Background guide: <http://www.ssuns.org/static/BG/britainww2.pdf>

There has been no war as devastating as WWII. Britain, faced the largest existential threat in its history, spent 6 years locked in bloody combat with a foe known for both its cruelty and its strength. The Third Reich’s slow westward march brought new peril every day, with “Blitzkrieg” tactics threatening civilian lives in a way unlike any war before. A combination of the resource-intensity of the war and the scope of the fighting lead to casualties higher than anyone would deem acceptable- threatening not only one life at a time, but whole swathes, as supply chains faced the threat of collapse, and infrastructure crumbled.

As the Minister of Foods, Frederick Marquis was committed to preventing total collapse on the domestic end of things. While his colleagues concerned themselves with Germany’s latest encroachment into French territory, Atlantic shipping routes and German attacks on British stockpiles were at the forefront of his mind (Pitt; Noakes).

The soldiers, however, were also of great concern to Marquis. Absolutely critical to any military campaign is the protection, expansion, and quality of the supply chains acting as their lifeblood. Keeping in mind that feeding an army as large and expanded as Britain’s was no easy task, German Blitzkrieg tactics played a particularly large role in creating this headache for him, as their targeting of supply routes made the delivery of rations a nightmare to achieve on a consist basis, especially during times of heavy combat, when said rations were particularly necessary (Holocaust Encyclopedia; Chorlton).

With civilian food supplies falling short, Marquis was tasked with developing and carrying out a rationing system. When a resource as fundamental as food runs short- public morale can worsen very quickly, and support for a war or wartime leaders can crumble. Because of this, it could be said that he had one of the most critical propaganda related roles in Britain at the time; it was he who was tasked with keeping the people in their nationalistic fervor, while staving off starvation at the same time (Fussell; Longmate).To do this, he introduced a multi-tier food stockpile plan, keeping the reserves well away from danger in case of a German offensive, while creating several feeding stations in the proximity of larger (and thus, riskier) cities in order fight hunger (“Keesing’s Contemporary Archives Volume III-IV” 4269; Time-Life Books). In addition, he introduced a points-based rationing system, where people could choose which foodstuffs they wished to consume, while under constraint of an egalitarian policy regarding resource allotment (Lacey; Zweiniger-Bargielowska). This demonstrates a fundamental understanding of the uses and applications of economics, as by cornering a market and then proceeding to create a “false” economy within that market, he managed to bypass traditional economic strife associated with such panicked and pressured markets.

His willingness to apply his skills and knowledge obtained from his days as a businessman set him apart from many others in the war cabinet. Instead of acting like a politician or a general, he fights using every tool available to him, hoping for a quick end to the war paired with stability for the people. To return prosperity to the people of Britain was his endgame, which meant essentially, doing whatever it took to maintain at least the semblance of normalcy and stability in the interim.

Of course, such a return to peace could only come with a victory for the Allies. Frederick Marquis knew that such a thing could only happen if proper precautions were taken. Looking at the whole picture, rather than just the Eastern Front, he knew that adequate care and attention ought to be put onto the Atlantic, in order to insure that overseas shipping remained viable for Britain as a means of receiving adequate quantities of food for both civilian and military populations (Pitt). Not only would famine undermine the soldiers’ capacity to fight, but the spirits of the people as well, destroying any political capital the war cabinet might hold.

But in the year 1940, his concern was solely on one thing- preparing for a German offensive. As he concentrated on logistics more so than combat, he greatly preferred any and all policies that would prevent the Third Reich from nearing his country. This meant that for him, holding the line, and preventing France from falling would have been the core of his war agenda- anything to keep the front lines far, far away. By forcing German troops to go to great lengths if they wished to bomb British food stocks, while simultaneously keeping them away from having large-scale Atlantic access (and thus, protecting Atlantic shipping routes), his job would be made far easier- and the people, more secure.

**Works Cited || Bibliography:**

Chorlton, Windsor. *Weapons and Technology of World War II*. Chicago, IL: Heinemann Library, 2002. Print.

Fussell, Paul. *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989. Print.

Holocaust Encyclopedia. “BLITZKRIEG (LIGHTNING WAR).” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. N.p., 2016. Web.

“Keesing’s Contemporary Archives Volume III-IV.” Sept. 1940: 4260. Print.

Lacey, Richard W. *Hard to Swallow: A Brief History of Food*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994. Print.

Longmate, Norman. *How We Lived Then: A History of Everyday Life During the Second World War*. Auckland, New Zealand: Random House, 2010. Print.

Noakes, Jeremy. *The Civilian In War*. Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1992. Print.

Pitt, Barrie. *The Battle of The Atlantic*. Ed. Editors of Time-Life Books. Morristown, NJ: Time-Life Books Inc., 1977. Print.

Time-Life Books, Editors of. *The Luftwaffe*. Chicago, IL: Time-Life Books Inc., 1982. Print.

Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Ina. *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls & Consumption, 1939–1955*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000. Print.