1994

Admiral Sir Reginald Drax and British strategic policy: Festina lente

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ADMIRAL SIR REGINALD DRAX
AND BRITISH STRATEGIC POLICY - FESTINA LENTE

BY

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B.A., Wilfrid Laurier University, 1992

Thesis
Submitted to the Department of History
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts degree
Wilfrid Laurier University
1994

ISBN 0-315-90783-5

Canada

This work is dedicated to my parents,
Lynn Arthur Davison and M. Ellen Metcalfe Davison

and
in loving memory of

Maurice Lynn Davison
(1911-1993)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to acknowledge the valued assistance of the following who helped make this work possible and were invaluable in its execution: Professor Barry M. Gough, my advisor, for his tireless help and patience; Professor Loren Calder, for his valued advice and encouragement; Professor Terry Copp; all at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo; Professor John B. Hattendorf, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island; Professor Donald M. Schurman, Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston; Dr. Roger Sarty, Senior Historian, Directorate-General of History, Department of National Defence, Ottawa; Helene Desjardins, DHIST, Department of National Defence, Ottawa; Rear Admiral J.R. Hill, RN, the Editor of The Naval Review, for his kind permission to quote from the 75th anniversary volume; Captain A.B. Sainsbury, RNR; Commander James Goldrick, RAN; Professor Jon Sumida, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland; Dr. G.A.H. Gordon, Cabinet Office, London; Professor John Ferris, University of Calgary; Mr. Martin Taylor and Mr. Alan Kuncia, Churchill Archive Centre, Churchill College, Cambridge; the Library staff of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich; the staff of the Public Record Office, Kew, Richmond, Surrey; the staff of the Royal Military College of Canada Library; and the staff of the Laurier University Library, especially the Inter-Library Loans Department, Mr. Don Rogers of the Audio-Visual Department at the Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston; the Audio-Visual Department at Wilfrid Laurier University; my colleagues: Mr. K. Allan Thurrott, B.A.; Ms. Elise Adolphe, B.A.; Mr. Christopher D. Underwood, B.A., B.Ed.; Mr. Scott L. Parks, B.A.; and Mr. Robert M. Dienesch, B.A., for editorial assistance.

The author especially wishes to thank Lieutenant Commander H.W. Drax, RN (ret.), for his kind permission to quote from his father's papers.

Robert L. Davison

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Waterloo, Ontario.
May 1994

PREFACE

In the main, this work is based on the papers of Admiral The Honourable Sir Reginald A.R. Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax KCB, DSO, ADC, RN, which have only been sporadically used, are found at the Churchill College Archives and are quoted with the permission of Lieutenant Commander H.W. Drax R.N. (ret.). Also very helpful were parts of the papers of Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond and Admiral of the Fleet Sir A.E.M. Chatfield, 1st Baron Chatfield which are held by the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich. The Admiralty Papers and Cabinet Papers at the Public Record Office, Kew, Richmond, Surrey were also of great assistance. Key sources also included The Naval Review and The Royal United Services Institution Journal where many of Admiral Drax's articles were published anonymously. These sources are found at National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa and the Royal Military College, Kingston. RUSIJ and Army Quarterly are also held at the Metropolitan Toronto Central Reference Library.

The Naval Review proved an interesting adventure in detective work in trying to identify authors since contributions were submitted anonymously to the editor. However, the author list from 1913 to 1930 is reprinted in Goldrick and Hattendorf eds., Mahan Is Not Enough from Admiral Sir William Henderson's personal copies. In addition, Admiral Drax frequently signed the initials R.X. or R.P.D. after many of his articles and there is a partial list of his works in the Drax Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge (DRAX 1/29).

In regards to secondary sources I am especially indebted to Professor D.M. Schurman, the late Professor Barry D. Hunt, the late Professor Arthur J. Marder, the late Captain Stephen Roskill, RN, Professor John B. Hattendorf and Commander James Goldrick, RAN.

"In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible knights of old:
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held."

Wordsworth[1]

"I am getting in the habit of writing perhaps more freely than I ought to. I write in haste, sometimes with no knowledge of a situation beyond our own view of it, so if I write too much please make allowance for my Celtic temperament. I know you will use them, as I wrote them, only for the good of the Service - or rather the good of the Country, which comes before the Service."

Commander R. Plunkett (Drax) 1914 [2]

"But the fate of that expedition is, I trust, now decided by an Arm stronger than ours, and by a Wisdom capable of counteracting our Folly."

Edmund Burke - 1797. [3]

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[1] Quoted in Admiral Drax, "Unconditional Surrender - Or What?", RUSIJ CIV no.614 (1959), p.198.

[2] RIC 7/4, Drax to Richmond, 18 Dec 1914.

[3] Quoted in Conor Cruise O'Brien, The Great Melody - A Thematic Biography and Commented Anthology of Edmund Burke (London: Minerva, 1992,1993), p.576. This is quoted from a letter from Burke to William Windham on the occasion of the dispersal of the French fleet off Ireland in January 1797.

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Frontpiece: Captain the Hon. R.A.R. Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax, RN from a photograph *circa* 1916-17. Used by permission of Rear-Admiral J.R. Hill, RN, the editor of The Naval Review. From the 1988, 75th anniversary volume of the Review. Rear Admiral Hill to author, 19 April 1994.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACNS	Assistant Chief of Naval Staff
ADC	Aide-de-Camp
ADM	Admiralty Papers, Public Records Office, Kew, Surrey.
CAB	Cabinet Papers, Public Records Office, Kew, Surrey.
CAS	Chief of Air Staff
CHT	Chatfield Papers, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
CinC	Commander-in-Chief
CID	Committee of Imperial Defence
COS	Chiefs of Staff
CNS	Chief of Naval Staff
DCNS/ VCNS	Deputy or Vice-Chief of Naval Staff
DPR	Defence Policy and Requirements Committee
DRAX	Drax Papers, Churchill College Archives, Cambridge
DSO	Distinguished Service Order
FAA	Fleet Air Arm
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
IGN	Imperial German Navy
IJN	Imperial Japanese Navy
NR	Naval Review. [London]
NRS	Navy Records Society
RAF	Royal Air Force

RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RIC	Richmond Papers, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
RMA	Royal Marine Artillery
RN	Royal Navy
RUSIJ	Royal United Services Institution Journal.
USA	United States Army
USAAF	United States Army Air Force
USN	United States Navy

Note: When officer's ranks are given with an author's name, it indicates rank in the Royal Navy, unless otherwise indicated. e.g., Captain Herbert Richmond, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, USN.

I. Introduction

British naval policy in the interwar period continues to intrigue historians. Although, as many writers have suggested, the Royal Navy entered the Second World War dangerously deficient in *materiel* and in numbers of modern vessels, the actual performance of the Navy throughout the years 1939-45 was better than could have been expected. At the end of the Great War, profound dissatisfaction existed with the performance of the Navy because of its failure, in some officers' views, to put its command of the sea to good use. During and after the war, debates over the Navy's effectiveness arose which involved nearly all the major naval leaders. Indeed, disputes over the results of the Battle of Jutland continued unabated until the eve of war in 1939.

In 1914, the Royal Navy possessed by far the largest Fleet in the world. An entire decade had been spent under the whip of Admiral Sir John Fisher to prepare the Navy for war on the material plane.[4] The Royal Navy's dreadnoughts were superior to anything else afloat and the officers and men of the Service were arguably equal to their tasks. However, as Sir Cyprian Bridge accurately put forward: "A

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[4] In this regard, see Arthur J. Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow - The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919 v.i (London: Oxford University Press, 1961)

'regular' permanently embodied or maintained service of fighting men is always likely to develop a spirit of intense professional self-satisfaction. The more highly organised it is, and the more sharply its official frontiers are defined, the more intense is this spirit likely to become."[5]

By contrast, in 1939 the Fleet was down to a one-power standard and was dangerously deficient in smaller craft. This situation was caused by the combination of post-war treaty obligations and the reluctance of the Treasury to spend money on armaments in view of the Depression. In spite of the material weakness it is impossible not to be impressed when one views the war record of the Navy in 1939-45. The Navy obeyed the principles of strategy and was greatly rewarded by victory.[6]

Again, this begs the question of what provoked this change? Certainly, if material strength in both relative and in absolute terms were compared in 1914 and 1939, it would be possible to assume that the Second Test would have been much more unsatisfactory than the First. One of the key differences was the triumph of the thinking naval officer. In 1939, the Navy possessed many officers of the first rank

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[5] Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, Sea-Power and Other Studies (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1910), p.101.

[6] Vice-Admiral Sir Peter Gretton, Maritime Strategy - A Study of British Defence Problems (London: Cassell, 1965), p.20. Captain Stephen Roskill, The Strategy of Sea Power - Its Development and Application (London: Collins, 1962), p.234.

with previous war experience. Also, the Royal Navy's very weakness in *materiel* necessitated thinking through naval strategy and efficiency very carefully for the margin of error was indeed slim. [7] In 1914, there were many senior officers, who unfortunately did not possess the flexibility of thought necessary for the prosecution of war in the most effective means possible. Even Lord Fisher, the patron saint of naval readiness, stated after he became First Sea Lord that, "Lavish naval expenditure, like human high-living, leads to the development of latent parasitical bacilli which prey on and diminish the vitality of the belligerent force whether in the human body or in the fighting ship!"[8]

With both the founding of the Naval Review in 1913 and the rise of younger officers with fresh ideas, and the triumph the Naval Staff system, tactics and strategy were no longer the private preserve of Fleet commanders and the First Sea Lord, but were the concern of all.[9] Independent action and initiative were emphasised, and officers were trained to think more carefully about their duties and responsibilities. This

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[7] Drax, "An Imaginary Disease and a Questionable Remedy," NR XIII (1925), p.262.

[8] Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow v.i, p.24.

[9] There were limitations to this change because much depended on the individual Commander in Chief and First Sea Lord. Some officers such as Admiral Sir Roger Backhouse (First Sea Lord 1938-9) were rigid centralisers whilst others like Admiral Sir Dudley Pound (First Sea Lord 1939-43) tended to rely more on his staff and could delegate some responsibilities.

new flexibility and the cultivation of young officers bore great results in the 1939-1945 war. This is not to say that there were no mistakes made, but the overall direction of naval strategy was a vast improvement over the 1914-1918 war. Not all of this re-thinking was done officially, but much was behind the scenes and much was also done in the pages of the Naval Review.

What we may call the "Young Turks" enter this debate only incidently since their primary focus was the condition of the personnel operating the machines rather than the machines themselves.[10] Unfortunately, the intellectual centres of the Navy were often the first ones to be cut when the new post-war estimates came down. A good share of that blame cannot rest with the Treasury in its entirety. The Admiralty set spending priorities in consultation with the Treasury and did not stand firm on the Naval Staff, the staff colleges or the Admiralty's Historical work. Even though, in the mid-1920s, the Admiralty did possess enough resources to rebuild the cruiser squadrons, there was not sufficient funds to introduce rigorous educational reforms. The nadir was reached in 1931

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[10] The "Young Turks" were a group of young naval officers who were dissatisfied with the direction of naval policy. Although it was "a marriage of convenience" among its members since they all had their own ideas, the group was vitally important in the foundation of The Naval Review. Its initial members included Captain H.W. Richmond, Drax, Commander K.G.B. Dewar, Lieutenant R.M. Bellairs, Lieutenant T. Fisher, Lieutenant H.G. Thursfield, and Captain E.W. Harding, RMA. Commander James Goldrick, RAN, "The Founders and the Early Days," NR LXXV (1988), p.58.

when the Government, facing financial crisis, slashed wages and benefits for ratings and officers resulting in the Invergordon mutiny.[11]

One of these "Young Turks" was Admiral the Honourable Sir Reginald Alymer Ranfurly Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax KCB, DSO, ADC, RN.[12] Drax did not play a prominent part in the actions of the Second World War although many of his ideas and methods were used. Nor did he rank high in the councils of state but he did offer answers into the strategic and tactical difficulties which afflicted the Royal Navy and the other two services as well. His chief contribution was to help facilitate an intellectual atmosphere in the Navy that allowed for the development of the thinking officer. Throughout his career, often in alliance with Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond and Vice-Admiral K.G.B. Dewar and others, he fought for the intellectual awakening of the Navy. Unlike his two colleagues, however, Drax managed to deflect much of the prejudice surrounding the "Young Turks" and teach his ideas to as many young officers as he could and even to penetrate the Admiralty organization. As Rear Admiral J.R. Hill, the present editor of the Naval Review indicated, the deep sense of liberation pervaded the Fleet far beyond the boundaries of

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[11] For a detailed examination of the mutiny, see S.W. Roskill, Naval Policy Between the Wars v.ii (London: Collins, 1976), pp.89-133.

[12] Then Commander The Honourable Reginald A.R. Plunkett, RN.

the "Turks" themselves to encompass some of the most brilliant officers of the time.[13]

As a member of the "Young Turks" under the leadership of Captain Herbert Richmond, Drax was arguably the most effective at getting his ideas implemented in the Admiralty and in the Fleet. The other members of this clique, though brilliant, had limited careers because of their lack of tact and their controversial views.[14] Although many of Drax's ideas were just as controversial, his manner in presenting those ideas, many of which he shared with Richmond and K.G.B. Dewar, was much more effective because his approach was to convince his fellows gently rather than use the bludgeon of insult often wielded by both Richmond and Dewar. This not only saved his career from the fate of his friends but it also provided opportunity for advancing the ideas of the reformers into the very heart of the Admiralty organisation during the Second World War.

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[13] Rear Admiral J.R. Hill, "Discussion of the Papers - Schurman, Hunt, and Goldrick," eds. Commander James Goldrick, RAN and John B. Hattendorf, Mahan Is Not Enough - The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 1993), pp.111-12.

[14] Richmond was forced to retire by the Board of Admiralty in 1931 and K.G.B. Dewar was placed on the retirement list after a court-martial in 1929. By 1933, Drax was the only founder of the Naval Review still on the active list. See Commander James Goldrick's article "The Irresistible Force and the Immovable Object." in Mahan Is Not Enough.

II. The Royal Navy's Strategic Problem

> "Britain's dilemma of the 1930s, of a single-handed war against several states, does not demonstrate that its relative strength had fallen so far that it could no longer defend the Empire. This situation would have threatened Britain even at the peak of its power...."[1]

In the interwar period, the Royal Navy faced what Paul Kennedy described as "Imperial Overstretch".[2] Declining force levels, the pressing need for economy, and the growing relative weakness of Great Britain combined to leave the Navy and armed forces in general in a serious predicament when faced with the possible combination of three hostile powers as geographically diverse as Japan, Germany and Italy. Even when the Fleet was at the pinnacle of its strength did it face such challenges.

While the Exchequer constantly pared down service estimates resulting in the squabbling of all three services, the government seemed to play into a policy that nearly assured the enmity of three powers that were a serious threat to Britain's security and interests. In the East, the Foreign Office and the Cabinet had postured with the League of Nations

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[1] John Roberts Ferris, The Evolution of Britisn Strategic Policy, 1919-1926 (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.31.

[2] Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers - Economic Change and Military Conflict From 1500 to 2000 (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p.410. See also, Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery, 3rd Ed. (London: Fontana Press, 1976,1991), pp.343-349.

to restrain Japanese aggression in China but could not contemplate taking military action. In the Mediterranean, His Majesty's Government had alienated Italy in the Ethiopian Crisis of 1935-36 by nearly going to war. Italy lay astride British communications to the Far East, and was perceived to be required to restrain Hitler in Europe. Meanwhile, with the acquiescence of the British Government, Germany was allowed to build up to 35% of the Royal Navy's battle fleet and 100% in submarines.

Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond wrote in Statesmen and Sea Power (1946) that the combined Japanese and German force levels under their respective treaty obligations would give them a 95% proportion of British strength. Even worse, in the event of the Italians being hostile, the combination would result in these fleets holding 130% of the strength of the Navy. When most of the British Navy's ships were older and had fewer auxiliaries it presented a bleak picture indeed. The chances of securing strategic equality against Japan, much less superiority, was slim.[3]

As was mentioned in the introduction, traditional history levels the blame for Britain's lack of preparedness on the Treasury for what occurred during the Second World War. However, modern scholarship has not been satisfied with that verdict. Drax himself, however, would argue that would only

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[3] Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, Statesmen And Sea Power (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), p.290.

be addressing a symptom of the problem. The answer, he argued, to difficult and complex questions was rarely ever found by merely throwing money at them.

The concentration of debate has focused round the infamous "Ten Year Rule". This principle was adopted by the Cabinet in 1919 to guide the development of British defence expenditure after the end of the Great War. The principle held that British defence preparations would be so tuned so that they would be ready for war in ten years' time. In the context of 1919, this made perfect sense when Britain had no real enemy to fear. However, the Ten Year Rule was made continuous by the Treasury (with, of course, the approval of Cabinet) in 1928 in order to contain defence costs.
However, the critical views take little account of the Treasury's real difficulties in controlling expenditure, especially in the middle of a Depression. As Peden indicates, the Treasury had not yet been conquered by Keynesian economics and still tried to stimulate economic growth by slashing expenditure and lowering taxes.[4]

Drax entered the fray on this issue. Like Warren Fisher at the Treasury, he also recognised that there were some very real financial constraints that forced Britain to watch her expenditure. In essence, the Exchequer was the fourth arm of the British armed forces. Without a good financial position,

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[4] G.C. Peden, British Rearmament and the Treasury 1932-39 (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1979), p.61.

Drax argued, Britain would be ruined. [5]

John Ferris has argued that the idea of Treasury control over defence policy was often constrained by the power of the Cabinet and numerous other influences. In particular, Ferris focuses on the impact of the Ten Year Rule on British strategic policy and the armed services. Indeed, in the initial stages, the Ten Year Rule was used by the service departments to wrest money from the Treasury because the services were to be ready for major war in ten years time.[6]

The Ten Year Rule was one of several guiding principles of British strategic policy such as the One Power Standard adopted as the strength of the Royal Navy, equality for the Royal Air Force and balanced budgets.[7] Indeed, it was not until after 1926 that the Treasury was able to control Service estimates and only then with the approval of Cabinet. [8]

Throughout the 1920s, the British Government spent twice as much as the in 1914 budget, since it had to service the massive debt from the war, and the cost of the new social welfare net. Also the Treasury was justified in thinking that Britain's financial strength, carefully husbanded, allowed for the victory of 1918. Moreover, the handling of money by the

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[5] DRAX 6/11, "Readiness for War," April 1931.

[6] Ferris, The Evolution of British Strategic Policy, p.28.

[7] Ibid., p.15.

[8] Ibid., p.29.

services themselves often left much to be desired. At least 10% of each services' estimates were returned to the Treasury each fiscal year.[9] However, as Stephen Roskill points out, the individual services had no choice but to use money prescribed for the purpose it had been voted by Parliament. If a contractor was slow in completing his assigned work in a given fiscal year, the Admiralty could not use the excess money for other purposes but had to return it to the Treasury. The Treasury and the Admiralty had partially come to terms over that issue in 1919.[10]

G.C. Peden agrees with Ferris but he concentrates most heavily on the period of the 1930s after the Ten Year rule had already done its damage due the budgetary restraint of 1929-1931. Peden finds that the Treasury was not guiltless for the lack of preparations in 1939. However, the Treasury recognised the importance of industrial capacity by 1935 and forced the services to produce well-balanced and orderly rearmament programmes. The lack of industrial capacity severely limited extensive rearmament. In final judgement, Peden concludes, "Far from being paralysing, the Treasury's use of the power of the purse forced ministers and military

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[9] Ibid., pp.33-36

[10] S.W. Roskill, Naval Policy Between the Wars v.i (London: Collins, 1968), pp.205-6. The Admiralty had agreed to have its estimates cut by 10% since the Navy nearly always spent that much under budget annually. In return, if costs went beyond these so-called "Shadow Cuts", the Treasury would introduce Supplementary Estimates to make up for any shortfall.

men to come to decisions about priorities, and thereby ensured that essential elements in Britain's defences were completed first."[11]

G.A.H Gordon also reviewed the problem of Treasury control and the problem of rearming the Navy for war. He finds, that although the Treasury had an important role to play in the formulation of defence policy the key problem was the rapid decline of the naval arms industry. Orders for warships and ordnance had decreased so much that only one company was able to fulfil all types of naval orders.[12] The resulting loss of industries essential to a modern navy meant headaches and continual bottlenecks when rearmament began in the second half of the 1930s.[13]

For the Navy, however, in the years before, during and after the Second World War, it became fashionable to use a verbal bludgeon on the Treasury. That department was to blame for the financial stringency and the resulting lack of readiness in 1939. While it is true that budgetary limitations and the almost legendary legacies of the "Geddes

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[11] Peden, British Rearmament, pp.178-184.

[12] G.A.H. Gordon, British Sea Power and Procurement Between The Wars - A Reappraisal of Rearmament (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988), p.79.

[13] For instance in 1939, the Admiralty was forced to purchase 2,300 tons of armour plate from the Skoda works in Czechoslovakia. ADM 167/101, "Construction for 1939, Memorandum by the First Sea Lord (Backhouse), 13 December 1938. The supply of armour was already a problem in the 1920, #56 "Admiralty Memorandum for the CID," 15 December 1920, The Beatty Papers v.ii, ed., B. Ranft (London: NRS, 1993), p.124.

Axe" and the "Ten Year Rule" had an important impact on naval policy and readiness, the answer goes deeper.[14]

No overall planning body with real clout existed in the years following the Great War. Attempts to found a genuine Ministry of Defence were quashed quickly in Parliament and in the corridors of power. The existing political structure allowed the three services to spring for their opposite's jugular without regard to resulting problems of inter-service co-operation. The only structure that could offer any joint planning was the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence under the secretaryship of Maurice Hankey. This body, however, had no executive authority of its own and was often pre-occupied with the airing of inter-service strife rather than offering real solutions to real problems.

The problem also lay within the Navy itself since many officers were still pre-occupied with the results of the Battle of Jutland. Much was also left over from the personal dictatorship of Fisher and the disease of over-centralisation that still pervaded the Naval Staff structure. While officers like Drax and Dewar fought for a Naval Staff, both recognised that such a system still had pitfalls for the unwary. A staff

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[14] The "Geddes Axe" refers to the massive cost-cutting programme undertaken by a committee under Sir Eric Geddes following the First World War. All three armed services were to be cut down substantially and vigorous attempts would be taken to avoid duplication of services. Roskill, Naval Policy Between the Wars, v.i, pp. 230-33, 267-8.

without sufficient independence or freedom from administration would produce stagnation as rigid as any dictatorship.[15] As Dewar wrote, the system was,

> reminiscent of the Chinese Emperor who... used periodically to send for his Ministers and pointing to a herd of deer in the royal park ask how they liked his horses. Those who had sufficient independence to say that they were deer were led out to instant execution.[16]

Drax himself was careful to ensure that naval officers could not use the excuse of financial stringency to not do their utmost to promote readiness. Witness his response to one officer in The Naval Review: "A remarkable view, which, reduced to its logical absurdity, means that if you have a large enough navy you need neither one [training] or the other [technique]..."[17] Financial and material resources were only a part of the problem of naval efficiency.

