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for and the New York
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ing bank averages for January show
the Midland Bank's ratio of cash to
its rose to 14.06 per cent. (p. 20 and 21)
of the gold intended for shipment in the
Queen Mary last Saturday was finally with-
held, and there has been a revision of other
plans for shipment in the near future. (p. 20)

THE DEFENCE OF THE WEST

Our Military Correspondent's study of the share which Britain might have to take on the soil of France itself in common self-defence appears at a moment when the PRIME MINISTER'S declaration in the House of Commons on Monday has directed attention afresh to our obligations and to the means of discharging them. The reception which the British Press has given to Mr. CHAMBERLAIN'S statement can leave no foreign observer in doubt that this country's response to any aggressive challenge to the vital interests of France would be immediate, wholehearted, and unsparing. Such a challenge would instantly tap the same determination which marked the British effort between 1793 and 1815, between 1914 and 1918. That can be taken for granted. The effort would be as large and as long sustained as the needs might require. The only question on which there can be any shades of opinion is where and how British forces might be deployed with the most advantage to a common cause.

Our Military Correspondent, taking the case in which France might be the object of aggression by land, attempts some measure of the degree in which the restoration of German power has affected the strategic balance. The military situation, as 1918 left it, could not endure and has not endured. The German revival, long before it began in earnest, was accepted in this country not only as inevitable but also, if rightly directed, as a necessary contribution to Continental stability and settlement. Unfortunately Europe has suffered from the collective failure to allow of an orderly redistribution of armed power by international consent under a new agreement for the limitation of armaments. The reoccupation of the Rhineland, the *Anschluss*, and the cession of the Sudetenland have followed in swift succession. It is the truth, though not the whole truth, that these events, in the form in which they have come about, have inflicted military "losses" upon France. Naturally and necessarily a purely military calculation of the strategic balance is incomplete. It cannot include the political factors which are essential to a final equation.

Thus the diplomatic position of France has been simultaneously strengthened by the voluntary "sacrifice" of an active policy of encirclement which, while it remained, was a provocation to Germans irrespective of party and a stumbling-block to large sections of British and American opinion, to name those only. It was the strength not so much of German arms but of the German case which enabled the Reich to achieve three extensions of its sovereignty without war. On the other hand France by abstaining, when the time came, from the employment of "strategic assets" in preventive war transferred other assets, not military but of high strategic importance, from the German to the French side of the account. Henceforth the most determined propaganda cannot hope to re-create in German eyes the France of "Mein Kampf," the traditional enemy, the jealous, apprehensive, and inveterate opponent of legitimate German aims. The slate is clean. The will to a reasonable peace has been demonstrated beyond qualification. Aggression, if ever contemplated, against France or Britain from whatever quarter would be aggression pure and simple without pretext or extenuation. Franco-British relations rest accordingly upon bed-rock, and an assurance given by a British statesman to France is an assurance given by every inhabitant of the realm. The converse can be asserted with equal confidence.

This is the standpoint from which, not in the expectation of certain war but in the exercise of

nothing undemocratic in compulsion—far from it. Democratic compulsion, as applied to military service in France, as applied in Britain and the United States in time of war, as applied in time of peace to taxation or education, is the expression rather than the extinction of the voluntary spirit. It is not and cannot be imposed from above—that is the essential. If and when the great mass of the British people, without respect of party, is convinced that the State must, in the interest of all its citizens, convert a moral obligation into a legal obligation, it will be a perfectly democratic conclusion. The power to confer that right upon the State is a power in reserve.

Time and events and the speed and efficiency with which voluntary organization can meet the immediate needs of national security will settle whether and when a statutory control of manpower ought to be established. At the moment it would advance matters hardly at all. For nearly two years of the last War the recruits provided by the voluntary system were not only of the highest quality, as always, but also sufficient in quantity to allow of a rapid expansion of the fighting forces. There is no reason to believe that the present call to national service will be any less effective in manning the defence machinery, elaborated though it now is by the multifarious claims of home defence. Compulsion could hardly accelerate the progress of preparedness immediately. On the contrary it might clog the machinery. It might also confuse the national will and delay its execution by precipitating futile and unnecessary controversy. The first essential is that the whole groundwork shall be ready for a swift and orderly deployment of the national resources, whatever the means that may be chosen to complete it.

