

**CIVIL DEFENCE**  
*Tunis, 19.4.39.*  
**TASK OF REGIONAL COMMISSIONERS**

**CONTACT WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

The names of the Regional Commissioners nominated under the Government's Regional Civil Defence Plan, and also of the Deputy Commissioners, were announced in the House of Commons yesterday and are published on page 14.

It is emphasized in an official statement that in peace time the Regional Commissioners have no executive functions. In war time, the degree of control to be exercised by the Commissioners on their own responsibility would vary according to circumstances. Only should there be a complete or partial breakdown of connections with London would they assume, for so long as might be necessary, and only to the extent that might then be necessary, the powers of the Central Government.

The Government would, of course, continue to be responsible for policy in every phase of civilian defence, whether food or water supplies, transport, hospitals and casualty services, evacuation of women and children, or local Air Raid Precautions, and matters affecting civilian moral and well being generally.

When the Regional Organization for Civil Defence was announced in February it was stated that in peacetime the Commissioner would establish touch with the local authorities in his region, and that there would be set up regional councils representative of the various interests, and including also the regional representatives of Government Departments concerned with Civil Defence. This the Commissioners will now proceed to do.

**REGIONAL COUNCILS**

The following are in general terms the composition and functions of the Regional Councils:—

The Regional Councils in time of peace provide the means of contact between the local authorities and the Regional Commissioners, and are also an important medium for the coordination of local authorities' plans, and for cooperation between the various services and authorities concerned with Civil Defence. They are also to advise the Commissioner on matters which he may wish to refer to them. The Councils would remain in being in wartime, but it is expected that by then their objects would largely have been achieved.

A Regional Council in England and Wales (but excluding the London Region) will consist of:—

- (a) President and Chairman.—Regional Commissioner.
- (b) Deputy Chairman.—Deputy Regional Commissioner.
- (c) Local Authority Members:—(i) A representative of the county council of each county wholly or partly in the Region. (ii) A representative of the council of each county borough in the Region. (iii) A representative of the council of each authority in the Region which is responsible for preparing a general A.R.P. scheme, though not a county or county borough council.
- (d) Official Members:—(i) Principal Officer designated to take charge of the Regional Commissioner's staff. (ii) Regional representatives of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour Food (Defence Plans) Department, Ministry of Pensions, Post Office, Ministry of Transport, Unemployment Assistance Board, and Office of Works. (iii) Any Group A.R.P. Controller that it is found necessary to appoint, e.g., in areas where the interests of Defence Services predominate.
- (e) Advisers:—(i) The General Inspector of the Ministry of Health. (ii) The Senior A.R.P. Regional Officer, who will also act as secretary to the council.

The Principal Officer mentioned in d. (i) is a senior Civil Servant. In addition to this officer the Commissioner will have the assistance of a representative of the Treasury.

The Regional Commissioner may at his discretion invite other persons to attend meetings of the council when matters affecting them are on the agenda paper.

**SCOTLAND AND LONDON**

There will be no Scottish Regional Council, but there will be a district council for each of the five districts, on the same general lines as the Regional Councils in England and Wales. There will be a district commissioner to each district.

The London Region (the Metropolitan Police District) will have a Regional Council, following in general lines the composition of a typical Regional Council, but on a broader basis, reflecting problems created by the density of the population and other special factors arising from the complex structure of this particular region. A description of the London Regional organization will be issued separately.

An important link in the Civil Defence organization is that between the local authorities, who in peace time would have prepared schemes for their localities, and the Regional Commissioners. This is provided by the Air Raid Controllers, who are being appointed by local authorities. They are persons selected for their powers of leadership and ability to inspire confidence, who in the event of an emergency could give any major executive decisions that might require to be taken in the operation of the various A.R.P. services. With each of them would be associated a small emergency committee representative of the local authority, which would be given wide powers in time of war to act on behalf of the authority in matters of civil defence.

Thus the chain of Emergency Civil Defence Control would be completed, from the local A.R.P. services, through the Regional Commissioners, up to the Central Government.

*24.2.39.* **THE TIM**  
**THE RED ARMY**

**A COMING-OF-AGE CEREMONY**

**NEW OATH TAKEN**

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT  
 WARSAW, FEB. 23

The Red Army has come of age, and to-day, the twenty-first anniversary of its foundation, it has been given a holiday. The only task of all soldiers except those on special duty has been to take the new oath which, for the first time, has been administered to each man individually. Marshal Voroshiloff, Minister of Defence and Commander-in-Chief, was the first to take the oath. Early this morning he, with his Deputy Ministers, Marshal Budyonny, General Kulik, and Commissar Mekhlis, assembled with the Chief of Staff and senior officers in the great hall of the Ministry of Defence, and Marshal Voroshiloff solemnly read aloud the text of the oath:—

I, a citizen of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, take my oath and solemnly swear to be an honest, brave, disciplined, and vigilant warrior of the workers' and peasants' Red Army, absolutely to fulfill all the military regulations and commands of my officers, commissars, and superiors. I will conscientiously pursue my military studies, in every way take care of military and public property, and to my last breath be devoted to my People, to my Soviet country and to the workers' and peasants' Government. I am constantly ready at the command of the workers' and peasants' Government to take the field in defence of my country, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and as a soldier of the workers' and peasants' Red Army I swear that I will defend it manfully to the best of my ability with dignity and honour, giving my blood and my life itself, if necessary, to attain complete victory over our enemies. If with evil intent I break this my solemn oath, may the stern penalty of Soviet law descend upon me and may I be an object of universal abhorrence and the scorn of the toilers.

Marshal Voroshiloff then signed the oath, whereupon Marshal Budyonny and the other high officers took the oath in similar manner, each reading and signing a separate paper. The same procedure has been followed to-day, as far as it has been possible, by every officer and soldier of the Red Army, the sailors of the Red Fleet, the special troops of the G.P.U., and the frontier guards.

**RESTORING CONFIDENCE**

Why to-day's ceremony was considered necessary cannot be said with certainty. The men had already taken an oath, the old oath, the text of which is scarcely less impressive than the new one. It is true that they had taken it only orally and collectively, soon after enrolment. The new oath introduces the words "I swear," whereas the old oath merely said "I undertake" and "I promise." The new text has the word "rodina," which may be translated as "country" or "fatherland." The old oath obliged the men to obey their officers, the new one adds the words "commissars" (political officials who shadow the officers) and "superiors," the meaning of which is conveniently elastic. It is generally believed that the solemn performance to-day was designed to start a new era in the fighting forces, whose confidence and moral had been shattered by the wholesale purging and shooting of officers during the last two years. The Central Committee announced a few weeks ago that the practice of wholesale purging in the Communist Party was to be abandoned. Presumably this announcement is to be applied to the fighting forces.

116751  
 24.2.39.