However, the financial squeeze in the post-war era, struck first at the intellectual organs of the Navy which were arguably more important than new construction. Indeed, the Admiralty's Historical Section was saved from the "Geddes Axe" by the personal intervention of the First Sea Lord, Earl Beatty. The Naval Staff was pared down to the bone and the

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[15] This concept gets interesting treatment by John Ralston Saul, Voltaire's Bastards - The Dictatorship of Reason in the West (London: Penguin, 1992). Especially in his chapter entitled "Learning How to Organize Death."

[16] Vice-Admiral Kenneth G.B. Dewar, The Navy From Within (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939), p.105.

[17] Drax, "An Imaginary Disease and a Questionable Remedy," NR XIII (1925), p.262.

Staff Colleges were nearly submerged into non-existence. Therefore, no concrete studies could be made of the experience of war and little of the Historical Branch's work was complete by 1939.[18]

The performance of the Royal Navy and its efforts at learning the lessons of the First World War have been discussed by many naval historians. Arthur Marder, one of the best of these historians, contended that the Navy had learned some important lessons from the results of the First War; but often the wrong lessons were learnt. He saw the Navy as being quick to digest the results of Jutland but even the Mediterranean Fleet under Admiral Sir Dudley Pound still relied on rigid line-of-battle tactics, which had proved so problematic in the Great War. However, the subtle difference in the title from "Battle" to "Fighting" suggested some loosening of the ties of over-centralisation. However, both Admirals Sir Ernle Chatfield and W.W. Fisher who preceded Pound in the Mediterranean Fleet advocated the use of divisional tactics and independent initiative.[19] Certainly, Drax who was one of the chief contributors to this change consistently emphasised the need to get tactical principles to be ingrained and to be properly applied. Thus, a concise

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[18] Arthur Marder, From the Dardanelles to Oran - Studies of the Royal Navy in War and Peace, 1915-1940 (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp.60-61.

[19] Jon Tetsuro Sumida, "The Best Laid Plans: The Development of British Battle-Fleet Tactics, 1919-1942," International History Review XIV no.4 (1992), p.695.

document would be more suitable than to give individual captains an extensive manual that attempted to address every conceivable situation.[20] In addition, many lessons of the U-Boat campaign were quickly forgotten, even though it had nearly strangled Britain in 1917-18.[21]

Furthermore, naval aviation was not developed as it should have been. While Britain was far in the lead in naval aviation in 1918, that leadership was clearly gone in 1939. Anti-air attitudes were prominent in naval circles and the effectiveness of anti-aircraft fire was exaggerated.[22] However, many naval officers thought through the importance of air power as evidenced in the pages of The Naval Review and in the writings of Drax himself.[23] Earl Beatty, when he was First Sea Lord, fought for an organic Royal Navy air service when he perceived that the new RAF would not aid the

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[20] DRAX 2/2, "Draft Memorandum for CinC Mediterranean (Pound), 1 June 1938. See also, DRAX 2/2, "Battle," n.d. "Our study of tactics concentrates, naturally enough, on the potentialities of the weapons employed and the geometric movements of the vessels that carry them. This is right, but it contains a germ of danger. Throughout history, "fighting instructions" have on the whole done more harm than good. Nelson, our greatest tactician..., issued very brief instructions and relied mainly on indoctrinating his subordinates by frequent personal explanations." Drax was Rear Admiral, 1st Battle Squadron in the Mediterranean Fleet in the late 1920s, see Appendix I.

[21] Marder, From the Dardanelles to Oran, pp. 36,40,53.

[22] Ibid., p.57.

[23] Drax, "The Influence in the Future of Aircraft Upon Problems of Imperial Defence," NR X (1922), pp.220-247.

Navy tactically or strategically.[24] Furthermore, in the last few naval construction programmes implemented before 1939 there was emphasis placed upon naval aviation and aircraft carriers.[25] However, the tension between the Air Ministry and the Admiralty over the control of the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) stunted its growth. Furthermore, new evidence unearthed by Professor Jon Sumida has shown that air power had limitations in the 1920s and 30s and with the advent of carrier-based fighters and radar, it was assumed that battleships would be able to hold their own.[26]

However, widespread dissatisfaction existed in regard to the Navy's performance in 1914-18 even though Marder states that "the Royal Navy had been successful in its main objective."[27] Officers such as Drax, Richmond and the Dewar brothers saw the Navy's performance in the war as a failure. Although Marder is correct in indicating that these officers were somewhat marginalised after 1918, their influence went beyond themselves. Many of the more mainstream naval officers of the calibre of Ernle Chatfield, and W.W. Fisher were instrumental in maximising the efficiency of the Fleet. The intellectual flexibility and airing of the views of younger

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[24] # 89 Beatty to First Lord, 21 September 1921, Beatty Papers v.ii, pp.182-3.

[25] Roskill, Naval Policy v.i, p.584.

[26] Sumida, "British Battle-Fleet Tactics," p.691.

[27] Marder, From the Dardanelles to Oran, p.57.

officers allowed a wider approach to the Navy's problems.

The historian David MacGregor in his article "The Use, Misuse, and Non-Use of History" broke down the Navy's three pivotal experiences of the First World War from which lessons could have easily been gleaned. These three experiences were the Battle of the Atlantic, Jutland and the Dardanelles expedition. As regards to the U-Boat campaign, MacGregor finds himself wholly in agreement with Marder's arguments that the Navy failed miserably to learn the lessons to deal effectively with the submarine threat until 1943. Of course, not all of the blame can rest on the Admiralty. Several high-ranking officers including Drax, Admiral Sir Gerald Dickens and Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound were profoundly aware of the need for long-range aircraft in the Battle of the Atlantic early in the war. Furthermore, a great deal of thought was put on the submarine threat as early as 1932, in order to develop adequate counter-measures to submarines.[28] However, the Navy was over-confident in the efficiency of ASDIC and other anti-submarine measures. MacGregor also states that the experience of Gallipoli did not completely discredit the concept of amphibious operations but "distorted" it. Many planners began to assume that no such operations could be carried out in the face of heavy opposition. Drax felt that such operations needed "perfect secrecy" in order

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[28] ADM 167/87, "Memorandum by 1st Sea Lord (Chatfield) - Regarding Sketch Estimates for 1933," 14 November 1932.

to be successful.[29] However, Drax put considerably more thought into the development of combined operations than MacGregor gives him credit. Several of his studies on amphibious operations still survive in the Drax Papers. Drax saw the necessity of developing striking forces that would be highly mobile and which would include both the army and the Royal Marines.[30]

Finally, it would be wise to take into account of the position and strategy of Britain's adversaries in the 1920s and 1930s. The emergence of the triple threat to global British security was one of the decisive difficulties with which Whitehall struggled. Each of the three powers had, in each their own way, a deep impact on British planning and strategy.

Fortunately, German naval policy and strategy was tentative and uncertain. The internal struggle between the proponents of commerce warfare and the Z Plan continued even after the out-break of war in 1939. Similar to the Royal Navy, the *Kriegsmarine* was confronted with the failures of the First World War. Also, as in the British service, there was a rebellion of younger officers against the orthodoxy of

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[29] David MacGregor, "The Use, Misuse, and Non-Use of History: The Royal Navy and the Operational Lessons of the First World War," Journal of Military History LVI no.4 (1992), p.607.

[30] DRAX 2/8, "Royal Marine Striking Force," February 1939, "Provision and Training of Personnel for Combined Operations," ca. early 1939.

Tirpitz's pre-occupation with the battle fleet and the battle of annihilation. The problem of Germany's geographic position remained constant since she could easily be isolated from the world's ocean traffic. This also meant the German battle fleet was of limited use when it assumed a defensive posture.[31]

During the interwar years, German naval planning was torn between the doctrine of Mahan where the prime focus was on the battlefleet or the concept of *guerre de course* where the main target was the commerce of the enemy. Tirpitz and Raeder initially depended on the concept of the battlefleet. As Holger Herwig indicated, German planners did not fully understand the functions of sea power since the concepts of Mahan that many officers espoused, were ignored or too easily passed off.[32] Tirpitz and Raeder forgot the problem of Germany's geographic position or joint strategic planning.[33] Furthermore, both floundered over the principle of superior maritime strength especially in Tirpitz's passion for the

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[31] Vice-Admiral Wolfgang Wegener, IGN, The Naval Strategy of the World War trans., Holger H. Herwig ([1929]; Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), pp.35-39, A.C.D. [Captain A.C. Dewar], review of The Maritime Strategy of the World War by Vice-Admiral Wolfgang Wegener, IGN, in NR XXVII (1939), pp.721-724.

[32] Holger H. Herwig, "The Failure of German Sea Power, 1914-1945: Mahan, Tirpitz, and Raeder Reconsidered," International History Review X no.1 (1988), pp.68-105.

[33] Ibid., p.72.

Entscheidungsschlacht.[34] However, the German forgot one thing: "Offensively, the control of German (and neutral) shipping, which the Grand Fleet exercised from Scapa Flow and the Channel ports was no whit less complete than if the German North Sea ports had been blockaded at close range..."[35]

However, until the late 1930s, the primary adversary that British planners concentrated on was Japan. After the end of the Great War, Britain sacrificed its 1902 alliance with Tokyo to satisfy American pressure.[36] Although Japan was bound by the Washington Arms Limitation Treaties and the Nine Power Pact in the Pacific her policies became increasingly aggressive throughout the interwar period. From the Manchurian crisis of 1931, it seemed that the Japanese went out of their way to menace or challenge British interests in China. However, no serious planning was done against Britain until 1940-1 by the Japanese according to Marder.[37]

Japanese strategy rested on the presumption of a limited

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[34] Carl-Axel Gemzell, Organization, Conflict, and Innovation - A Study of German Naval Strategic Planning, 1888-1940 (Stockholm: Lund, 1973, p.49. This term refers to the battle of annihilation.

[35] Herbert Rosinski, "Command of the Sea,"(1939) The Development of Naval Thought - Essays by Herbert Rosinski ed., B.M. Simpson (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1977), p.11.

[36] W.N. Medlicott, British Foreign Policy Since Versailles, 1919-1963 (London: Methuen, 1968), pp.18-22.

[37] Arthur J. Marder, Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy v.i (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p.65.

war fought for limited objectives. Tokyo aimed at asserting Japanese predominance in East Asia by striking quickly and decisively against western possessions in China, Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies. After these territories were secured, a solid defensive ring would be established to prevent any enemy, especially the United States, from penetrating. Rigorous counter-strikes would be inflicted on any move towards Japanese possessions using interior lines of communication. In the same way that Russia found itself limited because of the destruction of its fleet at Tsushima straits, so too would the western powers grow tired of a war with no victory in sight. This planning was based on the assumption that neither of the two major western powers would escalate the war into a total conflict. This calculation was perhaps valid in the 1930s but not during a world-wide conflict.[38] The Japanese relied on the decisiveness of battle and paid little attention to the problem of *guerre de course* that the Americans were to practice against them with great success. But the key miscalculation of the Japanese was the assumption that a Pacific war could somehow remain "limited" at which they had a chance at winning. The Navy was to be the shield of the army and found itself limited by that subordination. Indeed, Japan was, in Clark Reynolds' view,

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[38] Herbert Rosinski, "The Strategy of Japan," (1946) The Development of Naval Thought, p.111.

"the Continental State Upon the Sea."[39]

This subject will be discussed in much more detail later because Drax himself played an important role in the discussions over British strategic priorities in the Far East. However, the political costs of abandoning the Pacific were too high to consider the possibility of giving the Japanese a free hand in China. British prestige would collapse along with the Eastern Empire. This was especially the case in dealing with the so-called "white" Dominions of Australia and New Zealand whose support would be important in any future war, so their security, in exchange, must be assured. When this was combined with the Italian threat astride British communications in the Mediterranean, it was a serious situation that existed. A powerful enemy half a globe away and two powerful nations threatening the power balances in Europe left British planners with insuperable difficulties.

In this atmosphere, the Navy planned for war. No longer could the bulk of the Grand Fleet station its forces at Scapa Flow to keep watch on the High Seas Fleet but would have to watch the fleets of three powerful adversaries. None of those powers were individually stronger than Britain but together they posed a formidable threat.

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[39] Clark G. Reynolds, History and the Sea: Essays on Maritime Strategies (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), pp.137-40.

> "Instead of the brain being an active and productive machine, a thing of vast constructive power, we try to make it a cross between a museum and a lost-property office."
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> -Drax, 1913 [1]

III. Intellectual Context

The intellectual revolution that struck the Royal Navy had a profound impact on the development of naval policy. Drax was a member of that first generation of naval officers that experienced that revolution first hand and became one of its agents within the Service. The response to the growing international crisis, the impact of industrial power on navies and the growing awareness of a "scientific" study of war were all felt in Drax's formative years. To grasp fully the ideas put forward by Drax and other officers of his generation, it is necessary to delve into this intellectual development.

The Royal Navy in the nineteenth century had lost it way intellectually. There were no major wars to fight after 1815 and following the tradition of British defence policy in peacetime, the Navy was permitted to decay to a mere shadow of its former self. The Navy that remained seemed to rest on its laurels until it was forced to wake up by the decline in Britain's relative position after 1870. Britain lost the advantages of having a near-monopoly on industrial power and

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[1] Drax, "Naval Education," NR I (1913), p.28.

was increasingly more vulnerable than in 1815 due to the increased dependence on overseas food supplies. The need for imported food soon became a major weakness as by the 1880s Britain imported 65% of its grain.[2] In N.A.M. Rodger's view, "statesmen and sea officers ceased to know, and in many cases to care, what the Navy existed for. As the country's influence expanded, the Navy's intellectual horizons contracted."[3]

However, the response to that perceived crisis was an increased faith in newer vessels to maintain the Royal Navy's standard of strength vis a vis its nearest competitors. Naval officers, shipbuilders, politicians and the public at large were entranced by the technological developments of the final two decades of the nineteenth century. This technical change happened so quickly that many traditional ideas were assumed to be no longer valid and it seemed that all tactical and strategical problems could be solved by improved technology.

> Material change called forth material change and most people naturally accepted this specialisation that they did not understand, since it seemed eminently plausible, as it still is today, to say 'naval affairs are scientific - leave them in the hands of the experts.[4]

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[2] William H. McNeill, The Pursuit of Power - Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp.262-63.

[3] N.A.M. Rodger, The Admiralty (Lavenham, Suffolk: T. Dalton, 1979), p.93.

[4] Donald M. Schurman, The Education of a Navy - The Development of British Naval Strategic Thought, 1867-1914 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), p.5.

This trend accelerated and finally culminated in the advent of the *Dreadnought* with which the Navy went to war in 1914. The means and ends of war were hopelessly confused.[5] This was certainly reflected in the education that future naval officers were given at HMS *Britannia* as it tended to be extremely technical and focused on the study of mathematics.[6] Significant inroads were made in the decade prior to 1914 but it did not permeate those responsible for the direction of the war.

This problem refused to go away. Indeed, to-day, it is very beguiling to be entranced with the tremendous changes in the technology of warfare since the end of the Second World War. The development of the atomic bomb, nuclear-powered submarines, cruise missiles, attack aircraft and computerisation have again questioned the foundations of the historical principles of war. On the other hand, writers such as Kenneth Hagan, Martin van Creveld, and Captain Wayne Hughes, reflecting on this, found that too much attention to sophisticated weapons systems have pit-falls that need to be

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[5] Colonel Harry G. Summers, USA, On Strategy - A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982), pp.42-52. Summers explains in this work how the American military confused the ends and means of military operations in Vietnam in much the same way that the Royal Navy did in the First World War. In both cases, despite material advantages, strategy and tactics were mishandled which resulted in severe losses.

[6] Dewar, The Navy from Within, p.17. HMS Britannia was the training establishment for naval cadets.

guarded against closely.[7] If principles of strategy and tactics remain relatively constant, it is the application of those principles that undergo significant change.

Connected to the principles of war, is the importance of history as a teacher of lessons in the application of military force. The disjointed attitude towards naval history seriously impaired operational efficiency even with the increase of material available.[8] It was thought that history could no longer provide important lessons since so much had changed. As a result, the naval officer was cast adrift in a world of rootless materialism. With no concept of the use of weapons combined with no recent war experience, the consequences could be severe.[9]

In the Royal Navy at this time, existed the traditional Service prejudice against intellectuals and those "who thought too much". Junior officers were encouraged only to obey orders and not to presume to air their opinions before their seniors. Oftentimes seniors would so centralise their responsibilities

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[7] Kenneth Hagan, This People's Navy - The Making of American Seapower (New York: Free Press, 1991). Martin van Creveld, Technology and War From 2000 B.C. to the Present (New York: Free Press, 1989). Captain Wayne P. Hughes, USN, Fleet Tactics - Theory and Practice (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1986).

[8] Schurman, The Education of a Navy, p.5.

[9] This problem was further aggravated by the experience of war in the nineteenth century where technology played a large role in European and extra-European conflict. The gap between the breech-loading rifle and the spear concentrated attention on and distorted the importance of technology.

that there would be no way for a young officer to learn his job. This problem of overcentralisation was only gradually solved. Indeed, as late as 1938, one British officer, Bertram Ramsay became so frustrated with Admiral Sir Roger Backhouse's centralising at the Admiralty that he resigned his commission.[10]

Although Marder and MacGregor discuss the failure, in many cases, of the Navy to learn from the operational lessons of the Great War, it was by no means apparent to many officers that they should learn the past lessons. The lessons that were often learned were the wrong ones in that inaccurate inferences were made from past experience. In Marder's words: "It is an axiom among historians that knowledge of history can serve as a guide to the present... Armed forces have a particularly bad reputation for not taking this axiom seriously."[11]

The organisation of the Admiralty further aggravated the problems. The senior officers of the Navy were primarily responsible for administration and not the strategic direction of armed force. In Admiral Sir Reginald Custance's words: "Their attention was diverted from their proper role - the conduct of war - to details connected with *materiel*. It was

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[10] Martin Stephen, The Fighting Admirals - British Admirals of the Second World War (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), pp.23,35.

[11] Marder, From the Dardanelles to Oran, p.33.

a peace organisation."[12] Nor was this problem easily solved. When one looks through the papers of the various First Sea Lords,[13] the correspondence and business is constantly dominated by problems of finance and politics with little attention to war itself. Even the development of the naval staff failed to stop this pre-occupation even up to World War II.

The Royal Navy in the twentieth century has produced some extraordinary and powerful characters. For instance, the powerful image of "Jacky" Fisher completely dominating the Navy and the Board of Admiralty in manner which would have not been possible a half century before. All of a sudden the so-called "silent service" produced some loud voices concerning the direction of naval policy at the turn of the century. Professor Jon Sumida, at a recent conference at the Naval War College, commented on the sense of liberation that came about with the foundation of The Naval Review that was mentioned by Rear Admiral J.R. Hill.[14] Sumida contended that the Navy had finally caught up to the era of what G.M. Young called, "the

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[12] "Barfleur" (Captain Reginald Custance), Naval Policy - A Plea For the Study of War (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1907), p.4. For a similar critique of Admiralty structure see; Drax, "Jutland or Trafalgar," NR XIII (1925), pp.240-1.

[13] As available in the Navy Record Society's editions of The Beatty Papers and The Jellicoe Papers. See also Lord Chatfield, It Might Happen Again (London: Hutchinson, 1942)

[14] Rear-Admiral Hill is the present editor of the Naval Review.

disinterested intelligence."[15] This development affected naval culture a half-century later than the rest of the country.

However, that development does not answer the question of the problem of Fisher and the early reformers. This response, most likely, was a result of the recognition of the threat to British supremacy and the need to have a navy that could fight a modern war.[16] Certainly, Fisher was acutely aware of this fairly early on in relation to most of his contemporaries. Also, the growth in the prestige of the Navy and increasing nationalism gave officers like Fisher, Lord Charles Beresford and Sir Percy Scott an outlet for public support.

Fisher represents the first wave of reform that swept the Navy. With him came the technical revolutions that produced HMS *Dreadnought*, improved gunnery and a host of material advances unseen in the Royal Navy to that time. But this change was also counter-productive in one sense because it, in many ways, reinforced the intellectual stagnation and rigidity of doctrine. It also distorted strategy and tactics to the point that, in many cases, they no longer had any bearing on reality. The technical change, as in our times, outpaced the ability to apply it. This is by no means a condemnation of the Royal Navy; far from it. Any organisation

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[15] Jon Sumida, "Discussion of the Papers," Mahan Is Not Enough, p.113.

[16] Schurman, The Education of a Navy, pp.2-3.

of the size and history of the Royal Navy needs time to absorb change and dwell upon its impact on naval policy. As Lord Chatfield wrote in the introduction of his memoirs published in 1942, older officers found it difficult to assimilate new ideas so very quickly.[17]

This rapid, though necessary change, had severe implications and costs for a bureaucratic system. Fisher exerted the power of his personality and energy to run roughshod over others who did not share his vision. As a result of mounting opposition to his policies, Fisher was forced to become more and more deeply entrenched daring any to oppose him. As Fisher himself wrote: "Never Deny: Never Explain: Never Apologise." [18] This problem became so acute that any suggestion or new idea would be seen as verging on treason. Memoirs of the period such as those of Dewar, Keyes, Churchill, and Scott as well as the particulars of the infamous feud between Fisher and Beresford, bring out this problem.[19] Fisher was placed in the anomalous position of denouncing reform even though he was the arch-reformer and visionary. This concern for position also crushed any idea

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[17] Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, The Navy and Defence (London: Hutchinson, 1942), p.ix.

[18] Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher, Memories (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1919), p.275.

[19] A recent examination of this dispute is found in: Robert K. Massie, Dreadnought - Great Britain, Germany and the Coming of the Great War (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991).

of criticising Admiralty policy or even establishing an effective staff structure since it might imperil Fisher's position and give legitimate venues for the airing of the views of his opponents. This system of tyranny resulted in a Cabinet committee to investigate strategic planning and the imposition of a naval staff by the direct intervention of the First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill in 1911.

