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THE MILITARY AND GOVERNMENT

From Macmillan to Heseltine

Sir Ewen Broadbent

*Retired Second Permanent
Under-Secretary of State
UK Ministry of Defence*

Foreword by Harold Macmillan
first Earl of Stockton

M
MACMILLAN
PRESS

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SIR EWEN BROADBENT

Foreword

During fifty years of public service I had the privilege of being associated in a variety of ways with the Armed Forces of this country and their tasks in its defence. In the First World War I saw at first hand the awesome demands and sacrifices expected of them, to which they responded so magnificently. In the Second World War I was involved at the political level with their equipment in the Ministry of Supply, with their operations when I was Resident Minister in North West Africa and with their administrations during an all too short a time as Secretary of State for Air.

These were impressionable and powerful experiences. They brought home to me the vital importance of each link in the chain which leads from the major decisions of the Cabinet to the fighting capability of the sailor, soldier and airman. When I was appointed Defence Secretary in 1954 the role of that small Ministry, separated as it was from the highly competent but unduly independent and inward-looking Service Ministries and the half-baked Ministry of Supply, did not seem to me to be adequate for the efficient discharge of its high responsibilities. I saw the need for change towards greater and clearer central control. But the timing had to be right.

I am proud that as Prime Minister I was able in 1962 to launch that change towards a unified Ministry. When I was about to start the process I wrote to Her Majesty the Queen, 'Somehow we have got to meet two needs. We must unify to be efficient and avoid waste. And we must diversify to keep alive the spirit of the men.' This was a difficult challenge. I was greatly helped by the constructive and far-sighted proposals drawn up by two eminent retired senior officers – Lord Ismay and Sir Ian Jacob. The outcome, thanks also to the drive of Peter Thorneycroft and the loyal support throughout of Lord Mountbatten, was the formation of a unified Ministry of Defence in 1964, to which the Aviation Supply responsibilities were added a few years later. There was thus created, and I am glad to see there still is, one centre for the major decisions, but the organism has been able to accommodate the three Services with their own vital traditions and skills.

I am sure that this overall structure is right. There can always be refinements and improvements. Many have been introduced in recent years. No doubt there will be more. By itself organisation does not solve the continuing major problems that face every Government over the roles, size, equipment and the ultimate test of the use in operations of our Armed Forces. But bad organisation can do much harm and this is truer in defence than in many other spheres. It is essential that Her Majesty's Forces are well administered and receive clear instructions from the Government. Without sound, practical and decisive policies their difficult and dangerous tasks would become impossible.

It is therefore important that all those concerned with defence, from the serving officer in the field to the Members of Parliament and Ministers who determine policies, understand how the Ministry works. This book describes the evolution of the Whitehall organisation in historical terms. It is important to see it in this perspective. It is equally important to understand, as is explained here, the parts that Ministers, officers, civil servants and scientists play within the whole. Their wide range of human skills must be used to maximise advantage, and good organisation can do much to facilitate that.

Defence is vital to the nation. A book which helps us understand better how the responsible Ministry works is a valuable contribution.

October 1986

HAROLD MACMILLAN
(first Earl of Stockton)

Preface

Over the years at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies there have been many presentations, lectures and discussions concerned with relationships between the military and government and, in particular, the function and organisation of the Ministry of Defence. It has long been a matter of consuming interest to those who work in or with the Ministry, whether they be politicians, civil servants or military officers. The political direction of the military, both in war and in peace, can certainly generate excitement for historian and practitioner alike.

With the competition for resources between government departments and, not least, the effect of success or failure upon the ambitions of the ministers concerned, recent years have seen fresh endeavours to make the Ministry of Defence more effective in its control of the military budget and the frequent belief that this might be better achieved by reorganisation within the Ministry. Over time and in turn, emphasis has been given to 'the Centre' and then the single Services. In the 1980s, the thrust has been towards strengthening the central and higher organisation of defence.

Leading up to 1980, and in that year itself, increasing concern was expressed over the Ministry's structure. It was argued that timely and specialist military advice to ministers was not being provided when it was needed, and that the management of defence resources could and should be tightened and improved. One cold winter's morning in 1981 a closed debate was therefore held in the RUSI. Selected officers and civil servants took part, both serving and retired, of two-star rank and above and including Chiefs of Staff. The outcome was agreement over the need for change but that the process should be evolutionary, albeit towards an eventual and fundamental restructuring of the Ministry. That debate was a factor in the reorganisation introduced by the then Secretary of State, Sir John Nott, and Admiral of the Fleet, The Lord Lewin, then Chief of Defence Staff. It also prompted the recognition in the RUSI that no concise reference existed of the many and various changes which

had taken place since the formation of a unified Ministry of Defence. After the Falklands campaign in 1982 and then the further reorganisation of the Ministry by Michael Heseltine, the need became even more pressing. What was needed was someone who fully understood the system, who had worked in it, yet who could make an objective judgement of the political, economic and military issues involved. Sir Ewen Broadbent proved to be the ideal author. Lord Stockton too became attracted to the idea. This book is the result. It combines historical perspective and rigorous analysis with suggestions for prospective improvements.

DAVID BOLTON
Director
Royal United Services
Institute for Defence Studies

Glossary

ACDS	Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff
ADP	Automatic Data Processing
AEW	Airborne Early Warning
AUS	Assistant Under-Secretary
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
AWRE	Atomic Weapons Research Establishment
CAPL	Chief Adviser Personnel and Logistics
CDP	Chief of Defence Procurement
CDS	Chief of the Defence Staff
CENTO	Central Treaty Organisation (Turkey–Iran–Pakistan–UK–US)
CER	Controller Research and Development Establishments
CERN	Controller Research and Development Establishments, Research and Nuclear
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CPL	Chief of Personnel and Logistics
CSA	Chief Scientific Adviser
CSCSE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DCDS (P&L)	Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Personnel and Logistics)
DEPC	Defence Equipment Policy Committee
DOAE	Defence Operational Analysis Establishment
DRIRC	Defence Research and Intermural Resources Committee
DUS	Deputy Under-Secretary
FMPG	Financial Management and Planning Group
GLCM	Ground-launched Cruise Missile
GNP	Gross National Product
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
HOC	Headquarters Organisation Committee
MINIS	Management Information System for Ministers
MRCA	Multi-role Combat Aircraft

NDIC	National Defence Industrial Council
OKW	<i>Ober Kommando der Wehrmacht</i>
O&M	Organisation and Methods
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PAO	Principle Administrative Officers
PEMB	Procurement Executive Management Board
P&L	Personnel & Logistics
PPO	Principal Personnel Officers
PSA	Property Services Agency
P&T	Professional and Technology groups
PUS	Permanent Under-Secretary
R&D	Research and Development
REME	Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers
ROF	Royal Ordnance Factory
RRE	Royal Radar Establishment
RSRE	Royal Signals and Radar Establishment
SAGW	Surface-to-Air Guided Weapon
SBAC	Society of British Aerospace Companies
SEATO	South East Asia Treaty Organisation
VCDS	Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff