

# The History of the Twentieth Century

## Episode 284

### “The Bomber Will Always Get Through”

#### Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

“Up to the time of the last War civilians were exempt from the worst perils of war...In the next war you will find that any town within reach of an aerodrome can be bombed within the first five minutes of war to an extent inconceivable in the last War, and the question is, Whose morale will be shattered quickest by that preliminary bombing?”

“I think it is well also for the man in the street to realize that there is no power on earth that can protect him from being bombed, whatever people may tell him. The bomber will always get through...”

Stanley Baldwin, in a speech to the House of Commons, November 10, 1932.

Welcome to *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening Theme]

Episode 284. The Bomber Will Always Get Through.

Last time we looked in on the UK, we examined developments through the general election of October 1931. Briefly, the Labour government elected in 1929 became divided over austerity measures recommended by the May Commission Report and imposed by US bankers as a condition of lending badly needed funds to the British government. With his Labour Party badly split, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald offered his resignation to the King, who asked him to form what was called a National Government of all parties to lead the nation through the economic emergency caused by the Great Depression.

The Labour Party refused to participate in the National Government and expelled those of its members who did, including Prime Minister MacDonald, one of its founding members. The Conservative and Liberal Parties did join the new government, which accepted the austerity measures and took the pound off the gold standard.

This new National Government was envisioned as a temporary measure, but it soon became obvious there was no quick cure for the national emergency. The Conservatives pushed for a general election, with the National Government running jointly, in order to win a public mandate for its economic policies, including an increase in tariffs, a tricky issue in Britain. The Tories supported tariff increases, while the Liberals opposed them.

This election was complicated. The Labour Party opposed the National Government, but a splinter Labour group called National Labour supported it. The Liberal Party actually split three ways, between Liberals who supported the National Government but opposed tariff increases, Liberals who supported both the Government and a tariff increase, and Liberals who opposed both the government and the tariff. For those of you keeping score at home, this makes the third time I've had to tell you about a split in the Liberal Party. No wonder it's in trouble...

Well, it may be difficult to keep track of the various parties and factions, but the result was plain enough: a resounding victory for the National Government, with a breathtaking 554 seats. Within that bloc of votes, the vast majority, 470, were Conservative Party MPs, along with 67 Liberals, split almost evenly between the pro- and anti- tariff varieties, and a bare 13 National Labour, including MacDonald himself. The National Government would keep MacDonald on as prime minister, but the Conservative Party and its leader Stanley Baldwin were clearly in charge.

The Labour Party, now led by Arthur Henderson, whom you might recall as the first Labour Cabinet minister, back in the days of the Great War, won 52 seats, down dramatically from the 287 it had held in the previous parliament. Labour Party supporters would blame this catastrophe on MacDonald for splitting the Party and going into coalition with the Tories and would never forgive him.

The inevitable happened just a few months after that election, in February 1932, when the Government introduced a tariff bill that would empower an advisory committee to recommend a range of tariff increases. The Government's goal here was to create a system of Imperial preferences. Tariffs would be set to encourage the purchase of domestic products first, Imperial products second, and products from outside the British Empire last.

This sort of tariff scheme was exactly what the former Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain had been proposing back at the beginning of the century and had dubbed "the politics of the future." I told you about it in episode 38. Now, 29 years later, and 17 years after his death, Mr. Chamberlain's son Neville, Chancellor of the Exchequer, laid his father's tariff bill before the House at last, a House that also included another of his father's sons, Austen Chamberlain.

The bill passed overwhelmingly—not surprising, considering the Government's overwhelming advantage in the House. Labour opposed it, as did a portion of the Liberals. Even after the law was enacted, the Government held off on implementation in order to consult with the other nations of the Empire to negotiate reciprocity. I mean, it would make no sense for Britain to give

tariff preferences to the Empire unless the Empire was also giving tariff preferences to Britain. And so a conference was called to negotiate the details.

I occasionally draw some flak from my listeners in Canada who feel I have been shortchanging their homeland on this podcast. I went so far as to draw up a list of occasions when I talked about Canada and I feel at least that when you look at the list, there's quite a lot of material there, material that would make at least two Canada-centric episodes if I combined all of it.

But I haven't combined all of it; it has come out in bits and pieces over the years, and it's understandable if the thread of the story has gotten lost, so let me take this opportunity to stitch some of it together.

I raise this point now because the Imperial Economic Conference was held in Ottawa, the capital of Canada. This is in itself a sign of how much has changed. Recall back in 1914, less than twenty years earlier, when the United Kingdom declared war on Germany, it was taken as read that Canada and the other Dominions were included. Canada contributed significant numbers of soldiers and wartime production capacity. By the time of the Paris Peace Conference, the Dominions were all seeking a larger role in the postwar world. Canadian leaders saw Canada as the first Dominion, the eldest child as it were, and therefore saw a role for Canada as an advocate and leader not only for greater freedom of action for its own government but for the governments of all the Dominions.

At the end of 1921, the Liberal William Mackenzie King became Canadian prime minister. You'll recall he played a pivotal role in 1922's Chanak Crisis, episode 196; King threw a monkey wrench into the plans of David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill by refusing to automatically take up a British call to arms, instead insisting on consulting with the Canadian parliament first. As King himself put it later, "If membership within the British Commonwealth means participation by the Dominions in any and every war in which Great Britain becomes involved, without consultation, conference, or agreement of any kind in advance, I can see no hope for an enduring relationship."