However, as N.A.M. Rodger points out, Fisher can also be seen as the last of the Victorians.[20] This can readily be seen in Fisher's earlier career where he pushed for better weapons and was always an enthusiast for what he perceived as readiness. Fisher was convinced that speed was armour and that improved gunnery, bigger ships and larger calibre guns would solve the tactical and strategic problems faced by the Royal Navy in its contest with Germany. As Fisher wrote: "Myself, I hate a brainy man.... No brainy man ever sees that speed is armour."[21]

On the other hand, it is not entirely fair to characterise Fisher as a simple materialist as he was deeply concerned about the welfare of his officers. In addition, Fisher was instrumental in pushing forward the Selborne educational reforms at the turn of the century. Under his tenure moves were made towards increasing the intellectual

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[20] Rodger, The Admiralty, p.124.

[21] Fisher, Memories, p.98.

strength of the Navy as well as the material.[22] However, Fisher was ambivalent towards such reforms since on one hand he would denounce "brainy men" and on the other he would be concerned the "want of first-class Intellects."[23] In regard to naval education, the cramming of facts and mathematics with little attention toward the humanities threatened "the risk of putting a weapon into the mischievous hands of the ignoramus or the faddist, or still more mischievous hands of the charlatan."[24] The reliance on rigid centralisation and the often-deliberate crushing of originality still handcuffed the Navy to the nineteenth century. To be fair, Fisher's unconventional manner and disregard for convention allowed for a breath of fresh air into Admiralty administration.[25]

The intellectual awakening in the Navy built up slowly over time. At first the Colomb brothers wrote on British strategy, then Mahan and finally Corbett.[26] Nor was this revolution silent in the service itself throughout the period of the late nineteenth century. Indeed, Admiral Sir William

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[22] The growth of the War Course at Portsmouth, the Naval Staff at the Admiralty and the Staff College all contributed to this trend.

[23] Ibid., p.208. Fisher to Lord Esher, 3 January 1912.

[24] Bridge, The Art of Naval Warfare, p.236.

[25] Peter Kemp, "The Royal Navy," Edwardian England 1901-1914 ed., Simon Nowell-Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp.492-95.

[26] In this regard, see Schurman, The Education of a Navy,

Henderson, the first editor of the Naval Review, remembered how P.H. Colomb was marginalised for his views. For Henderson's part, he too was always an advocate of reform. Henderson was one of the founders of the Junior Naval Professional Association in February 1872. However, this organisation had a very short life as it was frowned upon by Their Lordships and the membership was limited to only officers of the rank of Lieutenant.[27] Other officers as well discussed this problem of naval development. Most notably Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, historian and strategist, who wrote a number of books at the turn of the century criticising the materialist bent of many naval officers as well as the so-called "Victory School".[28] In addition the contributions of the Navy Records Society and of Professor Sir John Laughton in advocating the relevancy of history was invaluable.[29]

Nor was this questioning of accepted doctrine, the preserve of the naval officer. Indeed, much of the

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[27] Barry Hunt, Sailor-Scholar - Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond 1871-1946 (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1982), pp.33-34.

[28] Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge (1839-1924) became the first Director of Naval Intelligence in 1889, C-in-C Australian station in 1894, C-in-C China station in 1901. He was also a distinguished writer on naval affairs until his death in 1924. J.R.H. Weaver, ed., Dictionary of National Biography, 1922-1930 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp.110-12.

[29] Sir John Laughton was a Professor at the Royal Naval College at Greenwich. He was also a pioneer in documentary research and one of the founders of the Navy Records Society. See Professor Schurman's assessment in The Education of a Navy, pp.83-109.

inspiration for the revolution was brought forth by civilians. In particular, Sir Julian Corbett was very quick to point the limitations of technology and the necessity of a policy built around sound strategical principles. Corbett pointed the inherent strength of the strategic defensive and that goals may be achieved without battle.[30] Indeed, in his history of the naval war, Corbett affirmed the correctness of the strategy of patient watching and waiting instead of parading forth to seek battle on the enemy's terms.[31] The historian was also profoundly aware of the limitations of sea-power and that it secured a maritime power only some advantages.[32]

It was a fine thing to have a naval battle to crush your enemies but to think that it would solve all your problems was a false hope. "What are you to do if the enemy refuses to permit you to destroy his fleets? You cannot leave your trade exposed to cruiser raids while you await your opportunity..."[33] Corbett saw battle as merely a means toward an end. For instance, in his praise of Nelson when that hero in the Pantheon of British Naval History had avoided battle when it

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[30] Sir Julian Corbett, Some Principles of Maritime Strategy ([1919]; New York: AMS Press, 1974), p.213.

[31] Donald M. Schurman, Julian S. Corbett, 1854-1922 - Historian of British Maritime Policy from Drake to Jellicoe (London: Royal Historical Society, 1981), pp.193-94.

[32] Ibid., p.ix.

[33] Corbett, Some Principles of Maritime Strategy, p.162.

did not serve his strategic interest.[34]

Corbett began his career as a publicist and a naval historian relatively late in life. Like the "Young Turks" he also rode the wave of reform brought about by Lord Fisher. Indeed, Fisher often supplied Corbett with confidential information and deep insight into British naval policy. By no means, however, was Corbett completely Fisher's creature since his active and powerful mind could act quite independently. Surprisingly enough, Corbett was able to remain in close contact with Fisher until the latter's death in 1920. Fisher valued Corbett's advice highly even when the former was his most dictatorial.[35] However, Corbett's views also transcended official channels and gained other outlets for his advice besides publishing, Herbert Richmond.

Corbett was a forceful influence on Richmond, Drax and the "Young Turks" who attempted to apply his ideas. Indeed, Herbert Richmond was friends with Corbett and the civilian aided him in writing his first historical work.[36] Drax's writing reflected many of the same ideas presented by

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[34] Sir Julian Corbett, The Campaign of Trafalgar, ([1919]; New York: AMS Press, 1976) pp.65-66. Corbett refers to Nelson's blockade of Toulon in 1804 when his squadron was guarding an important convoy from Britain to Sicily. Nelson deliberately oversaw the safety of that convoy first and foremost.

[35] Schurman, Corbett, pp.36-7.

[36] Hunt, Sailor-Scholar, p.12.

Corbett.[37] Certainly, Drax's concerns with the limitations of the naval defensive and his suspicions of the "Victory School" evidenced a deep understanding of Corbett's writing. This outside influence and re-thinking of British naval policy laid the foundation for the "Young Turks" rebellion.

In the same way, less significant than Corbett, his near contemporary P.A. Silburn wrote on naval affairs and concluded: "Sea-Power cannot be estimated by the number, size, power, or cost of ships and armament that a nation possesses, any more than the brain-power and ability of a man can be judged by his bulk or dress."[38] Fred T. Jane, the founder of the famous Jane's publishing company, also wrote of the fighting man's moral "Fitness to Win" as being the fundamental decider of battle.[39] This is indeed strong stuff from the publisher of the materialist's bible.[40]

The object of these inquiries into naval policy was to accumulate the so-called "principles of war" which remained constant throughout time and were universally applicable. Indeed, in the Preface of his Naval Warfare, Colomb wrote:

In writing this book I have kept in mind the double

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[37] Drax, "Naval Strategy in 1909," NR III (1915), pp.214-234.

[38] P.A. Silburn, The Evolution of Sea-Power (Longmans, Green & Co., 1912), p.263.

[39] Fred T. Jane, Heresies of Sea Power (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906), pp.321-334.

[40] Jane's Publishing House was and still is considered an international authority on defence matters.

> object of showing that there are laws governing the conduct of naval war which cannot be transgressed with impunity; and that there is no reason to believe them abrogated by any of the changes of recent years."[41] Failure in war could often be attributed to "defiance of plain rules of naval strategy.[42]

These claims for history's authority were buttressed by developments in the realm of political history. Sir John Seeley, the Regius Professor of History at Cambridge in the 1880s, lectured that history had definite lessons to teach and that change came about scientifically.[43] This new development of naval history as a "scientific" discipline, as Professor Schurman has shown in his classic study, had a profound effect on the development of British naval policy and strategy.[44] The enunciation of these historically-grounded "principles of war" was the focus of Drax's and the "Young Turks'" critique of strategic policy.

However, only after the Fisher revolution did the intellectual impact of these changes hit the Navy with full force. The intellectual revolution pioneered by the Colomb brothers and Mahan of the early 1890s found root in the generation succeeding Fisher's tour de force. Fisher's

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[41] Vice-Admiral Philip Howard Colomb, Naval Warfare - Its Ruling Principles and Practice Historically Treated v.i ed., Barry M. Gough ([1891,1895,1899] Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), p.3.

[42] Ibid. v.ii, p.287.

[43] Sir John Seeley, The Expansion of England - Two Courses of Lectures ([1883,1895] London: Macmillan, 1921), pp.114-16.

[44] Schurman, The Education of A Navy, pp.14-15.

tyranny provided the precedent and the environment from which these ideas could come to the fore.

Although both Colomb and especially Mahan had been extensively read before, it took time for those ideas to be absorbed and to be applied. Oftentimes Mahan would be quoted in order to gain larger estimates from reluctant parliaments or justify national expansion, without even being read. Mahan's writings were used by the big-ship enthusiasts focusing on Mahan's rejection of the *guerre de course* and the historian's reliance on the decisive battle as the prime factor in the loss or maintenance of sea power. A superficial reading of Mahan would leave the impression that the line-of-battleship was the deciding factor in naval war and forgetting Mahan's stand against rampant materialism.[45] As Richmond wrote, the French possessed much better ships on average than the English yet they did not triumph.[46]

This pre-occupation with decisive battle was where the so-called "victory" school came into being. Many officers were beguiled by the concept that battle was fought just for the sake of battle and once that battle was won, the fruits of victory, command of the sea, would pass to the winner. Certainly, Admiral Sir Reginald Custance fell into this

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[45] Regarding the similar situation in the United States see, Kenneth Hagan, This People's Navy.

[46] Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, Economy and Naval Security - A Plea for the Examination of the Problem of the Reduction in the Cost of Naval Armaments on the LInes of Strategy and Policy (London: Ernest Benn, 1931), p.143.

"fighting Blockhead" school, as Richmond liked to call it.[47] Especially note Custance's reaction against the convoy system introduced in 1917. Custance thought it would drain resources away from the main fleet to annihilate the High Seas Fleet when it emerged from its bases.[48] The key to members of this school was the rigorous offensive to push the enemy to battle. Concentration for battle, however, does not take into account the very real needs for commerce protection. As Corbett wrote in 1911:

> The idea of massing, as a virtue in itself, is bred of peace and not in war... True, advocates of the mass entrench themselves in the plausible conception that their aim is to inflict crushing defeats. But this too is an idea of peace. War has proved to the hilt that victories have not only to be won, but worked for.[49]

Those of the "Victory School" failed to understand the significance of the threat to British sea communications presented by the *Kruezerkrieg* of the U-Boat. In the same fashion, several pre-war writers questioned Mahan because of the growing vulnerability of the British isles to that particular form of warfare since the Industrial Revolution.[50] Indeed, Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge indicated the threat of

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[47] Geoffrey Till, "Corbett and the British Way of Warfare," a lecture delivered at the 20th Annual Military History Symposium at the Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston, Ontario, 24 March 1994.

[48] Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow v.iv, pp.167-68.

[49] Corbett, Some Principles of Maritime Strategy, p.134.

[50] Jane, Heresies of Sea Power, p.145.

this type of warfare and foreshadowed what actually did happen in the Great War. In one of his essays, he discussed the era of the Glorious revolution when the Navy was keeping such a close watch on the French fleet that English maritime trade was very nearly ruined.[51]

These men, many of whom were the "young Turks" under the leadership of the Captain H.W. Richmond led the way under the tutelage of Corbett. Technical development was not enough, naval officers had to think about what they were doing with these new weapons. How did they fit into strategy and in what way could their strengths be used to tactical advantage? This questioning was shown in Drax's attempt to lay down principles for the uses of the Battlecruiser a full six years after the type was authorised![52] Finally the mind was catching up to the body.

Another key change was that for the first time, relatively junior officers were involved in challenging the *ancien regime*. Whilst the generation of Fisher argued and fought amongst each other, it was done by senior admirals perhaps supported by younger men but they kept their peace. However, in 1917, a junior Royal Navy Captain, K.G.B. Dewar went over the heads of every one of his superiors to discuss how to obtain the dismissal of the 1st Sea Lord, Admiral of

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[51] Bridge, Sea-Power and Other Studies, pp.46-47.

[52] #499 Paper by Commander Reginald Plunkett, 1913, pp.928-931 in John B. Hattendorf et al., eds., British Naval Documents 1204-1960 (London: NRS, 1993).

the Fleet Sir John Jellicoe. Although this left a black mark beside Dewar's name for the rest of his career, it did not destroy him. Many younger officers had felt too restrained by the old system and something had to give way.

Furthermore, these young officers were not so foolish to challenge the hierarchy of the Navy unsupported by those in higher authority. Certainly, it was a major coup for the Naval Society to retain Admiral Henderson as editor since he had many contacts among the Navy's active and retired flag officers. The Naval Society also enjoyed the support of the First Sea Lord (Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg), the First Sea Lord, Arthur Balfour, and others in the Cabinet. Indeed, this support waxed as the war came in 1914 when the Young Turks gained the favour of admirals such as Rear-Admiral Sir David Beatty, the commander of the Battlecruiser squadron, Commodore Reginald Tyrwhitt and Commodore Roger Keyes.[53] Admiral Henderson's reputation as a reformer was also well-established as was mentioned above. Certainly as a Captain in 1887, he wrote to the President of the Royal Naval College,"...neither wisdom nor unanimity of action will be attained unless the principles and conditions of naval warfare are understood by all officers commanding..."[54]

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[53] S.W. Roskill, Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty - The Last Naval Hero: An Intimate Biography (New York: Atheneum, 1981), p.227.

[54] anon., "The Royal Naval Staff College," NR XX (1932) p.6.

Beatty was particularly of great importance to the Young Turks. His position as the Commander of the Battle-cruiser Fleet, his reputation as an extremely able officer and his popularity placed him in an ideal situation to ride roughshod over the inertia at the Admiralty. Indeed, after he became Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet, his staff was the focal point of the wave of discontent in 1917-18. Certainly, Beatty as First Sea Lord saved the Historical Section of the Naval Staff from the "Geddes Axe" and saved Herbert Richmond from an early retirement. Of course, Beatty himself was, in many ways, an outsider much in the same way as the Young Turks were. His powerful personality and his ambition provoked the jealousy of many of his rivals. His promotions were very quick as he was a Flag Officer at the same age as Nelson (39) and an Admiral of the Fleet at forty-five. Indeed, Richmond was the same age as he and Drax was only nine years younger than his Chief. Certainly, many senior officers distrusted him, certainly until they worked with him. Beatty was a vitally important ally and without his qualified support, the "Young Turks" would have been in serious difficulty.[55]

The instability of the Navy and the uncertainty of naval policy during the war, played directly into the hands of the Young Turks. The expectation of the decisive battle in the early months of the war was disappointed and when combined with revealed defects in the Navy's war-fighting ability,

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[55] Roskill, The Last Naval Hero, p.371.

scapegoats were needed. Battenberg was forced to leave the Admiralty and Fisher returned at the request of Churchill and against the wishes of many in the Cabinet and the King.[56] After the Dardanelles campaign, both Fisher and Churchill resigned and the former was replaced by Admiral Sir Henry Jackson. Jackson resigned shortly afterwards and was replaced by Admiral Sir John Jellicoe who was subsequently discredited by the 1917 convoy crisis and was dismissed from his post. In summation, the Admiralty had entered the war with high hopes and a great deal of political and public confidence By 1918, that image had been greatly tarnished. The repeated disasters discredited the Admiralty leadership and left great opportunities for young line officers and their senior allies to correct what they saw as the problems of the Fleet.

On one hand the "Young Turks" such as Drax, Richmond, and the Dewar brothers looked forward to a "renaissance" in naval affairs.[57] Naval Officers would be freed from their dependence on materialism and would be able to increase the effectiveness of a well-educated and well-directed Service.

The first real outbreak of this growing intellectual revolution was the founding of the Naval Review in 1912 by Captain H.W. Richmond, Commander Kenneth Dewar, Drax (still under the name Plunkett) and others. Most revolutionary was the concept that the Review was "to encourage thought and

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[56] Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow v.ii, p.89.

[57] RIC 7/4, Drax to Richmond, 1917.

discussion on such subjects as strategy, tactics... and any other topic affecting the fighting efficiency of the Navy, *but excluding the material aspects of the technical sciences.*"[58] Moreover, the Review opened up the sphere of discussion for younger and more junior officers to express their views and ideas without fear of retribution. This was especially important in a Service that had just survived the tyrannical rule of "Jacky" Fisher.[59]

Although the Review had many difficulties with the Board of Admiralty it still managed to survive by a loop-hole in the King's Regulations. The Regulations expressly forbade any serving officer to write articles for publication without the written permission of the Board of Admiralty. Admiral William Henderson, the editor, avoided that by arguing that The Naval Review was not a publication since it was only available to officers and few others in policy-making circles. The Admiralty remained unconvinced, but in the meantime, as mentioned before, the Review had gained powerful allies in Churchill, Lord Haldane, Balfour and Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg. Indeed, Henderson managed to get the membership

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[58] "Object and Regulations of the Naval Review." NR XXIII (1935), p.1; emphasis.

[59] Dewar, The Navy From Within, p.105. According to Dewar, Fisher had, "his own ways of smelling out dangerous thoughts at the War College or anywhere else."

of 73 flag officers.[60]

The Naval Review according to Rear Admiral J.R. Hill, RN the current editor, was a jumping board for wider reform:

> Certainly it happened through the personalities of the new school, but it was, I would contend, far more widespread than that. There was a feeling after the war that, liberated from the Grand Fleet battle orders, liberated from the more hide-bound ideas, then new ideas could take wing, not only in the staff colleges but in the fleets.[61]

The intellectual performance of the Royal Navy was mixed in the inter-war period. As Arthur Marder and David MacGregor indicated, the Navy had benefitted greatly from some of the lessons of the Great War and failed abysmally at others, most notably the pre-occupation with Jutland and anti-submarine warfare.[62] MacGregor gives more credit to the Navy in conquering the problem of Jutland than does Marder. MacGregor finds that tactics were done on much smaller scale, if only because of the small relative size of the Fleet. The exercises thus more closely the naval actions of the Second World War. However, it is not certain whether this applied to strategic matters since the Navy planners still counted on the Mahanian great encounter.

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[60] Commander James Goldrick, RAN, "The Irresistible Force and the Immovable Object: The Naval Review, the Young Turks, and the Royal Navy, 1911-1931," Mahan Is Not Enough, p.90.

[61] Rear Admiral J.R. Hill, "Discussion of the Papers - Schurman, Hunt and Goldrick," Mahan Is Not Enough, pp.111-12.

[62] David MacGregor, "The Use, Misuse, and Non-Use of History," pp.603-615.

Immediately after the war, however, it seemed that a "renaissance" was very probable.[63] Drax became the first head of the Naval Staff College, Richmond worked for and got an Imperial Defence College where officers of all three services would learn together and build an atmosphere of trust and joint planning and appreciation. Also, committees were formed to question the direction of British naval policy which seemed promising. The role of the battleship was questioned as well as the navy's performance during the war.

However, the confidence soon disappeared as controversy over Jutland grew unabated. The dispute over which party was correct divided the officer cadre into two camps: pro-Beatty or pro-Jellicoe. Any questioning of the performance of the Navy took on the appearance that the criticism was directed at either Beatty or Jellicoe. It became extremely difficult for any officer, even one with the tact that Drax possessed to examine the problems of the Navy without treading on someone's toes. At the same time, Richmond was marginalised, as was his Imperial Defence College, in view of the growing inter-service disputes.[64]

To return to the intellectual context prior to 1939, a growing suspiciousness of battle for battle's sake challenged

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[63] Marder, From the Dardanelles to Oran, p.34.

[64] The Imperial Defence College was an inter-service staff college that instructed younger officers of all three services in strategy and tactics. It was created to bridge the gap between the services and permit joint planning. Richmond was the first commandant when the College opened in 1926.

the "Victory School". In the vanguard, Corbett challenged it in the Official History where he argued that the Grand Fleet, and Jellicoe in particular, had acted correctly by avoiding battle under unfavourable circumstances. The resulting suspicion with which Corbett was treated is indicative of the "Victory School's" strength. This point was most aptly put by Peter Stanford "I am afraid the navy thought of Corbett as the fellow who made everything so complicated and didn't really want us to shoot it out with the Germans."[65]

Much of the intellectual system that Britain's maritime strategy, based around Mahan and the concentration of the battlefleet, seemed to be largely invalidated by the political and diplomatic reality that the Royal Navy found itself in during the inter-war period. The pre-occupation with the concept of a Jutland-style battle where the superior battlefleet would destroy its opponent and thus pass sea control to the victor seemed no longer workable. Indeed, it would be detrimental to British long-term interests. Nelson's dictum "engage the enemy more closely" had hit the cold water of reality in the 1930s. Admiral Chatfield (First Sea Lord 1933-1938) warned the Government in 1935, during the Ethiopian crisis, in no uncertain terms that war against Italy, even

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[65] Peter Stanford, "Discussion of the Papers Written by Sumida and Rosenberg," Mahan Is Not Enough, p.192, Schurman, Corbett, pp.167-8. It seems that Corbett ran into opposition of at least one of the "Young Turks", K.G.B. Dewar in regard to the historians pro-Jellicoe stance. #79 K.G.B. Dewar to Keyes, 24 May 1923, Keyes Papers v.ii, ed., P.G. Halpern (London: NRS, 1980), pp.88-9.

though he was confident of victory, would result in the Navy taking unacceptable losses that would be irreplaceable in the near future.[66] Meanwhile, with a weakened fleet, Britain would be powerless to stop moves by either the Germans or the Japanese.

However, Drax played an important role in challenging that doctrine in early 1939. His questioning of the Singapore strategy and the concentration of the Fleet in the Mediterranean was based on the assumption that the rigorous offensive must be retained even at the cost of heavy losses in the Far East. Without the retention of the decisive offensive combined with a concentration of force, there would be no possibility of victory.

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[66] CAB 16/136, 8th meeting of the DPR Committee, 17 September 1935.

IV. Drax and Strategy

Admiral The Honourable Sir Reginald A.R. Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax KCB DSO ADC RN (1880-1967), perceived the need for reform in how the Navy functioned. Drax was one of the most intellectually gifted officers of his time and had a record of reform and association with the Young Turks movement headed by then-Captain Herbert Richmond. Indeed, in Professor Schurman's view he was "the most intelligent of the lot."[1]

Drax was the second son of the 17th Baron Dunsany, an old Irish aristocratic family that had lost its lands in the Glorious Revolution for supporting James II.[2] Drax was born Reginald Plunkett in the Marylebone district of London in July 1880. Following the example of his grandfather, he entered the Royal Navy in July 1896 and enjoyed a successful career.[3] He passed out of *Britannia* with 5 first class certificates and as a Sub-Lieutenant formed a College for Study in Navigation

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[1] Donald Schurman to author, 10 December 1993.