Much has been done. Systematic provision has been made to prevent the misuse of manpower which was the sole drawback of the last great voluntary effort. But is everything else being done that can be done here and now? Is there enough imagination, drive, and leadership in the present official call to volunteers? Has the younger generation been provided with the incentive and opportunities for training which are its due? Are they to be granted the means of disciplined social service which exist in the Civilian Conservation Corps in America and existed in the voluntary *Arbeitsdienst* under the German Republic? Are the cadres of the Territorial Army ready at need for the immediate duplication of its strength, or more? These questions are far from exhaustive, but they supply the kind of test by which the progress of the national awakening will be judged. Manpower may call for further examination in the future, but leadership and organization are the pressing needs of to-day.

AN ARMY ACROSS CHANNEL?

STRENGTH AND ITS CONSERVATION

II.—THE WIDER VIEW

From Our Military Correspondent

All the limiting conditions outlined in the first article should be borne in mind when we come to the question of a fresh abandonment of our historic war policy and the preparation of an army for large-scale intervention on the Continent. Our present Prime Minister has shown that he knows the merits of that limited liability policy and the importance of conserving our strength wherever possible; the roles of the different services as redefined last winter clearly indicated a return to it. They implied that at that time the strategic conditions of a possible war were not considered likely to require, in the early stages at any rate, the dispatch of any considerable land reinforcement to France.

This judgment was reasonable then, and might well have been justified if war had resulted from the situation which came to a head in September. The balance of forces on the Continent was such as to offer little prospect of military victory to either side. Much less, indeed, than in 1914. The French in the west should have been capable of containing a large enough part of the German army to nullify the attempt to overrun Czechoslovakia, while the forces of the latter, with even moderate assistance from Russia, promised an effective distraction to any German attempt to concentrate against France. The one factor which might have undermined her power of resistance, the severing of her communications with Africa, was inoperative so long as the opposing Powers had not consolidated their grip on Spain. On a broad and long view of the situation it was a reasonable conclusion that the opponents of aggression still held a strategically favourable hand on the whole, even though it was marred by one inexcusably weak card: our state of preparedness to meet air attack. Though in consequence we might have suffered needless damage, the power of economic pressure against an opponent much less capable of sustaining a prolonged struggle than in 1914 should have assured the ultimate result.

THE MILITARY BALANCE

But we have now to face the fact that the German reoccupation of the Rhineland, the *Anschluss*, and the satisfaction of German, Hungarian, and Polish territorial claims upon Czechoslovakia have brought far-reaching changes in the strategic balance. While these events have removed any justifiable excuse for war, they have inevitably had a one-sided effect upon security in the military sense. The Germans gained not only by the release of forces but by relief from the anxiety caused by Czechoslovakia's geographical position as an operational air base uncomfortably close to vital points. The drawbacks of fighting a two-front war were deeply impressed on them by their experience in 1914-1918, and the risk of a repetition was no small restraining factor. The French, on the other hand, lost what was a powerful distraction to the German power to concentrate against them. In case of war, the 40 divisions which the Czechs might have mobilized from their resources would, by subtracting a large part of the German strength, have been an indirect addition to that of the French. In these circumstances there was no real need for the prospect of a fairly even balance, the French see themselves facing heavily adverse odds. This has made them more anxious than ever for a promise of direct support on land from us, and on a scale much larger than was before contemplated.

We have to consider how far it is necessary and how far it is practicable. In the first place it should be clear that, even if we could throw the whole weight of this country's manpower into France and equip it in disregard of our air and sea needs, the combined armies would not have anything approaching the superiority over a concentrated German army required to give them a reasonable expectation of "victory" by successful attack. The question of successful defence is apt to turn on the ratio of force to space. To express a complex calculation briefly: where the ratio is high enough to provide a continuous defensive front, with a properly woven network of fire and mobile reserves behind, the sum of evidence from modern experience shows that the attacking side requires at least a three to one superiority to achieve more than a local and momentary effect. Only where the ratio is low enough on the defending side to give the attacker scope for manoeuvre can any profitable result be expected from a lower margin of superiority. Now, taking the mobilizable strength of the French Army and the measure of their northern frontier, it would