addition there will be the two cavalry brigades. No commander will be appointed in peace to the Territorial mobile division, because, owing to the scattered disposition of the units, this would be impracticable. Suitable arrangements will be made for their training. We have provided also a considerable number of modern corps and Army units, such as Army Field and Survey Regiments, R.A., and Corps Signals ready to take their place in such formations should war eventuate. This is also in accordance with the Regular Army organization.

THE TERRITORIAL SPIRIT

"It is a feature of the reorganization that it does not entail disbanding any existing units, and thus avoids disturbing them. Where necessary it gives them the means of adapting themselves to a modern role, and thus gives them stimulus. In the main it preserves territorial divisional boundaries and territorial divisional esprit de corps, which is so strong in the Territorial Army. It produces an up-to-date Army capable of reinforcing the Regular Army by units or formations. I trust that the plan, which has required much working out, will give a general satisfaction. It is interesting by way of comparison to note that under the Haldane scheme in 1914 there were 14 Territorial Divisions, now there will be 18 Territorial Divisions, of which five will be Anti-Aircraft Divisions.

"Thus we carry the Territorial Army one stage farther along its progress and show both its members and the State that we rely on them not only in word but in deed, enabling those who serve in this force to fulfil both themselves and the purposes of a modern army. You will understand to what extent we rely on the brains and enthusiasm of those who serve in this Army when I tell you that one of the first steps we should have taken on mobilization would have been to send about 120 Territorial Army officers forthwith to the Staff College for a special course. I will in a few days announce a new scheme for the wider training of Territorial officers in peace to qualify them for Staff appointments in the event of war. Our aim in this was to avoid that discrimination which was felt to exist in the last War when it was said that the Staff posts were confined to Regular officers, for we now know how wholeheartedly the Regular Army would welcome an accession to its experience.

OTHER AUXILIARY FORCES

"With these encouragements I have no doubt that you will continue to advance the interests and increase the members of the Auxiliary Forces. The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, to reduce congestion, is to have an additional drill ship on the Thames. For those who prefer to go up in the air, or rather to control what is in the air, the Balloon Barrage Corps has still many openings. The Auxiliary Forces have considerably benefited under the spate of enthusiasm which the City of London, with the personal example of the Lord Mayor, has helped to foster by opening recruiting offices and in many other ways. Let us see that what openings still remain are quickly filled.

"We have avoided, under the inspiration of the Prime Minister, a conflict in which the civilian population might have been involved. With that gift of imagination that has distinguished so many holders of the Lord Mayor's office, the present Lord Mayor has appealed for those who are suffering even though peace has been preserved. In so doing he has symbolized the kind of character and principle which, far beyond its wealth and might, have made this country great. The Services for which I have the honour to respond will in case of need protect this country from physical invasion. But it is encouraging in these times to remember, and the Lord Mayor's appeal illustrates it, that we are determined to preserve also what is best in the human spirit."

They would wish, he added, to congratulate the Lord Mayor on his providential escape while on his mission to Czechoslovakia where he had gone on the good City of London principle of making sure concerning the people to whom he was to distribute money. (Cheers.)

ALDERMAN SIR GEORGE TRUSCOTT, responding to the civic toast, proposed by BRIGADIER-GENERAL LORD LUCAN, chairman of the City of London Territorial Association, announced