[2] The family lands were restored by the Treaty of Limerick.

[3] Admiral The Honourable Edward Plunkett, 16th Baron Dunsany (1809-1889) from Debrett's Peerage and Baronetage, (London: Debrett's Peerage Ltd., 1980) p.407. The surname was changed to Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax in 1917 following his mother's death and inheriting her extensive family estates in Surrey, Dorset, Wiltshire, Kent, Yorkshire and the West Indies. "Obituary..." The Times, 18 October 1967, p.12

and invented a gun deflection calculator.[4] His commander, Vice-Admiral Bridle reported, in 1900, that he was "likely to do well and Has shewn great ingenuity in improving on ship's armaments and heavy gun firing." He was selected to specialise in Torpedo work and scored highly in the resulting exams. After a period of sick leave in 1906, he returned to duty as Lieutenant (Torpedo). As a Lieutenant, Plunkett attended the Military Staff College at Camberley to study staff training and its use in war. This was extremely unusual duty for a naval officer of the time. Considering the prevailing relations between the Admiralty and the War Office. Certainly, Drax must have been looked upon as an exceptional officer by his superiors.

In May 1912, he was recommended for promotion to Commander in "appreciation of ingenuity and zeal in designing a recognition signal for destroyers" and he was duly promoted effective 30 June 1912. In 1912, Drax was selected for training as a staff officer, in fact he was the first so chosen out of 12 officers selected.[5] In 1913, he tried the War Staff duties examination which he passed easily and was then assigned to the staff of Rear-Admiral Sir David Beatty aboard HMS Lion. Beatty apparently thought his new Flag Commander to be first rate as he was trusted with forming the squadron's tactical plans. Beatty's Flag Captain Ernle

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[4] DRAX 1/32, "Inventions."

[5] "Drax Obituary," The Times, 18 October 1967, p.12.

Chatfield was also impressed by Drax's abilities.[6] As a result of his actions at Jutland in 1916, Drax was promoted to Captain. At the time, he and a Captain Naismith, V.C. were the youngest captains on the Navy List.[7]

During this period, Drax became closely associated with Captain Herbert Richmond and other "Young Turks" dissatisfied with the direction of naval policy. In fact, Drax had first run across Richmond when the latter gave lectures at the War Course in 1912. This is where the Young Turks got their start and support began to chyrstalise around Richmond.[8] He was also the key link between Richmond and Beatty.[9] He was also one of the founders and important contributors to the Naval Review from its inception onwards. Ironically, despite his obvious gifts in technical fields, he did not fall victim to what he and Richmond defined as the "materialist" disease. Drax, like Richmond, was very much alive to the necessity of training future leaders and most of all, staff work and not just mechanics.

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[6] Chatfield, The Navy and Defence, p.114.

[7] DRAX 6/18, "Notes on Chapter 12 of Marder's Book," 1959, p.13. The Navy List is the official publication which lists officers according to rank and status (retired, active etc.) and commissioned warships. It is printed annually and may be found in the Public Record Office, Kew Gardens.

[8] Hunt, Sailor-Scholar, pp.30-31.

[9] Richmond was Assistant Director of Naval Operations at the Admiralty until 1915 and from there was briefly sent to the Mediterranean and from there was sent to the 3rd Battle Squadron of old pre-Dreadnought battleships.

Drax was happy with his life aboard HMS *Lion* as he was a great admirer of David Beatty and was well-respected and trusted by him. Unlike many flag officers of his day, Beatty always took time to listen to his subordinates and solicit their opinions. The decentralised work of the Battle-cruiser squadron allowed Drax to exercise his mental powers in devising tactical and strategic uses of the battle-cruiser. [10] Indeed, Beatty sent him to London with his own personal correspondence to make representations over the head of the Commander-in-Chief Grand Fleet.[11] In the *Lion*, Drax was "a tall, good-looking sports-loving Irishman, who, like his chief, had unlimited courage and imagination."[12] Indeed, it was he that remembered Nelson's signal "Engage the enemy More Closely" at the Dogger Bank action in January 1915.[13] Drax's life was very nearly cut short at the Battle of Jutland. The

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[10] Roskill, The Last Naval Hero, pp.371,67.

[11] Rear-Admiral W.S. Chalmers, ed., The Life and Letters of David, Earl Beatty (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951), p.179. Letter from Beatty to his wife, 26 Oct. 1914. This is also confirmed in: The Jellicoe Papers, vol.I, #xv Jackson (First Sea Lord to Jellicoe, 7 June 1916, p.275. Chalmers was also on Beatty's staff during the Great War and Drax was his brother-in-law. Drax had married Kathleen Chalmers in 1916.

[12] Ibid., p.209.

[13] Ibid., p.209. See also DRAX 2/2 "Battle Tactics - A Lecture" 1929 p.9 which in addition, is found in the Naval Review, 1933. "There as a miserable substitute for it which read "steer closer to the enemy bearing as indicated." This, with its attendant compass signal, was duly hoisted, and was completely misunderstood. That is just one of the ways in which the 20th century has endeavoured to improve on Nelson."

Lion was struck by a heavy calibre shell that penetrated the joint between two armour plates on 'Q' turret. The shock of the explosion forced open the breech of a loaded 13.5 inch gun and a naked cordite charge and the projectile fell down into the well of the gun mounting. The flash of the explosion very nearly set off the midships magazine save for the forethought of a mortally-wounded Marine officer who ordered the flash doors shut and the magazine flooded. Unfortunately, three battlecruisers were lost that day due to inadequate magazine protection. Drax was mentioned in Beatty's despatch after Jutland for his courage in observing the fall of shot.[14]

After Jutland, Drax was promoted to Captain after only four years as a Commander and was given command of HMS *Blanche* (a light cruiser attached to the 5th Battle Squadron) and participated in minelaying operations in German waters for which he received a DSO in 1917. After the war, he became Director of the Royal Naval Staff College from 1919-1922, the President of the Allied Control Commission in 1922-24, and from there was honoured with the title of naval ADC to the King. He was promoted to Rear-Admiral commanding the 1st Battle Squadron in the Mediterranean Fleet and returned to the Admiralty as Director of Manning from 1930-32. He was promoted to Vice-Admiral in 1932 and sent to be Commander-in-Chief North America and West Indies Station until 1934 and

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[14] #vii "Jellicoe's Despatch on the Battle of Jutland, 4 July 1916, The Jellicoe Papers v.i, p.307.

Commander-in-Chief Plymouth 1935-1938. During his time as Commander-in-Chief North America, Drax visited Ottawa in time to witness the struggle of the Royal Canadian Navy with the Treasury Board and General A.G.L. McNaughton for its very survival in 1933. Drax reinforced the arguments of the Naval Staff that played an important part in the salvation of the Navy from the Treasury blade.[15]

He was pulled back to the Admiralty to assist in the writing and development of naval war plans and was then promoted to Admiral in 1936. In his obituary in The Times on 18 October 1967, the author stated that Drax was considered for the post of First Sea Lord in 1939 upon the untimely death of Admiral Sir Roger Backhouse.[16] However, it is by no means certain who wrote the obituary and what knowledge they had of naval affairs. However, for several reasons, it is rather doubtful that Drax was a serious contender for the post. Four possible reasons exist for this. First, Drax had not commanded either one of the major fleets in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, or had occupied a junior seat on the Board of Admiralty. Second, he was probably regarded as being perhaps too close to Richmond and Dewar who were still *persona non*

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[15] James Eayrs, In Defence of Canada - From the Great War to the Great Depression (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964), pp.282-83. The author wishes to thank Dr. Roger Sarty for bringing this to his attention.

[16] "Obituary - Sir Reginald Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax - First Director of the Naval Staff College," The Times, 18 October 1967, p.12.

grata at the Admiralty. Third, Drax was fourth or fifth in seniority of active Flag Officers and certainly Admiral Sir Dudley Pound (C-in-C Mediterranean), Admiral Sir Charles Forbes (C-in-C Home Fleet) and Admiral Sir Charles Little (Second Sea Lord) would have been ahead of him.[17] Lastly, he was sometimes immoderate in his criticism of Admiralty practices. Certainly, his criticism of the 1938 war plans and his rather forceful criticism of the Navy's staff structure earned him few friends on the Admiralty Board, save Admiral R.G. Henderson, Third Sea Lord.[18]

Drax's name has been connected to the historiography only with the failed Allied Mission to the Soviet Union in August 1939. As Admiral N.G. Kuznetsov commented after the 1939 conferences:

> A whole week passed before Neville Chamberlain announced to Parliament that the cabinet appointed Sir Reginald Drax head of the British Mission. No one could be less suited for the job. Drax, ADC, was an old admiral in retirement who long lost all contact with Britain's Armed Forces. [19]

Kuznetsov had a very definite axe to grind since he was compelled to show that the British did not desire an effective

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[17] Commander James Goldrick, RAN, to the author, 19 February 1994.

[18] DRAX 2/8, Drax (C-inC Plymouth) to Secretary of the Admiralty, 3 September 1937. And CHT 3/1, Chatfield to Drax, 5 November 1937.

[19] Admiral Nikolai G. Kuznetsov, SN, Memoirs of Wartime Minister of the Navy (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1990), p.106.

military agreement with the Soviet Union. However, it is unfortunate that he felt the need to sully the name of a highly effective officer to achieve his end. Contrary to Kuznetsov (and Chamberlain's parliamentary opponents), Drax possessed one of the "sharpest minds" in the Royal Navy.[20]

However, his hands were tied by the policies of both Moscow and London. Besides, the Soviets were already negotiating a treaty with the Nazis. As Admiral Sinclair (head of MI6) wrote to Drax afterwards, "It is an infernal shame... that they should send you to Moscow to try to clear up the mess that has been made out there by the politicians."[21]

After Churchill returned to the Admiralty in 1939, Drax was appointed Commander-in-Chief the Nore until 1941 when he retired from active service. He moved back to Charborough Park in Dorset and joined the local Home Guard as a private. However in 1943, he volunteered to be a convoy commodore in the North Atlantic, where he had the distinction of never losing a ship.[22] He remained very active after retirement, writing and reading and died on 16 October 1967. According to Professor Schurman, who met Drax in the 1960s, he kept his mental powers to the very end of his life. Indeed, even into

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[20] D.C. Watt, How War Came - The Immediate Origins of the Second World War 1938-1939 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), p.382.

[21] Watt, How War Came, p.453.

[22] E.T. Williams, C.S. Nicholls, eds., Dictionary of National Biography, 1961-70 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p.848.

his eighties, Drax experimented with solar heating systems which he had installed at his estate at Charborough Park in Dorset.[23]

As was mentioned before, Drax was closely associated with Richmond's "Young Turks" but that relationship was never dominated by Richmond and nor did Drax allow himself to be "bullied" by his senior.[24] As Drax wrote in his later years to Arthur Marder, "we certainly had not enough men of the Richmond type. Even he was a savage critic and never learnt 'to suffer fools gladly.'"[25] He then went on to criticise Marder's too heavy reliance on "sour critics who had axes to grind against decision makers."[26] This is a very important point, for it establishes Drax's independence from Richmond. It is also important because of the amount of historical interest on the character of Richmond such as Arthur Marder's Portrait of an Admiral, D.M. Schurman's Education of A Navy, and Barry Hunt's biography of Richmond.

Perhaps the best example of this refusal to knuckle-under to Richmond was an exchange in the 1914 volume of the Naval Review. Drax had written an article entitled "The Influence of an Efficient Home Defence Army on Naval Strategy"

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[23] Donald Schurman to author, 10 December 1993.

[24] Ibid.

[25] DRAX 6/18, "Notes on Chapter 12 of Marder's Book," 1959.

[26] Ibid.

in which he suggested that an adequate defence army in Britain would give great tactical and strategic freedom to both an expeditionary force and the fleet to strike decisive blows unimpeded. Richmond responded with a crushing criticism that deliberately sought to destroy every historical example used by Drax without really going after his thesis. "It is not proposed to discuss either the fallacies or the points in the following paper, nor whether R.X. [Drax's pseudonym] has succeeded in proving his case."[27] Richmond hoped that R.X. would give "half-a-dozen" historical examples "out of the many he knows" in the next number of the Naval Review to strengthen his case.[28] Instead, Richmond got a volley, followed closely by cold steel in the next issue of the journal.

Drax angrily responded saying, "But this article was quite obviously more of an attack than a criticism, and unfortunately the parts of it confined to criticism were purely destructive." [29] Drax continued, writing that he should feel flattered that his critic thought it necessary to write eighteen pages to destroy two pages of text.

> I would do it with pleasure if it were of value to the Service, but I feel more respect than my critic does for Mr. Corbett's dictum, officers no longer look upon history as a kind of a dustheap from which a convenient

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[27] Captain H.W. Richmond, "Some Historical Aspects of Home Defence - A Reply To R.X.," NR II (1914), p.141.

[28] Ibid., p.155; my emphasis.

[29] Drax, "Home Defence - A Reply by R.X.," NR II (1914), p.254.

brick may be extracted to hurl at their opponents...[30] At the end of his response Drax asks his critic if it would not be better that two naval officers could discuss the issue in a constructive manner that would do good for the Service. [31]

It is most probable that Drax did indeed know the identity of his critic. Both Drax and Richmond knew each other rather well since they were both founders of the Naval Review and there was an extensive correspondence. In addition, the vast range of historical knowledge shown by the critic quite obviously pointed at Richmond. Drax was his own man and his mind was at least as quick as Richmond's. One also has to remember that the Naval Review only had a very limited circulation and most of the writers probably knew each other. Membership of the Naval Society was only 16 in November 1912 from there it grew to only 282 by the following March and would only be over 500 by the end of 1914.[32] Indeed, in his later correspondence he told Richmond to be careful throwing his name around so there would be "less chance of evoking an order for my court-martial!"[33] Drax was not about to be bullied, even by the intellectual prowess of a man such as H.W. Richmond.

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[30] Ibid., p.255.

[31] Ibid., pp.262-63.

[32] Goldrick, "The Irresistible Force," Mahan Is Not Enough, p.89.

[33] RIC 7/4, Drax to Richmond, 24 November 1914.

Drax was also independent of K.G.B. Dewar. Even though Drax was supposed to have been Dewar's best man at the latter's wedding, Drax changed his mind about bringing Dewar with him to the Staff College at Greenwich as his assistant because of certain "difficulties.".[34] Dewar stated in his autobiography, "I could only infer that these difficulties referred to the reputation for independent thought against which Sir John Jellicoe had warned me and that it was considered necessary to safeguard our future staff officers from the danger of independent thinking."[35] This is patently unfair to Drax, since he was equally the champion of independent thought as Dewar. In addition, Dewar was involved in the dismissal of Jellicoe as First Sea Lord in 1917, which made him undesirable. Taking the perspective from Drax's writings and the way his career progressed, the Navy was the loyalty that he cared about most. Dewar, whilst having many good ideas and a first-rate brain, would only serve to alienate staff training from the Navy afloat and impair the work of the staff college. Furthermore, Dewar's behaviour during the "Royal Oak Affair" of 1927-28 further split naval opinion and exposed the Navy to public disgrace.[36]

Drax attempted to take the ideas of the Young Turks and

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[34] Dewar, The Navy From Within, pp. 160,256.

[35] Ibid., p.256.

[36] Hunt, Sailor-Scholar, pp.172-75 and, Roskill, Naval Policy v.i, pp.559-60.

translate them into effective policy. He did so by first ensuring his separation from Richmond as Beatty wrote in 1917 to Richmond, "I shan't tell him [Jellicoe] you had anything to do with it as your name stinks at the Admiralty."[37] Generally, Drax took a more even-handed approach than Richmond and certainly displayed much more patience. Although his temper shows through at several junctures, in general that was the case. Eventually, Drax was included in the highest planning circles of the Navy and by at least 3 First Sea Lords to assist in writing the War Plans.

Drax also had considerably more tact than Richmond. Although, both of these capable officers often reacted very strongly, Drax would admit his errors far more readily than Richmond. In his latter years, Drax would regret many of the things he had written in haste. As he wrote to Richmond in 1914:

> I am getting in the habit of writing perhaps more freely than I ought to. I write in haste, sometimes with no knowledge of a situation beyond our own view, so if I write too much please make allowance for my Celtic temperament! I know you will use them, as I write them, only for the good of the Service - or rather for the good of the Country, which comes before the Service.[38]

And as he wrote to Richmond earlier in the same year when he asked Richmond to be careful throwing his name about so there would be "less chance of evoking an order for my court-

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[37] Hunt, Sailor-Scholar, p.75.

[38] RIC 7/4, Drax to Richmond, 18 Dec 1914.

martial!"[39] Or in the note that Drax included with the index of his personal papers telling the future reader that he had burned much of the correspondence with Commander (later Rear-Admiral Sir) Roger Bellairs and Herbert Richmond,[40] "I Have tried to cut out most of the letters containing criticism or dealing with controversial subjects but if I have not done enough in this direction, I hope that Captain Roskill (the custodian of his papers at Churchill College) will perhaps do a little more for me."[41]

However, at various times, Drax did so show a lack of tact though nowhere near the level of Richmond or K.G.B. Dewar as was written in a report by a Captain Webb in regard to his performance, "all vg. [sic] Strength of character and high ability. Somewhat lacking in tact and inclined to shirk details."[42] Or the withering rebuke issued by Lord Chatfield in regard to Drax's recommendations for the improvement of staff work in the 1930s. Chatfield informed him that the planning system that he proposed would "overlap existing

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[39] RIC 7/4, Drax to Richmond, 24 Nov 1914.

[40] Bellairs served on Beatty's staff during the war. Unfortunately, his ship HMS Rodney was one of the most heavily involved in the Invergordon mutiny of 1931. Therefore, his promotion to active flag-rank was invalidated. Goldrick, "The Founders and the Early Days," NR LXXV (1988), p.60.

[41] DRAX 1/1, Introductory Note, June 1966.

[42] ADM 196/45, Service Records, report dated January 1913, p.214. It is not entirely clear whether this Captain Webb was indeed Admiral Sir Richard Webb who succeeded Admiral Henderson as editor of The Naval Review upon the latter's death in 1930.

structures" and that the charge that the present system did not allow for the cultivation of the offensive spirit. Chatfield replied:

> I am unable to accept this severe implication. You will recollect that in 1933 you expressed yourself in somewhat similar terms in a personal letter to me about the Far East War Plan. I had occasion to write to you personally pointing out the incorrectness of your arguments.[43]

Chatfield was annoyed with the lack of apparent respect shown by Drax to the Admiralty. Just prior to the outbreak of war, however, Drax's concerns were shown to be wholly justified. The "Binney Report on the Naval Staff" showed that there was an insufficient division between the material side and the "higher" development of the naval staff. Moreover, the Plans Division of the Naval Staff only seemed to develop plans for defensive dispositions without regard to offensive plans. Apparently, it was up to the individual Commanders-in-Chief to work out their own offensive planning. However, the defensive tone of the Plans Division seemed to indicate that offensive action was not desired nor expected.[44]

Also, his commenting on the 1938 War Plan got him into trouble. Instead of merely criticising it, Drax wrote what the German war plan would look like if it was written in the same spirit as the 1938 Admiralty war plan. Afterwards, Drax noted "1 or 2 of the Sea Lords much disliked the criticism

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[43] CHT 3/1, Chatfield to Drax, 5 November 1937.

[44] ADM 167/105 "Binney Report on the Naval Staff," 5 January 1939.

herein. I think my Appendix I wd. [sic] have been best omitted."[45] Or in the case of his 1929 clash with Admiral W.H. Kelly when Drax gave a lecture entitled, "Battle Tactics." He found Kelly "violently antagonistic" and his arguments to be "plausible, persuasive, and utterly unsound."[46] In the context of one of the arguments, Drax wrote, "my theories are based almost entirely on an exhaustive study of the late war, where, incidentally, I did more sea time and saw far more fighting than he [Kelly] did." [47] Sometimes, Drax lacked tact but he usually managed to keep it under control and did not attempt the high-handed actions of either Richmond or Dewar.[48]

Tact was often a key feature in Drax's writings. Also that tact went in both directions to both senior and junior officers. There was no reason to be stingy with praise and to give subordinates a chance to air their views to improve the Navy's performance. Also, juniors were to be treated with respect and their concerns should be looked after since the

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[45] DRAX 2/8, Drax (C-in-C Plymouth) to Secretary of the Admiralty, War Plans, 3 September 1937, minute by Drax.

[46] DRAX 2/8, "Battle Tactics - a note on the results of the lecture in November 1929." This document may have been sent to Ernle Chatfield since he invited Drax to give the lecture in the first instance. See DRAX 6/18, "Notes on Chapter 12 of Marder's Book," 1959.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Richmond published articles in The Times on 21 and 22 November 1929, contrary to the views of Their Lordships. Dewar went over the heads of everyone in the Navy in consulting with the Prime Minister to get rid of Jellicoe as 1st Sea Lord in 1917 as a Captain.

human element was the decider of battles.[49] Loyal subordinates were trusted not terrorised into performing their duties. The chief characteristic that a senior officer required in dealing with juniors was a quality that Drax had seen first hand in Beatty, that of accessibility. Beatty was always willing to hear the ideas of his subordinates and was open even towards those who distrusted him. [50] That quality was vital to avoid stagnation and friction.[51] But, tact was also required in ensure an inherent unity of purpose and doctrine in the Royal Navy's officers corps in order to heighten the performance of the Navy. Drax lived in a time where naval officers, even comparatively junior ones, often did not hesitate to stab each other in the back in order to get ahead. Disputes such as the one between Beresford and Fisher and the writing of the Official History on the Battle of Jutland controversy were a severe threat to that unity of purpose which was invaluable.

The Jutland dispute, in particular, was where Drax turned his attention to heal the rift in the officer cadre in an

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[49] Drax, "Advice to the Young - A Few Notes for a Dartmouth Cadet," NR XXXIII (1945), p.235.

[50] #32 Madden to Jellicoe, 12 February 1917, Jellicoe Papers v.i, p.144. Madden and Beatty were rivals for the post of Commander-in-Chief Grand Fleet when it was vacated by the promotion of Jellicoe in the end of 1916. Admiral Sir Charles Madden then found himself second-in-command to Beatty.

