(h) *Organisation to resist Invasion.*

231. Any account of the activities of the Command during this period would be incomplete without some mention of the preparations made to resist an invasion of the United Kingdom.

232. The roles to be played by the Home Commands in this eventuality had been laid down in broad terms by the Air Ministry in the Summer of 1940. It was then assumed that an invasion would fall into three distinct phases, beginning with a large-scale offensive against Fighter Command, continuing with an airborne invasion, and culminating in the seaborne invasion by which alone the Germans could hope to bring about our final defeat. It was thought that the third phase might in turn fall into three sub-phases, namely the preliminary concentration of shipping, the voyage across, and the attempt to establish a bridgehead. The Air Staff plan laid down the functions to be performed by the Command in each of these phases and sub-phases.

233. On consideration it seemed doubtful whether all these phases and sub-phases would be distinguishable in practice, and in devising arrangements to carry out the spirit of the plan, it was thought inadvisable to allot different roles to the squadrons during the voyage across on the one hand and the attempt to establish a bridgehead on the other. Instead, the various tasks which might devolve upon the fighter force in consequence of these activities by the enemy were grouped together in order of importance. Priority at this stage was given to the protection of our Naval forces against enemy bombers.

234. As experience grew, other modifications were made, and throughout the period it was necessary to keep constantly under review an elaborate complex of operational and administrative arrangements. It would be tedious to describe these arrangements in detail, more especially since, after the success of the Command during the preliminary phase of the German invasion plan in 1940, it never became necessary to repeat the experience or deal with subsequent phases.

235. One aspect of these preparations called, however, for something more concrete than planning. This was the defence of airfields against various forms of attack.

236. Before the War the necessity for providing for the local defence of our airfields against anything more than sabotage or low-level air attack had not been grasped. Consequently, when it was realised that airfields in this country might be seized by airborne troops or landing parties, measures had to be improvised.

237. The general defence of the country against enemy troops, whether airborne or seaborne, was, of course, the responsibility of the Army. On the other hand it had always been recognised as a principle in the Royal Air Force that Station Commanders were responsible for the local defence of their Stations. At the same time it was obviously essential that local defence schemes should fit into the general defence plan and be approved by the appropriate military Commander.

238. On the outbreak of War the resources of the Royal Air Force were insufficient to give adequate protection even against the dangers that were then foreseen, and help had to be obtained from the Army. Detachments of troops were supplied to undertake Station defence duties jointly with Royal Air Force personnel.

239. The consequence was a bewildering division of responsibility for defence against the various forms of attack that might be made; and it was quite clear that in many cases Station Commanders, who were answerable to their Group Commanders for the local defence of their Stations, would in practice be unable to exercise effective control over the miscellaneous units nominally at their disposal.

240. This problem was common to all Home Commands, but it was particularly urgent in Fighter Command, since fighter stations were a vital element in the defence system and some were peculiarly vulnerable by reason of their geographical position.

241. In the Spring of 1941 the experience of Crete focussed attention on this problem, which was already causing me grave anxiety, and various means of improving the situation were suggested. Few of these were of practical value, for although the necessity of securing the fighter bases was now generally recognised, the resources at my disposal were not adequate or suitably organised to effect the desired object.

242. It has already been pointed out that the local defences of Stations were manned partly by Army and partly by Royal Air Force personnel. This in itself was a source of weakness, particularly since there was a tendency for the Army detachments allotted to these duties to be changed at frequent intervals. The creation of a Royal Air Force defence force had begun in 1940, but towards the end of that year a halt was called to the scheme, pending a decision as to whether the War Office or the Air Ministry should ultimately bear the responsibility for defending the Stations.

243. To enable Station Commanders to dispose their resources to the best advantage, each was given the services of a Station Defence Officer. Many of the Officers appointed by the Air Ministry to fill these posts were past their first youth and lacked the resilience of mind and body required for service in the field.

244 There was a great need, in addition, for officers to be attached to the Staffs of the Fighter Groups for the purpose of inspecting Station defences and supervising training. After repeated requests, the services of one Army Officer at each Group were obtained; but the instructions given to these officers by the military authorities limited them, in effect, to the performance of liaison duties for which they were not needed.

245. Finally, there was in many cases a fundamental difference of view, which written orders seemed powerless to adjust, between Station Commanders and the Army Officers responsible for the general defence of their area, as to their respective duties and responsibilities in relation to their superiors and to each other.