[51] Drax, "The Art of Command," NR XII (1924), pp.101-3.

article entitled "Jutland or Trafalgar?"[52] He questioned the Beatty camp, "Is it right that Lord Jellicoe should be blamed for bad tactics, bad staff work, or for not doing better than he did? The answer is definitely No." He further states that "four out of five of our remaining admirals would have done no better", [53] and the mistakes were ones to be "logically expected from the pre-war training of the British Fleet."[54] This paper is especially important since Drax was a "Beatty man" because he was the Admiral's Flag Commander throughout most of the Great War. This is confirmed by Drax's rigorous defence of Beatty: "Beatty was so free of vanity there was never in all his conversation the slightest sign of boastfulness... I lived with him on board the "Lion" for three

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[52] This dispute was over the unsatisfactory results of the Battle of Jutland where the Royal Navy lost three Battle cruisers. Admiral Jellicoe commanded the Grand Fleet while Admiral David Beatty commanded the Battle Cruiser Squadrons. Members of the Beatty camp complained of Jellicoe's timidity and the Jellicoe camp justified their mentor's position and attacked Beatty's professional reputation as well. The controversy raged even after both of the antagonists were dead. Indeed, Lady Jellicoe wrote to the Board of the Admiralty (ADM 167/96) in 1937 angrily protesting the erection of a monuments to both Beatty and Jellicoe on Trafalgar Square. In February 1940, the Board of Admiralty deliberately renamed two battleships under construction from *Jellicoe* and *Beatty* to *Anson* and *Howe* to avoid controversy(ADM 167/108). This topic would make an excellent research topic in and of itself.

[53] Drax does not confirm or deny that Beatty could have not done any better. Drax would be most readily identified as a Beatty supporter due to his service under Beatty throughout the entire war.

[54] DRAX 6/11, "Jutland or Trafalgar?" Also found in NR XIII (1925), pp. 238-43.

years and I ought to know."[55] Furthermore, Drax wrote a part of the tribute to Beatty when he died in 1936.[56] His defence of Jellicoe is especially telling in this context since Drax's aim was always the improvement of the Navy and the unity of its officers.

Mistakes and errors must be learned from and it is simply not enough to seek out scape-goats for a general problem. "The dead past can well enough bury its dead, but the future is gravely in danger."[57] In conclusion of his tribute to "DB", Drax attempting to smooth over the differences re-affirmed the importance of both of those officers.

> Both were equally honoured by their Sovereign, and both alike, with their burial in St. Paul's, received equal honour and homage from the people of England. Their well-proven records stand so far above the reach of any tongues of controversy that we may surely hope they will now be stilled for ever.[58]

Drax mourned the loss of the "Band of Brothers" mentality and the succession of "the open hostility of chieftains."[59]

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[55] DRAX 6/18, Drax to Arthur J. Marder, 23 February 1963.

[56] DRAX 6/12, "D.B." This article also appears in the NR XXIV (1936), pp.215-220.

[57] Drax, "Jutland or Trafalgar," NR XIII (1925), p.238.

[58] Drax, "D.B.," NR XXIII (1936), p.219.

[59] Winston S. Churchill, The World Crisis v.i (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1923,1927), p.75.

i. Materialism

Also of great importance is the revulsion that Drax, Richmond and others had towards the increasing "materialist" bent to the naval profession. Surely, one of the most striking aspects of our present century has been the revolution in technology and its applications. Although the Navy attempted to staunch the flow of change early in the nineteenth century, its resistance could do nothing in the face of the flood of change.

At the turn of the twentieth century, a wave of reforming fervour struck the Royal Navy and awoke that ancient institution from its slumber. Under the leadership of Admiral Sir John Fisher and others the Royal Navy underwent an enormous change in technology as gunnery, armour and engineering was brought up to very modern standards. These reforms increased the cost and prestige of naval weapons to such an extent that commanders were reluctant to risk them in the throw of the dice. Also, commanders, in regard to the cost of these weapons, found themselves unwilling or unable to allow for independent initiative by subordinate commanders. The perfect example, in the eyes of these reformers, was the Battle of Jutland itself in 1916. Jellicoe's Grand Fleet was so rigidly controlled from his flagship, the *Iron Duke* that

when that portion of the line turned away from a torpedo attack, the rest of the squadrons lost contact with the enemy following the movements of the Commander-in-Chief.

This was certainly central to Drax's experience in the Royal Navy. When he joined the Service at the very end of the 19th century, the Navy was on the edge of a revolution under the leadership of Admiral Fisher. The bureaucracy of the technological revolution grew exponentially and became so caught up in this material development that had only a vague idea of actually how to use these weapons. Drax himself commented "Freak warships have been designed without any clear idea of what would be their strategical use in war. Weapons have been designed and fitted in such a way that their effective use in battle would be beyond the powers of any known system of tactics."[60] Here Drax is clearly indicating Fisher's so-called "Outrageous Class" battlecruisers. These vessels were armed with heavy calibre guns on light cruiser hulls with only a three inch main armour belt.[61] Perhaps, Lord Tedder summed it up best when he expressed concern that too much money spent on armed forces results in a high level of waste.[62]

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[60] Drax, "Materiel," [1915] NR VIII (1920), p.315.

[61] Captain John Moore ed., Jane's Fighting Ships of World War One ([1919]; New York: Military Press, 1984), p.50. The Courageous, Glorious, and the Furious saw valuable experience as aircraft carriers after conversion.

[62] Marshal of the RAF Lord Tedder, Air Power in War (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948,1959), p.27.

This phenomenon is certainly relevant to the Royal Navy in the interwar period as everything settled down to a leisurely pace even after a period of reform brought about by the "Young Turks". As Drax himself wrote to Richmond, "The English won't learn in peace... but they *can't* fail to learn from war. It may be 5 years, or 10... but sooner or later the truth *must* come to light and a renaissance will result..."[63] The inertia of administration continued in many ways unabated. Marder's masterful explanation of this development is particularly effective.[64] However, some very keys changes had taken place.

Richmond and Drax were a part of the generation that first experienced Fisher's reforms and had, to a certain degree, embraced them. Richmond, even more than Drax was marked by Fisher as an up-and-coming officer of high intelligence and skill which earned a place in the "Fishpond".[65] Fisher was impressed by Richmond's abilities as the latter had served as Fisher's Naval Secretary at the Admiralty. Indeed, after several years at the Admiralty, Richmond was sent to command HMS *Dreadnought*, one of newest

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[63] RIC 7/4, 28 September 1917. Also quoted in Marder From the Dardanelles to Oran, p.34.

[64] Marder, From the Dardanelles to Oran. See the chapter aptly titled, "The Influence of History Upon Sea Power."

[65] Drax was only promoted to Commander in 1912, after Fisher had left the Admiralty. The "Fishpond" referred to Admiral Fisher's habit of pulling relatively junior men to the fore and being given highly favoured positions within the Navy.

of the Navy's battleships and Fisher's brainchild. This was a very significant posting for a relatively junior Captain. However, at some point both of these officers became disillusioned with Fisher.

Younger men who experienced the first fruits of Fisher's reforms found themselves increasingly alienated from Fisher. If they questioned Fisher's methods they would find themselves in severe difficulty professionally. Fisher became extremely dictatorial as he forced through the reforms he saw necessary.[66] "Anyone who opposes me, I crush."[67] Fisher, "... will neither seek nor accept counsel. He generalises about war, saying it is to be made terrible, the enemy is to be hit hard & hit often, and many other aphorisms."[68] Nor does it take long to find examples of Fisher's hostility. Needless to say, this centralisation of control greatly hampered efforts by younger officers, especially Richmond, to get an efficient staff system to allow for better planning. As it stood, all strategical and tactical plans rested in the minds of either the individual Commander-in-Chief or the First Sea Lord. Some years later Drax wrote a more balanced view: "I have immense admiration for Lord Fisher, but he was surely in some respects

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[66] Churchill, The World Crisis v.i, p.73.

[67] Massie, Dreadnought, p.405.

[68] Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, Portrait of an Admiral - The Life and Letters of Sir Herbert Richmond ed., A.J. Marder (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), p.48, entry dat . 2 May 1909.

a sad materialist and no expert tactician. How otherwise could he have built the "Furious"... with two 18" guns..."[69]

However, one may disapprove of Fisher's dictatorial manner, but it had one very important result. The men of the "Fishpond" whom Fisher had recognised as being particularly brilliant officers were pushed ahead in rank above their fellows and were in positions to use their influence to aid the growing intellectual revolution. Officers of unique gifts were promoted rapidly such as Richmond and Beatty along with others.

This also, as was mentioned before, was an era when the popular mind was captured by technology and naval officers were by no means immune from this thinking. Many officers wrote terrifying accounts of future war where battleships were doomed and that air-power had smashed any hope of resistance. Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge commented on this irony that such an age of scientific development could produce such "false prophets or quacks."[70] It was forgotten that men fight not weapons in and of themselves.[71]

If naval officers were to be trained in only how to use weapons and to run their ships efficiently, something was lacking. If an officer, with the theoretical possibility of

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[69] DRAX 2/2, "Battle Tactics: A Reply." Also found in the NR XXI (1933).

[70] Bridge, The Art of Naval Warfare, p.241.

[71] Drax, "Materiel," NR VIII (1920), p.316.

eventually becoming a Commander-in-Chief or First Sea Lord had not been trained in tactics and strategy, how could he be expected to be innovative to produce proper plans? He could not. As Richmond stated, it does not matter how many ships you arm for battle, it is the method in which you use them that counts. Nothing else matters. Officers had simply forgotten what Kempenfelt called the "sublime" aspects of the naval profession.[72] This anti-intellectualism may have even had wider causes due to the system of British education where the young were to be raised as "gentlemen" and as "practical men". As Correlli Barnett quoted the Economist, "...the education which fits men to perform their duties in life is not got in public or parish schools but in the counting-house and lawyer's office, in camp or on board ship, in the shop or factory."[73] As Captain Roskill noted, such attitudes were prevalent among naval officers.[74]

Drax had less reason, or so it seemed, to oppose Fisher's influence since he was more technically proficient than Richmond. Drax also was part of this reforming trend as he proposed several inventions such as a pocket gunnery deflection calculator, various signalling devices and a

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[72] Richmond, Portrait of an Admiral, p.89, entry dated 27 October 1912. Richmond is commenting on the foundation of the Naval Review, "We are going to have a try to stir up interest in what Kempenfelt called the sublime parts of out work - strategy, tactics, principles."

[73] Barnett, The Collapse of British Power, p.94.

[74] Roskill, The Last Naval Hero, pp.59-60.

cordite-powered torpedo. However, there is some evidence that he took great exception to Arthur Hungerford Pollen, the inventor of fire control systems.[75] Perhaps Drax did not care for Pollen's pushiness. Drax also became wary of materialism. As he told then-Captain Andrew Cunningham when he took over command of the new battleship HMS *Rodney* in 1929, "Cunningham, on no account allow yourself to become entangled in the technicalities of this great ship."[76]

Drax's anti-materialism was very pronounced but it took a different tack than Richmond. From the start Richmond was an intellectual since his upbringing was in a very socially active family and Richmond spent many hours in the company of the England's intellectual elite.[77] Richmond's indictments of the narrow education he received were, "the standard complaints of a mind that cannot, will not, or perhaps should not, come to grips with technical and mathematical detail for its own sake."[78] Drax, on the other hand, was profoundly fascinated by material inventions that flooded the naval arena

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[75] Ibid., p.193. Professor Sumida has speculated that Drax may have been put off by a dispute between Captain Ernle Chatfield (Beatty's Flag-Captain) and Pollen over the latter's inspection of the ship's Dreyer fire-control table. Also, Pollen's writings during the war may have offended Drax. Professor Jon Sumida to author, 14 April 1994.

[76] Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Cunningham of Hyndhope, A Sailor's Odyssey - The Autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Cunningham of Hyndhope (London: Hutchinson, 1951), p.142.

[77] Hunt, Sailor - Scholar, p.5.

[78] Schurman, Education, p.117.

in the first decade of the twentieth century and it was an interest that never left him even into his eighties. As was mentioned before, Drax had invented several systems, one of which was responsible for his promotion to Commander.[79] On the other hand, he felt that weapons and systems for cc .bat vessels should meet rigorous standards for quality and usefulness. For instance, in 1939 he raised the alarm about the vast number of types of ordnance required for the Navy which greatly complicated the supply difficulties of an overseas Fleet.[80] This problem was certainly borne out in the difficulties experienced by Admiral Cunningham in the Mediterranean supplying his cruisers with proper 5.25" and 6" ammunition in 1940-41. Nor by any means was Drax slow to grasp the importance of new technologies to naval warfare. As a Captain in 1921 he understood the importance of aircraft in an essay that won the RUSIJ bronze metal.[81]

Unlike Richmond, Drax would not hesitate to argue from the materialist point of view if it aided his point. For instance, Drax in his article "Big Battleships" argued for a reduction in battleship tonnage from a distinctly *materiel* point of view. He argued that modern warships could only use specialised docking facilities and were, in fact, more

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[79] ADM 196/45, "Officer Service Records," p.214.

[80] DRAX 6/19, Drax to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 2 September 1938.

[81] Drax, "The Influence in the Future of Aircraft Upon Problems of Imperial Defence," NR XX (1922), pp.210-247.

vulnerable to battle damage, especially below the water-line, which was even more difficult to repair.[82] By contrast, Richmond would often be arbitrary in his pronouncement of the 10,000 ton limit that should be, in his view, be imposed on battleships. [83] Richmond's pronouncements of an arbitrary displacement weakened his case, especially when it could be shown his knowledge of design was limited in relation to others.

Differences in personal style also affected their relative positions on this issue. Richmond would often rail against materialist concerns, rightly, because of their frequent failure to think through the applications of their technology. This was compounded by Richmond's historical view of naval affairs in which he often failed to recognise the importance of changing technology as Eric Grove indicated.[84] His manner of trying to convince the "materialists" fell on deaf ears as they disliked being told "what materialist blockheads they were."[85] Eventually his obdurate attitudes pushed him to publish those infamous articles in The Times in November 1929 which finished his naval career and earned him

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[82] Drax, "Big Battleships," NR XXXIV (1936), p.249-250.

[83] Richmond, "Smaller Navies II - The Capital Ship," The Times, 22 November 1929, p.15, and, Eric J. Grove, "Richmond and Arms Control," Mahan Is Not Enough, pp.231-35.

[84] Grove, "Richmond and Arms Control," Mahan Is Not Enough, p.233.

[85] Marder, "A Biographical Essay," Portrait of an Admiral, p.31.

the lasting enmity of Lord Chatfield.[86] Just how bitter the reaction was against Richmond was shown by Chatfield's reaction:

> I mention this because in the last few years Admiral Richmond has descended from his position of advantage among the clouds of Mount Olympus where he used to declaim against such vulgar matters as *materiel and weapons* and used to explain at great length how unimportant they are.[87]

On the other hand, Drax was profoundly aware that any direct assault on the materialist school that went out of its way to insult his brother officers would be counter-productive. It would only make their hearts more obdurate from accepting any of the criticisms that were vital to the good of the Service. Notice his conciliatory approach when he examined the issue in his article "The Psychology of War"in 1914. "Can we not try each to appreciate the good qualities of the other, to admit that one is the complement of the other, and all to agree that at least we should credit our brother officers with working loyally for the good of the service..."[88] The practical and the theoretical officer need to work together in order for the Service to benefit. Also,

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[86] CHT 3/1, "Sketch Estimates for 1933."

[87] Ibid. To be fair to Lord Chatfield, Richmond's ideas were used by the politicians to justify cuts in Naval Estimates. Also, Richmond's abrasive manner and his break of the chain of command generated considerable and wholly justifiable resentment. Apparently, Richmond returned Chatfield's enmity, # 297 Richmond to Keyes, 7 December 1936, Keyes Papers v.ii ed., P.G. Halpern (London: NRS, 1980) pp.356-7.

[88] Drax, "The Psychology of War," NR II (1914), p.106.

when the existence of the Naval Review was threatened, just after the Great War, Drax resisted the desire of both Admiral William Henderson and Richmond to take the dispute to the public arena. Drax preferred to use the powerful political contacts to gain the Naval Review a permanent place.[89]

> To a very great extent the result of every war is decided before it starts. As we sow in peace, so we shall reap in war. The results will largely depend on the education for war obtained by our officers and men and the practical training provided in our fleets at sea.[90]

Drax was not a hard-bitten old salt who distrusted modern "gadgets" as Richard Ollard's study might lead us to believe.[91] On the contrary, he was very quick to recognise new technologies, but they had to be rigorously investigated and tested to ensure they were suitable for use at sea. Nor should, in Drax's view, modern developments be fitted aboard warships without due regard to their tactical or strategic use.

Drax, although being very wary of the cancerous growth of materialism in the Fleet also recognised that material

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[89] Goldrick, "The Irresistible Force," Mahan Is Not Enough, p.97.

[90] Drax, "The Principles of War,"[1921] NR XX (1932), p.327.

[91] Richard Ollard, Fisher and Cunningham - A Study in the Personalities of the Churchill Era (London: Constable, 1991), p.70. Ollard refers to the incident where Drax told Cunningham not "... to become entangled in the technicalities of this great ship." This was in 1929 when Drax was Rear-Admiral, 1st Battle Squadron when A.B.C. was commanding HMS Rodney.

change itself was necessary. His only concern was that naval officers would regard new equipment and better weapons as an end in and of themselves and only the means to protect British maritime interests. His method of reducing this dependence rested on persuasion and understanding rather than a descent from "Mount Olympus."[92] This struggle has important lessons for us in the present age. How much of our military policy in the west is based on the application of high technology to solve particular strategical and tactical problems? When western forces have shown over-confidence in their technological advantages they have often been repulsed. Material concerns are only one sub-set in the equation of victory.

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[92] CHT 3/1, "Sketch Estimates for 1933."

ii. Staff and Training

Drax, as a trained staff officer, wished for the Royal Navy to have a highly effective staff system which could develop plans and raise new ideas and concepts in order to make the fleet a highly-effective fighting force. The concept of individual responsibility of command would remain unchanged yet staff officers would be able to take the pressure off a commander by taking over his paper-work and give him advice and access to new ideas of fresh minds.

Even so, Drax was puzzled by the difficulties of retaining individuality in a staff structure. As John Ralston Saul indicated in his recent best-seller Voltaire's Bastards, the problem with military staffs is the attempt to rationalise war to such a degree that individual direction becomes impossible.[93] Individuality had to be embraced and cultivated to avoid intellectual stagnation. Drax himself blamed the education system that naval officers had to endure as cadets. "...For it is simply the inevitable outcome of a process of evolution which has been very largely shaped by the peculiarities of the English character."[94] The system of education that trained Royal Navy officers concerned itself

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[93] Saul, Voltaire's Bastards, pp.205-211.

[94] Drax, "Naval Education," NR I (1913), p.26.

with cramming and with an almost deliberate effort to crush individuality.[95] As with a modern bureaucracy, unpopular ideas assumed to be "unworkable" are thrown out. Too often the tendency is to go on with a system that works without thinking through its implications.[96]

Drax's ideas concentrated round the development of a free-standing staff of brilliant young officers to introduce new ideas and to be freed from day-to-day routine. Perhaps from this idea springs A.B. Cunningham's distrust of the archetypal staff officer yet he encouraged debate and argument among his subordinates to get maximum input into decision-making. As Richmond wrote sarcastically in his diary about Jacky Fisher's attempt at a Naval Staff:

> There are a great many things we want our naval Von Moltke to tell us when you have started him at the head of the Naval War College! What distance shall we open fire? How near shall we approach the enemy in view of the gyroscope?[97]

Staff work involved a radical departure in how naval officers functioned and were educated. As Admiral J.H. Godfrey wrote in his 1921 unpublished memoirs: "A junior commander assigned to two years in the Plans Division had very little idea what he was in for. In two respects his

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[95] Ibid, p.28.

[96] Saul, Voltaire's Bastards, see the chapter entitled "Learning How to Organize Death." See also B.H. Liddell Hart Why Don't We Learn From History? (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1943,1971), pp.26-32.

[97] Hunt, Sailor-Scholar, p.17.

relationship with his seniors was quite different from anything he has experienced... at sea. Firstly, he must no longer expect to be told what to do. Now he must produce the ideas..."[98] This was quite a contrast from the days when Lord Fisher could boast that he and Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson were the only ones to know the naval war plan.[99]

Drax's career focused primarily on getting officers to think for themselves and to improve the Service. As he wrote himself:

> Without intelligent criticism you can have no progress; but in our Service, having sometimes criticism of the wrong sort, all criticism is looked on with suspicion. I know young officers who would tell you to-day that in their opinion certain things are wrong and ought to be put right, but they dare not say so officially because they believe their careers would be finished if they did so. [100]

In the same way, while Drax agreed with most of the substance of both Richmond and Dewar's ideas and indeed, many of his own thoughts were entirely concurrent, he rejected their harsh style. Drax quickly learned the best way to get ideas considered was to take a lower profile. For instance, the dismissal of Jellicoe from the post of First Sea Lord in 1917. Whilst Dewar and Richmond took an active part in the process

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[98] #486 "From the Unpublished Memoirs of Admiral J.H. Godfrey, 1921," British Naval Documents 1204-1960, p.892.

[99] Fisher, Memories, p.102.

[100] DRAX 2/2, "Battle Tactics - A Lecture 1929," pp.14-5.

and exulted in Jellicoe's fall, Drax remained silent.[101] The jealousies among officers was one of the primary causes in the loss of a war or campaign in Drax's eyes.[102] Certainly, he would fight as hard as he could to get them implemented, but he would stay out of the public eye and would work behind the scenes.

Drax was profoundly aware of the difficulties raised by powerful personalities and the bitter criticisms levelled by naval officers on their brothers: "Friction between officers who are required to co-operate and work together is one of the most frequent causes of failure in war. Wherever personal jealousy or disagreement begins to operate it is almost certain that injury to the State will result."[103] Criticism of no longer effective practices was necessary because without such activity the results of a war could be disastrous. "Also we should remember that the less we encourage discussion and criticism within the Service more violent is likely to be the

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[101] Marder, From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow v.iv, p.344. Richmond and Dewar had directly and indirectly discussed the issue with the Prime Minister. Knowing Drax's attitude toward fellow officers, it would be unlikely that he would have participated in the scheme. Besides, he was no longer on Beatty's staff and was thus further away from the centres of power and influence. However, in DRAX 1/1 Drax wrote that much of his correspondence from the War was destroyed so it is unknown exactly what reaction he had at the time.

[102] Drax, "With the Grand Fleet 10/10/14," NR II (1914), p.311. See also his caution against unfair criticism in: Drax, "The Art of Command," NR XII (1924), pp.104-5.

[103] Drax, "The Principles of War," (1921) NR XX (1932), p.328.

criticism directed at the Service from without."[104]

To be sure, Drax often had very harsh things to say about those who failed to think through the Navy's problems. For instance his statement about "the deep sense of uneasiness beginning to pervade the Fleet. I omit the pessimists who of course are stupid..."[105] and his concern about his personal correspondence during the Great War.[106] In addition, Drax wrote a letter to Richmond when Lord Fisher was contemplating breaking up the battlecruiser squadrons into separate divisions, "I look on it as verging on lunacy among those who have not had the opportunity to study naval strategy, and little better than treason in those who have."[107] More often than not, his bitter attacks were confined to his private correspondence. Even in his publications, when his temper showed through, he tried to couch it in terms that would limit the sarcasm and the resulting personal hurt. One is reminded of the storming prophet gaining no converts while the quiet, slower-working disciple manages to gain a whole congregation. While Commander Goldrick may be correct in pointing out that Richmond was well-liked and respected in all his commands,

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[104] DRAX 2/2, "Notes on the Jutland Controversy," ca. 1939.

[105] RIC 7/4, Drax to Richmond, 6 November 1914.

[106] DRAX 1/1, "Note Regarding Private Letters," June 1966.

[107] RIC 7/4, Drax to Richmond, 7 January 1915. To be fair to Lord Fisher, it was Jellicoe that devised the scheme of dividing the battlecruiser squadrons. #68 Jellicoe to Fisher, 18 November 1914, p.96, in: The Jellicoe Papers, v.i.

his effectiveness as a reformer was severely compromised by his "descents from Olympus" which annoyed Chatfield so much.[108]

Throughout his career, Drax was committed to what he saw as the proper training of Naval officers to seize the initiative and not to fall into the trap of finding security in printed orders. He concluded that, "Generally, the tendency to wait for orders and do nothing in cases of this sort is becoming a disgrace to the Navy and a menace to the Empire."[109] He used an example from an exercise where a cruiser had to be ordered to engage the enemy, or during the war where Drax commanded a flotilla of minelayers. Two destroyers observed enemy vessels at night but did not attack. The commander replied when questioned afterwards, "I thought that if I left them alone and did nothing they might have moved clear of your course before you came up."[110]

The struggle between the opposing forces of individualism and collectivism was one of the key issues of Drax's career. On one hand, too much individualism would result in the much-dreaded "friction of war" while too much collectivism would only foster mediocrity and discourage original solutions to both old and new problems. Somehow, a universal consensus was required for a common doctrine while it was necessary to have

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[108] CHT 3/1, "Sketch Estimates for 1933."

[109] DRAX 2/2, "Memorandum on Initiative," 2 February 1932.

[110] Ibid.

some form of internal dissent to check stagnation and chaos. This was the very problem that dominated much of Drax's thinking and writing.

iii) The Offensive

The one concept that Drax held dearest to his conception of war was the rigorous offensive. The most economical way to win a conflict was the use of the offensive arm to compel the enemy to your will. This offensive, unlike Mahan's did not necessarily mean the use of the main battle fleet against the enemy but to continually demoralise him by sustained action. This was even brought out regarding the prayer books that were used in the Navy. Drax found the "Prayer to be said Before a Fight at Sea Against the Enemy" was inadequate for Royal Navy service since it asked God "that thou wouldest be a defence unto us against the face of the enemy." [111] he concluded that the above prayer was good for a besieged fortress but it did little to reinforce our confidence:

> We want to take the offensive with success, without bothering too much about saving our own skins, and therefore it is of far less importance to ask that God will defend us from the violence of the enemy.[112]

Furthermore, this obsession with the offensive was in evidence in Drax even as a young officer where he wrote to his friend Captain Richmond: "I was pained to find on my

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[111] DRAX 6/11, "Prayers for the Fighting Services 1939." Also found in the 1939 volume of the Naval Review.

[112] Ibid.

return that practically no offensive measures seem to have been taken... We seem to have descended everywhere to a policy of passive... defence."[113] Indeed, W.S. Chalmers wrote, "he was an ardent believer in the offensive, which fitted in well with the pattern of warfare as seen by the mind's eye of his Chief [Beatty]."[114] Indeed, when Commandant of the Naval Staff College at Greenwich, Drax "took every opportunity to impress upon the younger generation the paramount importance of the offensive in war - a doctrine which was readily accepted, and bore much fruit in the War of 1939-45."[115]

Drax's chief work in this regard was tactics and the teaching of tactical skill to younger officers to ensure that the same mistakes at Jutland were not repeated at some future date. Certainly, the Navy could not afford the losses suffered at Jutland in a future war.

The chief problem was getting officers to think about tactics. As Drax wrote: "I have studied tactics for over 30 years and I have at least learnt that it is a very easy subject to get wrong ideas about."[116] Drax held that the tactical failures in the First World War were primarily the result of over-centralisation of command, the emasculation of

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[113] RIC 7/4, Drax to Richmond, 26 Oct. 1914.

[114] W.S. Chalmers,ed., The Life and Letters of David Beatty, p.209.

[115] Ibid., p.210.

[116] DRAX 2/2, "Notes on First Impressions," 2 April 1935.

independent initiative and overly-restrictive "battle instructions" with attempted to cover every conceivable situation in one volume. Time after time he showed this fault in tactical skill such as the Dogger bank action in January 1914 and at Jutland where the whole line turned away from a torpedo attack thus leaving the battlecruisers unsupported.[117]

Individual commanders and divisional officers must be able to fully grasp his Commander-in-Chief's intentions. When an awkward situation occurred they would ask themselves one question, "What would the Commander-in-Chief wish me to do if he could see what is happening around me?"[118] Like Nelson, Commanders were to inform their subordinates of his broad intentions prior to battle and leave the details to a minimum.

This work dealing in tactics struck another deep blow at the standard hierarchies in the naval service. Officers were to be supposed to disobey orders within the context of a commander's general intentions as Beatty did in August 1914.[119] The Fleet had been bound by precise written instructions that left little room for independent initiative. In the Second World War, however the Navy performed extremely well

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[117] DRAX 2/2, "Battle," n.d.

[118] DRAX 2/2, unaddressed and undated letter. See also, DRAX 2/2, Drax to Backhouse, 6 September 1935.

[119] DRAX 2/2, "Battle," n.d. Beatty deliberately disobeyed orders to support Reginald Tyrwhitt against German battlecruisers on 28 August 1914.

tactically with more room for manoeuvre for junior officers.[120]

Drax also suggested in his lecture "Battle Tactics" which he gave in 1929 that naval officers must be willing to accept high-risk battles. He rejected the notion that one could fight a battle without suffering losses since it was completely unrealistic.[121] Naval officers must be taught when risks are justifiable and when they are not.[122]

However, in regard to strategy, Drax was well aware of the limitations of the naval offensive and the basic strength of Corbett's strategic defensive.[123] That strategic defensive was particularly strong when the enemy was dogged at every opportunity and tactical offensives were used constantly to throw him off balance. In his consideration of the 1938 War Plans, Drax wrote, "It is also assumed that France is our ally because without her we could do very little."[124] Drax recognised the limitations of sea power and realised that navies alone cannot win the war against a great continental power. Furthermore, Drax's report of September 1939 shows that

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[120] The best new exposition of the development of tactics in the Royal Navy is to be found in: Jon Sumida, "The Best Laid Plans - British Battle-Fleet Tactics, 1919-1942," International History Review XIV no.4 (1992), pp.681-700.

[121] DRAX 2/2, Battle Tactics - a Reply," 1933.

[122] DRAX 2/2, "Battle Tactics, 1929," p.4.

[123] Corbett, Some Principles of Maritime Strategy, pp.32-37

[124] DRAX 2/8, Notes on War Plans," 21 October 1938.

awareness very clearly.[125] In addition, Dickens and Drax wrote another paper advocating the use of offensive mining in order to bottle up German submarines and surface warships in their ports while still assuming a defensive posture.[126] Mining was to be done by warships, submarines and aircraft working in conjunction. This policy worked to good effect as "Bomber" Harris himself stated.[127] Even before the war, Drax had written down ideas in his commentaries on the war plans before 1939 that were compatible with the strategic defensive. Drax's offensive ideas included attacking enemy ships at sea by using aircraft, submarines, surface vessels and motor torpedo boats. In addition, closing enemy harbours with blockships and mines.[128] Drax also suggested the attacking of enemy ports using smaller craft in co-operation with aircraft.[129]

Drax was also rather circumspect of the claims of the "Victory School" that all the problems of sea control could be solved by battle at the first opportunity. "...In

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[125] ADM 205/2, "Minutes of a Meeting in the First Lord's Room, 18 September 1939.

[126] ADM 205/3, Admirals Drax and Dickens, "Offensive Mining W.P. 6," 19 September 1939.

[127] Marshal of the RAF Sir Arthur Harris, Bomber Offensive (London: Stoddard, 1947,1990), pp.138-40.

[128] DRAX 2/8, "Offensive Action: Various." 15 November 1937.

[129] DRAX 2/2, "Theoretical Investigation of Tactical and Strategical Problems," 15 June 1938.

attempting to destroy the enemy's naval forces, the means must not be mistaken for the end. Our ultimate aim is to dominate all maritime lines of communication..."[130] In the same way, although he desired strong offensive activity against the enemy, Drax approved of taking the strategic defensive. As regards to the Grand Fleet's inactivity he had only this to say: "That ability to do nothing is the measure of their tremendous strength."[131] The Royal Navy possessed the sea lanes without having to fight a battle while the Germans had to come out to change the situation in their favour. The aim of sea power was to control communications not just to destroy the enemy, "the only ultimate object of attack by warships is merchant shipping and seaborne commerce. The sea contains nothing else, except fish."[132]

Nor in Drax's view was command of the sea to be gained or exercised by the use of surface warships in general or battleships in particular. All three services had to play a role in the securing of British sea lanes and in offensively using the sea power that Britain already possessed.

> Based on the above principle it is therefore not correct to say that 'holding the Mediterranean is the job of the British Navy.' On the contrary, we are regretfully compelled to assert that in the Mediterranean, as in the Far East, the odds against us are so heavy that, in a war

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[130] Drax, "Naval Strategy in 1909," NR III (1915), p.218.

[131] Drax, "With the Grand Fleet 4/4/15," NR III (1915), p.171.

[132] RIC 7/4, Drax to Richmond, 22 March 1916.

> with Germany, Italy and Japan, reasonable prospects of success in our Naval operations do not exist.[133]

In particular, the co-operation of the RAF was essential to success in naval operations. As Drax mentioned to Arthur Marder in 1959, "This essential support particularly in the air was often denied to us because a number of amateur strategists regarded the war as a contest in which Navies fought Navies and Airmen fought Airmen. This was a horrible fallacy."[134]

Moreover, Drax's commentary of the actions of Admiral Rodney in the closing stages of the American Revolutionary war taken from extracts from Mahan's Influence of Sea Power Upon History provides further insight to his stance on the issue. Drax concluded that the reason that Rodney lost was because of "faulty naval strategy which was primarily defensive and ignored the urgent need to take the offensive when a golden opportunity offered."[135]

Furthermore, Herbert Richmond pointed out in a letter to Drax: "Our other action, as it appears to me, must be defensive. But defensive, in my eyes, does not mean beating off attacks alone; it includes offensive measures to deprive the enemy of this means of injuring us in our vital commerce;

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[133] DRAX 2/8, "Notes on War Plans," 21 October 1938.

[134] DRAX 6/18, "Notes on Chapter 12 of Marder's Book," 1959.

[135] DRAX 2/8, "Mahan: 'Influence of Sea Power Upon History.' Extracts from Pages 394-397," undated circa 1939.

that is, his bases abroad..."[136] This was a point that Drax himself agreed upon, for the use of maritime power was a fundamental British strength and indeed, weakness. Sea power could be used for an offensive strategy but first the security of Britain's vital seaborne commerce had to be protected.

Drax attempted to come to terms with modern difficulties of British strategy. He was intrigued with the idea of rapid offensive and using new technologies and techniques to disable an enemy's ability to attack the Navy. He also had a profound knowledge of the nation's financial position and realised another war like the last would bankrupt Britain very quickly. This is one of the primary reasons a rapid offensive was required (besides his life-long commitment to individual initiative and the offensive). A long war whether or not it was victorious would be disastrous for the United Kingdom and the Empire. Like Richmond, he was concerned with the development of co-operation between all three services for a common effort; hence his interest in combined operations.

Like other intellectuals in military circles in the interwar period, Drax was impressed with the importance of rapid and decisive action required to crush an enemy quickly. "To conclude, I think it is very necessary, if only for financial reasons, that our next war should be short and decisive: this is one of the many reasons for starting it with

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[136] DRAX 2/8, Richmond to Drax, 4 January 1939.

a vigorous offensive."[137] Like Richmond and the other "Young Turks" as well as Liddell Hart and Fuller, he was frustrated by the quagmire of the First World War. In his view, the war dragged on and on with no result, because neither service had any concept of an efficient staff or individual initiative. Nor was any type of intellectual looked favourably upon.[138]

The strategic debate Drax became involved with just prior to the outbreak of war was the April 1939 considerations of British Imperial strategy. In particular, the traditional strategy of despatching a Fleet to the Far East was under seige from those that contended that it was an unrealistic plan to do so in the light of the European situation. Drax had been involved with the writing of the war plans since the early 1930s and had been used as a valuable resource to re-think traditional planning. As N.H. Gibbs pointed out in the official history, never before had the traditional concept of sending the main fleet to Singapore been so openly challenged.[139]

Since the end of the First World War, Japan had been considered the primary threat to the security of the British Empire. Lord Jellicoe's Empire mission of 1919, argued

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[137] DRAX 2/2, "Notes on Jutland Controversy," undated, most likely from 1938 when Drax was re-writing the "Fighting Instructions" for the Mediterranean Fleet.

[138] Robin Higham, The Military Intellectuals in Britain 1918-1939 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1966,1981), p.4.

[139] N.H. Gibbs, Grand Strategy, I - Rearmament Policy (London: HMSO, 1976), p.423.

forcefully for the construction of a very large Far Eastern Fleet to cover British sea communications and to shield Australia and New Zealand.[140] However, economic pressure and the naval arms treaties tied Britain to a standard of naval strength that did not mesh with her global responsibilities. Indeed, many recognised this trend and throughout the 1930s, British commitment in numbers of ships and time before relief respectively decreased and increased.[141] However, the political commitment of the defence of Australia and New Zealand remained.[142] In an approved 1938 Draft Report, it was accepted by the Cabinet that:

> We should be able to send to the Far East a force sufficient to provide "cover" against the Japanese Fleet; we should have sufficient additional forces behind the shield for the protection of our territory and mercantile marine against Japanese attack; at the same time we should be able to retain in European waters a force sufficient to act as a deterrent...[143]

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[140] #124g) Jellicoe to First Lord, 3 March 1919, Jellicoe Papers v.ii, pp.290-95.

[141] Marder, Old Friends, New Enemies v.i, pp.38-41. In 1930, it was estimated that the main fleet consisting of all of 3 or 4 battleships to be retained in home waters would arrive at Singapore in 28 days from the commencement of hostilities. CAB 55/5, "Strategic Situation in the Far East..," 9 July 1930. In 1937, the period until relief was extended to 70 days and then only a force of 7 or 8 ships could be spared. CAB 55/9, "Far East Appreciation JP#202," 7 May 1937. Finally, in 1939, it was uncertain when or what ships would be available. R. John Pritchard, Far Eastern Influences Upon British Strategy Towards the Great Powers, 1937-1939 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987), p.142.

[142] DRAX 2/9, "Composition of the Far Eastern Fleet in War," 15 March 1939.

[143] ADM 167/92, "Draft Report November 1935 to the Naval Construction Ministerial Committee, November 1935.

In respect to naval strength, Richmond actually agreed with Jellicoe, when he examined British policy in regards to the Pacific. When the treaties were combined with agreements with Germany, the margin of superiority was very slight.[144] Indeed, that margin was so slight that it seemed barely possible to send any major fleet to the East in case of trouble with Japan. To allow for any margin of strategic superiority, the Royal Navy would have to strip home waters of every available ship, thus leaving the British isles uncovered. "The Singapore strategy was born out of economy and nurtured by parsimony. Having decided that it could not afford a fleet to match Japan, the British Government planned the base so that it could fit a single fleet into a two-ocean strategy."[145]

In 1937, the Admiralty attempted to get a "New Standard of Naval Strength" approved by the Cabinet to replace the one-power standard that was no longer fulfilling British strategic requirements. The Admiralty calculated that it needed 20 battleships, 15 aircraft carriers and 100 cruisers to be able to take the strategic defensive in the Far East whilst presenting a credible deterrent in Home waters which require a construction programme of at least L104 millions per

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[144] Richmond, Statesmen and Seapower, pp.289-93.

[145] David McIntyre, The Rise and Fall of the Singapore Naval Base, 1919-1942 (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.53.

annum.[146] The Admiralty would be disappointed since the other services feared being cut out of their share of revenue and also because of very serious restraints on spending. Indeed, no decision had been made in the Cabinet in this regard even in time for the 1939 programme.[147]

That was the very crux of the difficulty. The strategy to reinforce Singapore from both the Mediterranean and Home Fleets was based on all-or-nothing response to direct Japanese aggression. The moving of reinforcements to Singapore for precautionary concerns would not be feasible either in a period of high tension because it could provoke hostilities.[148] And the all-or-nothing response would not function against smaller provocations and Japanese moves extending its influence into the South China Sea and into Indo-China which undermined the security of Singapore. "By these steps, Japan reduced Singapore from a secure main base to an advanced outpost."[149] The Far East could not be divorced from security problems in Europe where Britain faced the hostility of both

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[146] ADM 167/97, "Draft Memorandum on A New Standard of Naval Strength," 19 April 1937.

[147] ADM 167/101, "Construction for 1939 - Memorandum by the First Sea Lord (Backhouse), 13 December 1938.

[148] ADM 167/91 "Re-Distribution of Home and Mediterranean Fleets," 2 October 1934. The idea of sending 2 Battlecruisers to Singapore was regarded as too risky in April 1933 and was promptly turned down by the CID.

[149] Pritchard, Far Eastern Influences, p.208.

Italy and Germany.[150] The idea that a major fleet could be kept in the Far East indefinitely was completely unrealistic while the European situation was so unstable. This is the context of the struggle in early 1939.

The Chiefs of Staff, the First Sea Lord in particular, Admiral Sir Roger Backhouse, contended that British priorities should be shifted away from the Far East.[151] In this approach, Drax supported the Naval Staff and Backhouse with well-thought out and well-written arguments. In early March 1939, the CID COS sub-committee, the Admiralty, increasingly aware that government was not going to give the two-power standard they saw as a requirement to a two-hemisphere defence system, tried to extricate itself from the perilous guarantee of supplying a major fleet to Singapore automatically in case of trouble with Japan.

From Drax's point of view, the Mediterranean was the best place for the Navy to strike offensively. In co-operation with the French forces in the area, the Mediterranean Fleet could provide a massive superiority over the Italians. A rapid offensive would be able to cut off Italian armies in Africa, sever Rome's seaborne trade and force the Italian navy to deploy for the defensive as well as giving Allied navies

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[150] CAB 55/9, "Far East Appreciation, JP# 202," 7 May 1937.

[151] Gibbs, Grand Strategy v.i, p.423.

a free hand in the bombardment of exposed Italian coasts.[152] The other benefit would be that the Italians' ability to use interior lines would be greatly impaired by a combined Anglo-French offensive.[153] However, he was frustrated by a lack of planning for decisive moves in the Mediterranean: "Cannot we go in and completely smash the Italian naval bases on that coast?... War with Italy first threatened in 1935, yet today, 1939, we have no plan ready for a determined offensive action against that country."[154] This argument was based on the assumption that France would be willing to take an early offensive against Italy and that the Japanese would not move against British interests in the short term. Drax went on to argue that the Fleet must go where it is most needed and thus concentrated to strike the most effective blows as possible.

Furthermore, if the Navy was able to inflict heavy blows at the outset, it would deter the Japanese all the more.[155] In addition, to spread the Fleet over 3 areas would be perilously close to ignoring Frederick the Great's warning against attempting to defend everything resulting in defending

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[152] DRAX 2/9, "An Outline of the Principles Affecting the Use and Distribution of Warships," 3 March 1939.

[153] DRAX 2/19, "Draft Memorandum to C-in-C. Mediterranean (Admiral Sir Dudley Pound), 24 January 1939.

[154] DRAX 2/8, "Notes on European War Plan, 1939," 21 March 1939.

[155] Ibid.

nothing.[156] "...I think it will be found that to get a rapid decision in Europe will need the whole of our naval resources."[157] In order to preserve British possessions in the Far East, the Navy must rely on the Army and the RAF in the short term until reinforcements were available from the Mediterranean. By sending a major fleet to Singapore, it would, by necessity, be inferior to the Japanese not only because of keeping powerful units in Home Waters but because of ships laying in dry-dock being modernised. Thus, the best that could be sent would be an inferior, unmodernised force that would be forced to sit in Singapore because of its inferiority in numbers and in quality. This fleet, however, would only have limited usefulness operating "in being" since it would not deter the Japanese from step by step investiture of the fortress. The Fleet's offensive arm would be tied down in the Far East and morale would collapse because of inactivity.[158] Therefore, it would be best to maintain local forces only at Singapore until Japanese intentions were known and the situation in Europe was much clearer.

As for the defence of Australia, it was based on the assumption that Singapore would be attacked and not by-passed. The Japanese could easily move down the Marianas,

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[156] DRAX 2/9, "Composition of the Far Eastern Fleet in War," 15 March 1939.

[157] DRAX 2/8, "Notes on War Plans," 21 October 1938.

[158] Ibid.

New Guinea to Australia. Therefore, any British Fleet would have to operate thousands of miles from its main base. A small naval force, composed of battlecruisers would be well suited to harassing Japanese communications and force them to divide their fleet and effort. If the Japanese did attack, the Flying Squadron could be reinforced from home if we were able to inflict heavy losses on the Italians.

In the Pacific, there was also the presence of the United States that could exercise influence over Japanese behaviour. However, any co-operation with Washington was fraught with political difficulties because of the isolationist stance of a good share of American public opinion. Although it was in the interest of the Americans to help the British maintain some power balance in the Pacific, President Roosevelt was not about to allow American foreign policy to be fully dependent on the British Empire nor did he desire to be in the position to be actively defending the British Empire.[159] American naval strategy by this time, had written off the Philippines just as British strategy had written off Hong Kong in the face of a determined Japanese attack. Thus, British offers of aid in defending Manila fell on deaf ears. The Royal Navy lacked a credible air arm and by early 1941, its surface strength was

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[159] James R. Leutze, Bargaining for Supremacy - Anglo-American Naval Collaboration, 1937-1941 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), pp.5-7.

reduced whilst its responsibilities had doubled.[160]

In the face of British relative weakness, it was deemed wise to look at the possibility of American co-operation in the Pacific. However, Drax felt it very unwise to count on American support for they would be most reluctant to go to war unless American interests were attacked directly.[161] However, it was still advisable to make discreet contacts with the United States and the Netherlands concerning a joint strategy. This was done in May 1939 and Whitehall suggested to the Americans that they station a powerful force at Manila and Singapore;[162] because, in the long run, the Navy's only hope for saving the situation in the Far East against determined Japanese aggression was the United States.[163] In the end (early 1941), the Americans in their joint talks with Britain refused either to send their main fleet to Singapore or significantly reinforce their Asiatic Fleet. As mentioned before, Singapore's situation had been strategically compromised by relentless Japanese encroachments and it was the furthest point of advance for British forces without

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[160] Edward S. Miller, War Plan Orange - The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945 (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), pp.62-3.

[161] DRAX 2/17, "Critique of Dreyer's War Plans Against Japan, 17 February 1939.

[162] Glen St. John Barclay, "Singapore Strategy: The Role of the United States in Imperial Defence," Military Affairs XXXIX no.2 (1975), p.55.

[163] DRAX 2/19, "Notes on Foreign Office Letter of 12 January 1939," 20 January 1939.

American forces.[164] Singapore was on its own and the British were forced to find forces available to preserve their possessions in the Far East from the approaching Japanese onslaught.

Drax's ideas in regard to the Far East were used extensively by Admiral Backhouse during Cabinet discussions. Backhouse desired that the British commitment to the Far East be watered down in the face of strategic reality. However, due to Drax's unconventional approach, a report was couched in ambiguous terms stating only that it was uncertain when the relief of Singapore could take place and what forces could be spared.[165]

> Meanwhile, by drawing freely upon many of Admiral Drax's ideas in their oral explanations, the Admiralty convinced the SAC [Strategic Appreciation Committee of the Cabinet] -and more importantly convinced Neville Chamberlain - that it was time to let Britain's naval guarantee to the Pacific Dominions lapse in all but name.[166]

The opposition to this move by Lord Chatfield, now the minister for the co-ordination of defence, was effectively by-passed. During this debate, Chatfield remained adamant that a fleet must be dispatched to the Far East in case of war with Japan regardless of the position at home. Even though the pressure to change the focus of British strategy to the Mediterranean was switched back to the Pacific in response to

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[164] Pritchard, Far Eastern Influences, p.208.

[165] Ibid., pp.141-2.

[166] Ibid., p.142.

further Japanese aggression, the Mediterranean offensive remained a possibility.

The use of imagination, combined with a deep passion for the offensive, gave Drax an insight into British strategic problems and a possible solution. Albeit, that solution was also based on a large number of assumptions regarding French policy and the attitude of the other services, it still showed a defensively-minded staff that something could be done even with the limited strength that Britain possessed in 1939. Also, it was the precursor to Drax's role as special advisor in the Admiralty during the Second World War.

Drax's abilities were recognised within the Navy, since Admiral Sir Dudley Pound brought him to the Admiralty to keep Churchill's strategic follies down to a minimum as in the Norway campaign and air bombing.[167] Drax's intellectual bent and Pound's method of deflecting Churchill's unrealistic ideas bureaucratically merged very well. This had an added benefit of taking some pressure of the Naval Staff. Furthermore, Churchill himself had considerable confidence in Drax. Churchill and Drax had corresponded during the the interwar years and the First Lord's influence secured the latter's appointment as Commander-in-Chief, the Nore. Churchill also valued Drax's input in the decision-making process and thought it best to have the Admiral come into London once a week for

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[167] Hunt, Sailor-Scholar, pp.227-28.

consultation.[168]

Drax was a trusted friend and colleague of the First Sea Lord in the first half of the Second World War. Admiral Pound and Drax had worked together in re-writing the Fighting Instructions for the Mediterranean Fleet when Pound was Commander-in-Chief of that Fleet. And by bringing Drax into the Admiralty when Churchill took over as First Lord in 1939, Drax helped compensate for the CNS's relative weakness vis a vis Churchill. As Captain Roskill noted, Pound was not very articulate and tended to avoid clashing with Churchill directly but sought to deflect his wilder schemes bureaucratically. [169] This not to discredit Pound, for even the redoubtable Fisher found himself unable to out-argue Churchill. Indeed, both Drax and Admiral Sir Gerald Dickens upon considering the War Plans with Churchill wrote a paper warning against taking the naval offensive for six months thereby hoping to establish a mood of restraint.[170]

The conflict over Operation "Catherine" is a case in point. The idea was to move a large surface fleet into the Baltic to cut off German supplies from Scandinavia. Pound, uncharacteristically refused to back down and was armed with

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[168] Martin Gilbert, The Churchill War Papers v.i (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), p.495. A letter from Churchill to Pound, Phillips and Sir A. Carter, 11 December 1939.

[169] S.W. Roskill, Churchill and the Admirals (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1978), p.118.

[170] Ibid., p.93.

"lucid arguments" to demolish Churchill's plans.[171] The idea of sending unsupported capital ships in the Baltic with no assurance of bases, supplies or air cover was ludicrous. However, Pound himself was still not entirely convinced of the decisiveness of air power in enclosed waters. These points were most likely supplied by Captain V.H. Danckwerts, the Director of Plans, but also in all likelihood Drax himself was a major contributor.[172] There is little direct evidence, but there is very strong circumstantial evidence that is what happened. Furthermore, Drax and Admiral Dickens had written a paper which precluded taking the strategic offensive at least until mid-1940.[173] Significantly, however, both Drax and Dickens recommended tactical offensive to make the enemy's life exceedingly difficult especially in regard to offensive mining.[174] Drax had experience dealing with such measures as he was closely involved in mine warfare in the First War. It was also something he kept in mind in his critique of War Plans.

The fight against the pre-occupation of British policy-

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[171] Richard Lamb, Churchill As War Leader (New York: Carroll & Graf, 1991,1993), p.24.

[172] Drax was involved in the discussion over "Catherine", Gilbert, The Churchill War Papers v.i, pp.496-7. A letter from Churchill to Pound, Phillips and, Carter, 11 December 1939.

[173] ADM 205/2, "Minutes of a Meeting in the First Lord's Room, 18 September 1939. Also quoted in Roskill, Churchill and the Admirals, p.93.

[174] ADM 205/3, "Memo. by Admirals Drax and Dickens - Offensive Mining, W.P.6," 19 September 1939.

makers with strategic bombing was a deep concern for Drax. In 1921, his essay on air-power already detected dangerous deviations from the principles of strategy which needed correction. "If this be the case, all attempts to gain command of the air and all forms of direct air attack, whether with bombs or other weapons, must be looked on a as means to an end, not an end to in themselves."[175] His 1943 pamphlet on the questionable strategic bombing strategy was brought home. The stripping of aircraft away from Coastal Command was rebuked. Again, Drax emphasised the historical truth that Britons had lived and died by for centuries. If the British lost the war at sea, they had lost the war. Connected to this problem was Drax's continued frustration with the pipe dreams of the politicians, some military men and large segments of the population that war could be won cheaply and without much bloodshed. The continued pre-occupation of measuring horsepower, bombloads and of solving strategic and tactical problems by simply throwing money at developing more capable weapons never failed to produce a withering rebuke from his pen. As he wrote in the Naval Review in 1920, "If our policy in regard to it [materiel] is to display enlightenment, continuity and breadth of purpose, we must build our future progress on a foundation of sound principles carefully

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[175] Drax, "The Influence of the Future of Aircraft...," NR XX (1922), p.227.

collected and widely studied."[176] Or later in 1925, "So all-pervading was the *Materiel* fetish that every calculation of battle strength centred round 'inches of armour' and 'pounds of projectiles.'"[177]

Drax stated latter in his life that he had worked "closely allied" with Churchill to push for more effective rearmament, as he sent him a copy of his article "England's Last Chance" in October 1938, even when Drax himself was on the active list.[178] Indeed, his only two criticisms of Churchill was the Prime Minister's insufficient attention to ensuring the British sea communications and the co-operation of all the services for a single object. He was especially harsh on the RAF:

> In the early years of the War our Army, Navy and Merchant Marine were suffering terrible losses because we were not receiving the close and constant support of the RAF which was essential for our success. I do not blame the Prime Minister because he had, it seems, been persuaded by some of the airmen that they could win the War in a few months by bombing Germany if the Army and Navy could be told off and play by themselves...[179]

Of course, the concept of boldly seizing offensive action was characteristic of Churchill. As First Lord of the Admiralty in the Great War, Churchill was the sponsor of many raids and the Dardanelles campaign. Churchill demanded rapid

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[176] Drax, "Materiel" [1915], NR VIII (1920), p.321.

[177] Drax, "Jutland of Trafalgar," NR XIII (1925), p.242.

[178] DRAX 6/8, "Drax & Churchill", 1966.

[179] Ibid.

and effective offensives in order to strike the enemy as hard as possible. After the withdrawal of the British Expeditionary Forces from the continent, the only way to effectively bring the war to Germany was by air action. Added to that motive was the pounding that British cities took in the Battle of Britain and the Blitz.

Unfortunately, Churchill's passion for the offensive got him into trouble because he failed to grasp the strategy behind the offensive. As Drax himself wrote in later years, "Napoleon, Hitler and Churchill were complete amateurs in the matter of Naval Warfare and were liable at any minute to hatch ideas which were unsound and dangerous."[180] Drax, Pound, Richmond as well as others, did not object to the offensive. In fact, they embraced it but felt that it must be tempered with realistic estimations and common sense. Witness Richmond's (he was serving as Assistant Director of Naval Operations at the Admiralty) frustration in dealing with a formidable personality:

> We have the game in our hands if we sit tight, but this Churchill cannot see. He must see something tangible & can't understand that naval warfare acts in a wholly different manner from war on shore. That Fleet in the north dominates the position. It's no business of ours to go trying to pluck occasional, small indifferent fruits in the south. We must make the enemy come to us & fight us in the place we want.[181]

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[180] DRAX 6/18, "Notes on Chapter 12 of Marder's Book," 1959.

[181] Richmond, Portrait of an Admiral, p.98, entry dated 12 August 1914.

Churchill as with other members of the so-called "Victory School" often mixed the ends and means of sea power. Take for example the case of Vice-Admiral Sir James Somerville in November 1940. Churchill called a Board of Enquiry because Somerville broke off an engagement with the Italians because his primary mission was to guard his convoy proceeding to Malta.[182] As Martin Stephen put it: Pound's problem was that he was not only having to fight a war, but muzzle a bulldog in his back yard at the same time."[183]

Much of the difficulties with air co-operation were directly caused by the dispute between the Air Ministry and the Admiralty over control of the Fleet Air Arm. In 1918, due to lack of co-operation between the air forces of both the Navy and the Army, the Royal Air Force was created in order to have a unified air service and administrative system to regulate aircraft production which had suffered from bifurcated demands from two separate ministries. Neither the Army nor Navy were happy to see a new competitor for funds and used every means at their disposal to destroy it. However, Hugh Trenchard, the first and third CAS argued about the cheapness of air power and being quite reasonable in assuring the Navy of proper tactical air support.

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[182] Roskill, Churchill and the Admirals, pp.169-71.

[183] Stephen, The Fighting Admirals, p.39. Although this quotation refers to the troubles between Admirals Cunningham and Pound, it is particularly apt in summarising the relationship between the First Sea Lord and Churchill.

However, the Admiralty under Beatty would have none of that. Just how violent the arguments got was shown in tne CID Chiefs of Staff sub-committee over the defences of Singapore in 1924.[184] Beatty demanded that the Navy should have complete control over the Fleet Air Arm and went so far as to threaten the resignation of the entire board of Admiralty to get his way (a tactic Beatty often used). The impasse was resolved in 1924 in an agreement that would grant the Navy operational control over the FAA when embarked aboard aircraft carriers but the Air Ministry controlled it when ashore and provided a significant portion of the aircrew. The Air Ministry retained control over procurement and design of aircraft.

This unsatisfactory situation was brought to a head again in 1936-37 by Beatty's protege, Chatfield when he was 1st Sea Lord. The Admiralty secured total control over the FAA but the Air Ministry still controlled the production of aircraft. Due to the confrontational nature of the dispute, it was to unlikely that the Air Ministry would devote much time and resources to developing aircraft specifically for the need of the Navy especially considering the massive re-arming of the Royal Air Force in the 1930s.

Unfortunately, the FAA and the Coastal Command of the RAF both fell victim to the dispute. In 1945, the Fleet Air

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[184] CAB 53/1, 16th meeting of the CID COS Sub-Committee, 24 February 1925.

Arm was still flying Fairey Swordfish biplane torpedo bombers and had to get most of their aircraft from the United States to fight the war in the Pacific. Domestic aircraft proved to be difficult for carrier operations such as the navalised Spitfire and Hurricane. Coastal Command was the least popular of the branches of the air force and it was often left with second-rate equipment. Coastal Command was also seen as only "defensive" and therefore lacked the appeal or attention that Bomber Command got.

The same obsession with the "offensive" also afflicted the Navy. Without proper regard for defensive safeguards, offensive thrusts securing questionable results may be positively dangerous. Convoys and Coastal Command were "defensive" measures that did not easily fit the mold of taking rapid offensive action to strike at an enemy. Indeed, even Admiral Pound was unconvinced that convoying was necessary even until the end of the 30s.[185]

The air offensive was built around the same premise, in many respects as the naval blockade. In the same way, it sought to weaken the will of the enemy and to destroy his economic power to carry out the war. "In the strategic air offensive the 'other side of the hill' tends to be farther away than any other type of warfare, except, perhaps, that of

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[185] Roskill, Naval Policy Between the Wars v.ii (London: Collins, 1976), p.429.

the naval blockade."[186] The concept of striking beyond enemy lines and destroying his will to fight and his economic strength was very appealing since it avoided the drudgery of the trenches. The rapid development of aircraft made it very easy to assign a different operational role of air forces than to the surface.

The series of articles and booklets written by Drax and others concerning air bombing came at a pivotal point in the direction of the strategy in the air. The Air Ministry and Bomber Command wished to retain as many aircraft as possible to continue the pounding of German cities. Although the chief object of the Offensive was to attack the morale of the German people in mid-1941, the bomber force was quite incapable of doing anything of the sort.[187] In fact, the numbers of aircraft available for bombing Germany had decreased drastically since the previous year. Many aircraft had been transferred to other theatres while bomber command had received more powerful aircraft.

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[186] Sir Charles Webster, Nobel Frankland, The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany, 1939-1945 v.i (London: HMSO, 1961), p.11. On the other hand, H.W. Richmond challenged this comparison by demonstrating that the British blockades of Brest by not, "aiming at the isolation of the French people from the outer world: it was an operation whose object was to bring the Brest fleet to action if it sailed. It was a measure of protection to the kingdom, the colonies and the trade, because it disabled the fighting force which alone could injure... them." H.W. Richmond, Sea Power and the Modern World ([1934] New York: Arno Press, 1972), p.139.

[187] J.R.M. Butler, Grand Strategy v.iii pt.ii (London: HMSO, 1964), p.523.

Out of frustration, Drax published an article in the Royal United Services Institution Journal (RUSIJ) in November 1942.[188] He was frankly alarmed at the push for the strategic bombing campaign over the needs of the other two services. He reaffirmed that sea power and the security of the sea lines of communication of the British Empire were of fundamental importance of not only the empire but of the security of the Home Islands themselves. Without that sea power the war would be lost. "There is little help for Britain to win the War until our sea power, i.e., our power to control the sea communications of the world, has been greatly strengthened and made more or less unassailable."[189] To Drax, that sea power was not to be won by the Navy alone since all three services had to work together. Like the Colomb brothers of the late nineteenth century, he advocated the co-operation of all arms of the British services. But, in this treatise, he included the RAF which he saw a the vital partner in preserving British sea power. "Needless to say," he wrote, "sea power can be effectively exercised to-day only by a combination of sea and air forces, both in great strength."[190] This was entirely in accordance with pre-war Admiralty

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[188] The article is entitled "The British War Effort" which is found in the November 1942 number of RUSIJ. It is also to be found in the Drax Papers 6/13.

[189] Drax, "The British War Effort," RUSIJ LXXXVII no.548 (1942), p.319.

[190] Ibid., p.319.

pronouncements on strategic policy:

> It is, therefore, not superfluous to repeat what we all know, that this country is dependant upon our seaborne trade, that without imported petrol the R.A.F. cannot fly, that without imported food all our Air Raid Precautions will not prevent us from starving... If, therefore, our naval preparations are inadequate, the rest is of no avail.[191]

He went on to describe how "Every Admiral and General is anxious to see Germany bombed", but with out such sea control, the air offensive would be fruitless. [192] Britain must concentrate her slender resources on the vital point "on the field of battle." He saw the chief problem being the lack of co-operation between all three of the services. He rejected the limited model of assuming that Fighter Command will defend us against bombing, the army was to help defend France and the Navy was to secure the seas. This is a false method of war, since all arms are required to fulfil the demands of sea control and the defence of Great Britain.[193]

> ...We are apt to assume that it is the duty of the Navy to deal with the enemy's ships and of the Air Force to deal with the enemy's planes and aerodromes. The army no doubt would aim to get at the enemy's army where and when it could. But this theory is entirely unsound, it is the negation of effective team work... [194]

The logic of this "dog eat dog" mentality was put forward most

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[191] ADM 167/104, "Memo. by First Lord (Stanhope) for the CID, 15 June 1939.

[192] Drax, "The British War Effort," p.321.

[193] Ibid., p.321.

[194] DRAX 2/8, "Notes on War Plans 1938," 21 October 1938.

clearly by Admiral Sir Reginald Custance who argued the army and navy were separate mediums of war. To be fair to Custance, he still emphasised that the "aery" (as he called it) was to operate in co-ordination with both of the surface forces. Unfortunately, this statement was only one step away from the Air Force asserting its own independence by stating that the air was the co-equal as a medium of war.[195]

Very shortly afterwards an article, written by Drax appeared in the 1942 volume of Brassey's Naval Annual entitled "Combined Operations." Drax, because of his active status elected to use the pseudonym "Flag Officer." Drax went on the assault further, charging that British preparations had been wholly inadequate especially on the sea. Part of the exercising of sea power was the use of aircraft but the lack of strength in Coastal Command and the Fleet Air Arm precluded proper war preparations. In sum there was, "... in fact, no hope that the Navy could get the air support that it needed."[196]

Moreover, although Drax agreed that many generals and admirals were not sufficiently "air-minded" but many in the RAF were isolationists who sought to win the war their own way. The doctrine of "the bomber will always get through: therefore we must have more bombers than the enemy so that

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[195] Admiral Sir Reginald Custance, A Study Of War ([1924]; London: Kennikat Press, 1970), p.8.

[196] Flag Officer [Drax], "Combined Operations," Brassey's Naval Annual 1942, p.161.

however much he blasts our cities we can blast his a little more." [197] Air attacks in modern war lacked concentration on a particular objective and war had taken on a new character and marked a new decent into barbarism:

> It must be noted here that the whole character of war has changed and has now brought us to a new principle which, though horrible, is practically unavoidable. It is this: 'Modern war can be conducted most efficiently and successfully only by the wholesale slaughter of women and children'. Obviously this statement needs careful proof. In choosing targets we may at once rule out the attack on defenceless civilians for producing moral effect: that is barbarous and unnecessary...[198]

However, the idea that bombing would not be done was equally fallacious since modern forces were dependant heavily on industry and large urban centres. Therefore, the British forces needed to target a) Large ports b) dockyards c) transport facilities d) communications centres and lastly could carry out coastal bombardments on important targets.

Drax's article "The British War Effort", published in the Royal United Services Institution Journal in November 1942, was followed by a full-sized privately circulated document in March 1943.

The work was entitled "The Art of War - 20th Century Version." As a preview to his attack he dedicated the work

> ... to those soldiers, sailors, airmen and men of the Merchant Navy who, fighting with matchless courage... were foredoomed to die in the Second World War because

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[197] Ibid., p.162.

[198] DRAX 2/8, "Notes on War Plans, 1938," 21 October 1938.

> ideas and opinions have changed while the principles of war have not.[199]

Although he stated that he did not want to attack anyone personally, he felt the need to critically examine the course of the war and British policy in relation to it. However, it is rather easy to tell who is the target of this work; namely the leadership of the Royal Air Force and Bomber Command in particular.

Immediately, Drax plunged into the attack by addressing the concepts supported by air power enthusiasts which he termed, the "New Strategy". This "New Strategy" was "a collection of ideas and theories about the use of air power which ran counter to the accepted interpretation of the traditional principles of strategy and tactics." [200] Instead of devoting resources to developing the strength of British armed forces, both the Navy and the Army were starved of air co-operation because of the bomber offensive.

Drax calculated that by 1942, there should have been enough aircraft produced in Britain to protect the essential seaborne trade. The army was also "crying out" for air support.[201] Drax's case is easily understood when one considers how many German U-Boats were sunk by aircraft and the enormous losses suffered by the Royal Navy because of the

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[199] DRAX 6/13, The Art of War - 20th Century Version, March 1943.

[200] Ibid., p.7.

[201] Ibid., p.12.

lack of proper air support. Drax concluded that the strategy of the air offensive rested on impossible grounds due to its ignoring of the fundamental precept of modern strategy. "Distant strategic bombing is, to the army about to attack, rather reminiscent of Alice in Wonderland, who when told that she would get 'jam to-morrow' could only be certain of only one thing, which was that she would not get jam to-day."[202]

In essence, the bomber worked like the desert raider or naval bombardment since it would only marginally effect the strategic situation. He quoted statistics which showed that the effects of bombing were rather problematic. Valletta, the capital of Malta had been bombed 2,000 times and at one point had received 6,000 tons of ordnance in a single month yet it remained intact. Coventry was basically levelled but production in the city had only declined by 12% and that had been made up quickly.[203] This conclusion would seem to be supported by the actual results of the bomber offensive where it was not until the *Luftwaffe* was nearly destroyed that it became really effective. By that time, the war was very nearly won. British production was even more vulnerable than the German given the very close concentration of British industry centred round London and the Midlands. Like the 'cross-ravaging' mentioned by P.H. Colomb, the air policy was carried out without reference to the proper rules of strategy.

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[202] Ibid., p.12.

[203] Ibid., p.23.

Colomb was loath to study naval warfare much before the 17th century since he derided it as "cross-ravaging" where there was no concept of the command of the sea nor was there any strategic object involved such operations.[204]

Drax's chief objection to the whole direction of RAF strategy was the assumption that air power somehow operated on a different level than forces that were bounded to the surface of the earth. Prognostications of air power filled the imagination and challenged the rule of the two older service, but that really tore it for Drax was the assumption that air power could somehow act completely independently from the traditional maxims of strategy and tactics. "But there are no two opinions on the fundamental fact that aviation has altered the traditional textbook conceptions of strategy and tactics."[205] However, to be fair to the RAF, officers such as Air Chief Marshal Tedder were thinking about air forces integrated with grand strategy.[206] Some officers within the Royal Navy were thinking, as Professor Marder put it, "it's all so different now" so many of the lessons of the Great War could be safely ignored.[207] On the other hand, Drax was well

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[204] Colomb, Naval Warfare v.i, p.21. See also, Richmond, Sea Power in the Modern World, p.135.

[205] Major Alexander P. de Seversky USAAF, Victory Through Air Power (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1942), p.3.

[206] Tedder, Air Power in War.

[207] Marder, From the Dardanelles to Oran, p.59. Marder refers to Vice-Admiral Tom Phillips as the "high priest" of this cult.

aware of the possibilities of air power. Indeed in 1913, he wrote a paper on the functions of the battle cruiser that endorsed the need for the command of the air in the North Sea.[208]

Indeed, it seemed that the air strategists had not fully grasped the realities of technology and its impact on war. It was assumed at the outset of the war that bombers would, as Stanley Baldwin said in 1935 "always get through." This is easily borne out by the initial actions of bomber forces in 1939 and the Blitzkrieg campaigns of 1939-1940. Thereafter, in the Battle of Britain, air defences had blunted the edge of the bomber's offensive power and it should have been realised that the bomber did not produce a magical result without some kind of strategy that ensured relative command of the air which did indeed happen over German skies in 1944.

Like the naval materialists before them, many air power enthusiasts also forgot that the airplane could be defeated and the problems of material change bringing forth material change again raised its ugly head.[209] As Admiral Dickens indicated, the increased air defences of the American and British fleets had made it increasingly difficult for air

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[208] #499 "The Role of the B ttle-Cruiser," by Commander Reginald Plunkett, 1913, pp.93· ·1 in John B. Hattendorf et al., eds., British Naval Documents 1204-1960,

[209] Schurman, Education of a Navy, p.5.

attacks to succeed.[210] The air threat in the Pacific had been severely limited because of the massive growth in the number and effectiveness of anti-aircraft artillery and the overwhelming number of fighters available to fleet commanders.[211]

In retrospect, the history of the bomber offensive is a story of the proverbial see-saw where each side developed the technology to out-wit the other. But it was not until 1944 when the advent of long-range fighters destroyed the German Air Force's ability to interdict the bombers was the campaign decisive.[212] That see-saw proved to be extremely expensive in treasure, equipment and, most of all the lives of well-trained personnel. "...There is no... technology so perfect that it cannot, in principle at any rate, be countered with the aid of appropriate organization, training and doctrine."[213] However, some important successes were registered, but the refusal to reinforce the Navy in the Battle of the Atlantic, at least in hindsight, seems unjustifiable. Even a few bombers allocated to Coastal Command would have made the task

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[210] Admiral Sir Gerald Dickens, Bombing and Strategy - The Fallacy of Total War (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1946), p.16.

[211] Hughes, Fleet Tactics, p.103. For a specific example see page 132 where Hughes discusses the strength of American cruisers and destroyers to fend off air attacks by gun-fire alone.

[212] Webster and Frankland, The Strategic Air Offensive v.iii, p.288.

[213] Martin van Creveld, Technology and War - From 2000 BC to the Present (New York: Free Press, 1989), p.230.

much easier.

Indeed, the concept of strategic bombing as it developed during the war, paid little heed to the logical direction of the prosecution of war. It was argued that the bomber would so demoralise the enemy population and destroy vital infrastructure, that the enemy would be incapable of continuing the conflict. But in reality that was a division of the objectives of war. The Bomber Offensive confused the means and the ends of war.[214] In war, it is essential that one compels an enemy to your will as Clausewitz wrote, but that was done by attacking his armed forces whenever possible. Bomber Command was "misled into attacking red herrings" rather than supporting the other services on the surface.[215]

In addition, the Bomber Offensive was a violation of the traditional British method of waging war. The armed forces of the nation should have been devoted to securing its proper defensive strength in order to build up forces to return to the offensive. Indeed, initial British strategy was built on that premise that Britain needed time to build up its small forces in order to be ready to fight a major war. But the fall of France skewed that strategic direction. As a result, strength was frittered away for political and morale motives rather than based on good strategy. Indeed, Admiral Richmond portrayed the whole debate in terms of the traditional British

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[214] Dickens, Bombing and Strategy, p.1.

[215] DRAX 6/11, The Art of War, p.17.

debate between the 'Continental' and 'Maritime strategies. The "new Continental school", however, attempted to use the medium of air power to fulfill that role.[216]

However, politically, offensive striking at the German homeland had a great deal of appeal to public opinion and, the Prime Minister in particular. It has been well-established that Churchill was consumed by the need for the offensive to compel the enemy to end the war: "...the search for a naval offensive must be incessant."[217] Frankly speaking, there was precious little else for Britain to strike back with, besides her bomber forces. The British army had been forced to withdraw from the Continent, narrowly avoiding destruction and the Navy was stretched to the limit trying to maintain British sea lines of communications and did not have the reserve for offensive actions. These inconsistencies and the ignoring of the historically-based principles of war were the fundamental points of attack on Bomber Command by the writers of the maritime school such as Drax, Dickens and Richmond.

The Navy, in Churchill's eyes had shot its bolt. The reluctance to assume offensive measures such as Operation "Catherine" amongst others, turned the Prime Minister off. His energy was always trained on the offensive and the need

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[216] Richmond, Statesmen and Sea Power, p.315.

[217] Martin Gilbert, Winston Churchill v.vi (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), p.38.

to take the war directly to Germany. After the fall of France in 1940 and the obvious reluctance of the Navy to adopt any stance beyond the strategic defensive, made bombing the ideal choice. With the idea of bombing, Britain could use its insular position to build up its air strength and to exercise the bombing offensive as an extension of the Navy's blockade. As Sir Arthur Harris indicated, the Germans could evade the blockade by securing supplies through Russia at least until the summer of 1941.[218] This view was also confirmed by the official historian, J.R.M. Butler.[219] The blockade had sprung some very serious leaks and the destruction of German war potential seemed the best option at the time.

The reaction to Drax's paper by his peers was largely positive. Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond concluded:

> I think it a piece of sound reasoning. Naturally it revolves around the one great thing - the armed forces of the enemy must always be the first objective: and a corollary with that concentration on the principle object. You are, I believe entirely right in your strictures on RAF strategy.[220]

Admiral James Somerville, who had experienced the lack of proper air cover himself also reacted positively to this paper.

> The pamphlet throughout is undoubtedly most restrained and consequently in very sharp distinction to pamphlets and articles written about the air force which claim for

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[218] Harris, Bomber Offensive, p.45.

[219] Butler, Grand Strategy, v.iii, pt.ii, pp.511-13.

[220] DRAX 6/13, The Art of War, Appendix I- Comments by Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond dated 25 April 1943.

the latter a free and unfettered role in the War.[221] Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield summed up "My views correspond entirely."[222] Also Richmond's view of air bombing was shown in a 1939 letter to Drax, "our offensive (in the major category) is confined to the damnable business of air bombing..."[223] With the lack of any effective means to take the strategic offensive, the bomber offered some answers.

Moreover, note the tone that Drax took in his papers. While he sought to instruct and to attack the tenets of strategic bombing, he took specific precautions to ensure his ideas came across. He carefully and deliberately avoided insulting anyone; because his object was to enhance the fighting power of the British armed services instead of being concerned about his personal ambitions to dash the cane of logic about the ears of the Air Ministry. To those who would inevitably take exception to his views, he wrote, "... I regret that you are offended, but my motives at least are above reproach. I am striving ... to help the Allied Cause to victory...."[224]

Drax and Dickens gave voice to the so-called new "maritime School" of strategy that sought the security of

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[221] Ibid., Comments by Admiral Sir James Somerville dated 21 June 1943.

[222] Ibid., Comments by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield dated 28 April 1943.

[223] DRAX 2/8, Richmond to Drax, 4 January 1939.

[224] DRAX 6/11, The Art of War, p.6.

British sea lanes that would preserve her in the travail of total war with Germany.[225] They used their minds to intellectually buttress the Navy's arguments for very strong air support. Others such as Admiral Max Horton needed allies in the Admiralty. "Bombing attacks on Germany, no matter how effective they may be, can do little to counter the existing threat to our sea power."[226]

In the end, the strategy of the air offensive was attacked on two separate levels. First, it was a violation of the traditional principles of strategy and traditional British defence policy. Second, the bomber's impact when pursuing the strategic air offensive was quite limited until it had secured command of the air and until it could act in co-ordination with the other services. That was borne out by the results of the bombing campaign. Drax, Dickens and Richmond were all well aware, and as Bomber Command became aware, of the limitations of air power. The results were not worth the resources expended. "The best criterion of value for money and effort expended is that we should be continually doing more damage to him than he is to us."[227]

Nor were Drax, Richmond and Dickens reluctant to question the morality of strategic bombing, especially the use of area

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[225] Richmond, Statesmen and Sea Power, pp.314-317.

[226] ADM 205/15, "Memorandum by Admiral Sir Max Horton, RAF and Sea Power," 26 February 1942.

[227] DRAX 2/8, "Notes on War Plans," 21 October 1938.

attacks. The trend of warfare since the Thirty Years' War had been to mitigate the hardships of war against civilians. Various organisations had been set up in order to alleviate this suffering. As Dickens wrote: "All very illogical no doubt to the realist, considering that poisoned water are no worse in their effect on humans than high explosives..."[228] In the same way, Drax questioned the morality of bombing as well. It is not that he objected to bombing. Indeed, in his comments in the 1938 War Plans he fully endorsed the need to get at the enemy's centres of production. However, in the same document he criticised terror bombing to kill primarily women and children which he regarded a descent into barbarism.[229]

The fight against the bombing offensive was related to Corbett's critique of the so-called "Victory School" of naval thought. In the same way the air strategists sought to take the offensive at all costs, so did the "Victory School." But without a clearly defined objective both were, in Drax's eyes, bankrupt. Pre-mature offensives that were taken without regard to other considerations bordered on folly and amounted to frittering away forces that could be used at the decisive point and the decisive time. The principles of war should be a part of <u>all</u> military calculations.

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[228] Dickens, <u>Bombing and Strategy,</u> p.75.

[229] DRAX 2/8, "Notes on War Plans," 21 October 1938.

iv) Drax And Peace

Drax's mind also examined higher strategic policy. He wrote articles and pamphlets urging a policy of a clear recognition of the threat to British interests. He railed against the politicians failing to tell the British people the vital threat and struggle they faced. He was also profoundly suspicious of German policy and motives. Although Drax never commanded major fleets or has attracted much historical attention, his career was one where naval and military policy was rationally and comprehensively criticised, representing a wide range of opinion within the ranks of the Navy.

Like most naval and military officers, Drax had no love for war and indeed thought that every means must be used to prevent its outbreak. War was fought for a just cause and was not fought flippantly since it was a costly thing in both lives and treasure. War policy, in his view must keep in mind that peace had to be won as well as the war. In the same way that he wrote "The Principles of War" in 1921, he brought forward "The Principle of Peace" in 1959.[230]

However, even before the Second World War, Drax

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[230] Drax, "The Principles of Peace," RUSIJ CIX no. 684 (1959), pp.155-59.

violently resisted the suggestion of the inevitability of war. Even Drax's elder brother, Lord Dunsany did not escape his pen when Dunsany wrote an article in the Spectator in 1933 entitled "Why War Must Survive." [231] Dunsany argued that war is a natural condition whilst continued peace is a "delusion" Dunsany went on to argue that there are "3 exits to this world: war, famine and plague" and without war this planet would become too overcrowded. Stopping war is like stopping up a dam. When the deluge hits it strikes with all the more force.[232]

Drax utterly rejected such pronouncements and argued that dams can stop the rush of war for several generations and the waters could be diverted slowly off. He also rejected the notion that food would be a direct cause of modern war.

> It would seem that homo sapiens has firmly fixed in his mind the maxim 'let us fight to-day for tomorrow there may not be enough to eat.' A trifle illogical, because the world's surplus food supply varies from year to year... and the world's food supply is immensely in excess of our present needs - provided of course that we do not divert millions of men from agriculture to assassination...[233]

However, Drax was painfully aware of the practical problems of securing peace. In his article "War Without

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[231] Edward Moreton Drax Plunkett, 18th Baron Dunsany, (1878-1957) Who Was Who, 1951-1960 (London: A.C Black, 1961), p.330.

[232] DRAX 2/14, letter by Lord Dunsany, "Why War Must Survive," The Spectator, 10 February 1933.

[233] DRAX 2/14, "Why War Must NOT Survive," The Spectator, February 1933.

Bloodshed" recognised the need for judicious application of the forms of pressure prescribed by the League of Nations and the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1927. To use such pressure would be very practical for use on smaller powers who break the rules of the game but what happens when a major power is deemed to be the aggressor?

The problem for Britain was that her overseas markets were essential to her survival as an independent power. When the industrial revolution struck Britain, her population grew so quickly that food had to be imported to prevent starvation. Britain, therefore, must import 500 millions of pounds worth of food annually and in order to do so must export her manufactured goods overseas to gain purchasing power abroad to buy food. Therefore, if Britain were to go along with League sanctions she would lose precious markets to less dutiful nations. In short "War is a short-cut to national suicide, and economic war is little better... and if our efforts fail we are faced with 'limitless disaster'."[234]

In the light of what actually happened to the British economy both during and after the war, Drax was not far off. Lend Lease saved Britain from bankruptcy. The limited gold reserves that Britain possessed were very nearly used up by the second year of the war. When this was combined with the loss of overseas markets (in many cases permanent) and the losses in shipping, it is surprising that she stayed in the

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[234] DRAX 2/12, "War Without Bloodshed," 11 January 1931.

fight as long as she did. In 1945, Britain was exhausted and bankrupt. Without the help of the United States, Britain would have been forced to sue for peace with at least one or two of its enemies.

V. Conclusion

> "I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war."
> - Jeremiah IV: 19 [1]

In the historical literature on the development of British naval strategy most of the attention, quite naturally, has focused on the contributions of very prolific writers. Certainly, H.W. Richmond has been justly given a great deal of attention by such eminent historians as Arthur Marder, Donald Schurman and especially Barry Hunt. He was a unique figure and a powerful voice concerning the direction of British policy. By contrast, officers who worked behind the scenes and who sought to influence policy have not as yet figured prominently in the literature. Drax was one of these. He was as committed as Richmond to reform, but he preferred to work with more patience and more slowly, over longer periods. It is time that historical attention be widened to other important figures beyond Richmond and K.G.B. Dewar.

Drax was by no means an uncritical supporter of Richmond. The former's independence was asserted early in their relationship and was of great importance. Equally important, was the method in which that independence was asserted. It was done by beating Richmond on his own ground, the barb of

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[1] Drax, "The Psychology of War," NR II (1914), p.104.

the pen. But that barb for Drax was directed not to deliberately insult a brother officer, even though Richmond's criticism most likely deeply hurt him. Drax instead, whilst making it clear that he would not back down from Richmond, also made it clear of his higher purposes:

> May I suggest that, in a discussion between two naval officers both trying to work for the welfare of the Service, however young or ignorant the writer may be thought, there are ways in which the zeal of the critic can be made greatly more productive. With a little more kindly toleration, a little more courtesy, and a little more helpful constructive effort, the ends sought, if they be sound and useful, could be attained with greater ease and more benefit to the Service. Had this been his policy, I for one should have welcomed the discussion and been more anxious to defer to my critic for historical guidance.[2]

Herein lies the fundamentally different approach taken by Drax. He never saw much point in personally attacking those who disagreed with him. He preferred working behind the scenes and restraining his personal ambition since his goal was always the improvement of the Navy. This is not to say Richmond's goals were any less noble, but the way in which he carried them out earned him few friends and supporters.

Drax's career represents, in some respects, a triumph of not only the intellectual naval officer, but also of the triumph of the relevancy of history to strategy. The historically-based naval "principles of war" brought forth by Colomb, Mahan and Corbett found their application in officers

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[2] Drax, "Home Defence - A Reply by R.X.," NR II (1914), pp.262-3.

of Drax's generation and of Drax himself. History offered concrete lessons for the modern warrior, not just a source of inspiration and a story of battles.[3] Indeed, the articles written by Drax all fall back on this bastion. His critique of British policy, the Navy's tactics and his attack on the logical underpinnings of the bomber offensive all rest on the "principles of war" which, in his view, remained unchanged over time and were gleaned from historical examination.

Furthermore, Drax struggled with the dichotomy between individualism and the collective identity of the Royal Navy's officers. This tension posed a pressing problem for intellectuals which was even more intense in the case of a military organisation where *esprit de corps*, trust and honour are watch-words. His career saw many of the results of daggers drawn among brother officers based on personal jealousies and professional disagreements. At the same time, rigid centralisation of authority led to even greater difficulties since individual imagination and skill played so much in the victories of the past. Drax, in the author's view, never satisfactorily resolved this tension but did attempt to find a balance. While he constantly argued that individual officers must be trained to think for themselves and to exercise initiative, that must be restrained by a common doctrine as a starting point. However, the difficulty

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[3] See Professor Schurman's opening chapter in Education of A Navy, pp.1-15.

of doctrine's change over time remained the chief problem. What does an officer do who feels that the common doctrine is based on ill-founded assumptions? How far is the officer justified in combating these assumptions? Certainly Drax himself felt that the propagation of new ideas was vital and he himself took part in the "Young Turks'" revolt against the Admiralty. On the other hand, unlike Richmond and Dewar, Drax was profoundly aware of the need for tact and discretion. In his view, breaches of discipline and political intrigue bore heavy costs for not only the individual officer involved but the Navy as a whole, and those costs must be carefully weighed so that harmful consequences in both the long and short term could be effectively managed.

Intellectual flexibility and the growing allowance for individualism was fostered by the "Young Turks'" rebellion. Officers were given an outlet for intelligent discussion of the "higher" side of their profession and many were forced to re-think the Navy's role and the individual's place within that Navy. Naval officers on a broad scale were resisting the great trend of increasing conformity and followed different paths than the well-worn ones of the nineteenth century. No longer would it automatically be assumed that the easy path would be taken, as Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge wrote early in the century, "As in the physical domain the tendency is to follow the line of least resistance, so in the moral and

intellectual it is to follow the line of least exertion."[4]

The arrival of this new officer heralded the modernisation of the Royal Navy. War had become so complex and so difficult to manage that one commander could not possibly maintain strategic direction and administrative and material concerns. Failure to recognise the limitations of the individual commander resulted in an fundamental inability to see beyond the intense material change in navies at the turn of the century. Naval strategy and tactics rested and still does rest on basic principles that are disregarded at one's own peril. The neglect of the study of war and the neglect of history as a teacher could result in very serious consequences. These consequences could be particularly dark considering the developing concept of total war where national survival was at stake, not just the pride of an individual monarch. Since so much was risked, and invested in preparing for war, proper strategic planning was absolutely vital.

In the same way, however, the application of those strategic principles changed over time, and in this century it has been particularly quick. Older officers needed the infusion of fresh ideas of younger men as in no other time in history. Those new ideas and applications was a key development in permitting much more flexibility in naval policy which was necessary as the Navy moved later into the twentieth century. Drax's career was an important aspect in

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[4] Bridge, The Art of Naval Warfare, p.237.

the Navy's struggle with itself and with the modern world.

"FESTINA LENTE"[5]

[5] Debrett's Peerage, p.407. "Festina Lente" is the Plunkett family motto which means, "Quickly, but not Impetuously."

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*These articles are taken from the 1988 75th anniversary volume of The Naval Review and have been used with the kind permission of the current editor, Rear Admiral J.R. Hill, RN. Rear-Admiral J.R. Hill, RN to author, 15 March 1994.

Appendix I

Drax's Career [6]

15 July 1896	Midshipman
15 January 1900	Sub-Lieutenant
15 January 1901	Lieutenant
30 June 1912	Commander
1912-13	Naval War College
1913-1916	Flag Commander to Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty
30 June 1916	Captain
1916-1918	Commanding HMS Blanche, 2nd Cruiser Squadron, 5th Battle Squadron
5 June 1917	Awarded Russian Order of St. Stanilas 2nd Class
17 May 1918	Awarded the Distinguished Service Order
1919-1921	President of the Naval Staff College, Greenwich
1923-1924	President of the Allied Control Commission (Berlin)
1925-1927	Commanding HMS Marlborough, 3rd Battle Squadron
2 August 1927	Naval ADC to the King
2 January 1928	Awarded Companion of the Order of the Bath
16 January 1928	Rear-Admiral
1929-1930	Rear-Admiral 1st Battle Squadron, Mediterranean Fleet
1930-1932	Director of Manning, Admiralty.
24 September 1932	Vice-Admiral
1932-1934	Commander-in-Chief North America and West Indies Station
1 January 1934	Awarded Knight Commander of the Order of the Bath
2 January 1936	Admiral
1936-39	Commander-in-Chief, Plymouth Station
1939-1941	First and Principal Naval ADC to the King
1939-1941	Commander-in-Chief the Nore Station
30 September 1941	Placed on retirement list by own request.
1941-1943	Home Guard
1943-1945	Commodore of Convoys
1945	Retirement
1967	Died on 16 October 1967 at the age of 87.

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[6] ADM 196/45, Service Records, pp.213-14.

Appendix II

First Sea Lords

Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Fisher	1904-1910
Admiral Sir Arthur Wilson	1910-1911
Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman	1911-1913
Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg	1913-1914
Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Fisher	1914-1915
Admiral Sir Henry Jackson	1915-1916
Admiral Sir John Jellicoe	1916-1917
Acting-Admiral Sir Wester Wemyss	1917-1919
Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty	1919-1927
Admiral of the Fleet Sir Charles Madden	1927-1930
Admiral Sir Frederick Field	1930-1932
Admiral of the Fleet Sir Ernle Chatfield	1932-1938
Admiral Sir Roger Backhouse	1938-1939
Admiral Sir Dudley Pound	1939-1943
Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham	1943-1946

Appendix III

First Lords of the Admiralty, 1904-1946

The Earl of Selborne	1900-1905
The Earl of Cawdor	1905
Lord Tweedmouth	1905-1908
Reginald McKenna	1908-1911
Winston Churchill	1911-1915
Arthur Balfour	1915-1916
Sir Edward Carson	1916-1917
Sir Eric Geddes	1917-
Walter Long	1919-1921
Arthur Hamilton, Baron Lee	1921-1922
Leo Amery	1922-1924
Viscount Chelmsford	1924
William Bridgeman	1924-1929
A.V. Alexander	1929-1931
Sir Joseph A. Chamberlain	1931
Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell	1931-1936
Sir Samuel Hoare	1936-1937
Alfred Duff Cooper	1937-1938
Earl Stanhope	1938-1939
Winston Churchill	1939-1940
A.V. Alexander	1940-1945