King's insistence on greater autonomy for the Dominions played a key role in the events which led to the Statute of Westminster, which we've already discussed. The Statute of Westminster was passed through the House of Commons in December 1931, shortly after the National Government's election victory. It eliminated the power of the British parliament to enact laws for the Dominions. The Act applied automatically to Canada, Ireland, and South Africa, while requiring ratification from the parliaments of the other three Dominions—Australia, New Zealand, and Newfoundland. The parliaments of Australia and New Zealand would take their time on this; neither would get around to ratification until the 1940s. As for Newfoundland...well, hold that thought for a minute.

The Great Depression hit Canada particularly hard. The Canadian economy was heavily dependent on agricultural exports and by 1929 Canada had supplanted the United Kingdom as

the biggest trading partner of the United States. So when the Depression hit the US, it hit Canada, and the economic losses grew even greater after the US enacted the Smoot-Hawley tariffs in 1930. The economic downturn led to a Conservative victory in the 1930 Canadian federal election and the accession of businessman Richard Bedford Bennett to the premiership, and he was prime minister when Canada hosted this conference.

I hope that helps clarify the through-line of Canadian history during this period. You can plainly see a movement toward greater autonomy for all the Dominions, but especially Canada, with Canada leading the way. Aside from the UK and the six Dominions, representatives of the semi-self governing nations of India and Southern Rhodesia were also in attendance. The representative nations agreed on suspending the gold standard and on a series of bi-lateral trade agreements to codify a system of Imperial preferences. Alas for Canada, which negotiated aggressively at this conference, the Canadian economy gained little from this arrangement.

Alas, too, for Newfoundland, a very small country that was suffering from all the same economic problems as Canada, but even more so. The situation got so bad there that after the 1932 election, Newfoundland's new government petitioned the UK government to resume direct control over the country, which it did in 1934. Newfoundland would continue to be referred to as a Dominion until 1948, although during this period it was no more than a courtesy title.

The British economy, on the other hand, showed marked improvement from 1932 forward. The Imperial preference tariffs may have played a role; the abandonment of the gold standard certainly did, as did the British military buildup of this period. Speaking of which...

[music:

In 1926, the Manchester *Guardian* revealed the secret military relationship between Germany and the Soviet Union, which the Germans were using as a device to skirt the restrictions of the Treaty of Versailles.

In other circumstances, this might have led to Allied action against Germany, but by then the Locarno Treaties had been signed. Germany had pledged to respect the postwar borders to its west and was making its reparations payments under the Dawes Plan. The so-called Spirit of Locarno was in the air, and the British, French, and Italian governments judged it more practical to make new and more equal peace agreements with Germany than to continue to insist on enforcing every letter of the old one. So they chose to look the other way.

Then came the Great Depression. We saw the political convulsions in Germany over reparations payments in general and the Young Plan in particular, and the abrupt rise of the National Socialists. The year 1930 also saw the end of the Allied occupation of the Rhineland that had begun after the war and a new sense of unease developed about the future of Europe.

In France, there was debate over how properly to defend France in the event of another war with Germany. Some younger officers, like Charles de Gaulle, favored heavy investment in the modern weapons of war, like tanks and aircraft, which they viewed as likely to be decisive on the battlefields of the future. Old-school officers like Marshal Joffre and Marshal Pétain, on the other hand, urged construction of powerful, fixed defenses. They persuaded the French minister of war, André Maginot, and work began on what history remembers as the Maginot Line.

I need to say here that in our time, the Maginot Line has become a metaphor for the danger of overconfidence in one's defenses, but if you were to consider the situation of France in 1930, the plan actually makes a lot of sense. First of all, following the withdrawal from the Rhineland, Allied forces would not be able to rely upon the formidable Rhine River as a defensive line in any future war. Building a new defensive line along the new frontier with Germany seemed a logical move.

But there was a lot more to the plan than that. French strategic thinking in 1932 was not all that different than it had been in 1912, though modified a little to take into account the lessons of the Great War and the new military technologies that had emerged. The fundamental fact remained that Germany had nearly twice the population of France and a much larger economy. On the other hand, in the event of a new war between Germany and France, France could count on greater support from its allies. Since 1918, Italy had been a thorn in France's side more often than not, but in 1932 even Benito Mussolini could be counted on to oppose German aggression. The UK was an indispensable ally, again, not always as cooperative as one might like, but certain to oppose a resurgent Germany.

The new Soviet Union was uninterested in alliances with capitalist powers, so the French stitched together alliances with Eastern European nations such as Poland and Czechoslovakia. These countries were not the military juggernauts that Russia had been—or seemed to have been—but they were big enough and strong enough that Germany could not afford to throw all its military weight against France. Some portion of the German military would have to be held in reserve against a potential attack from the east.

Any future war, if it did not end quickly, would likely bog down into a long and bloody war of attrition, as the Great War had. And in the long run, France and its allies would have the resources to keep up the fight longer than Germany could, as had been the case in 1918. The Germans, therefore, would likely seek to knock France out of the war quickly, as they had last time. Any future war with Germany would therefore likely see another Schlieffen Plan, another German effort to duplicate the success of 1870 and knock France out of the war quickly.

The challenge facing French strategists then, was how to ensure that a future war would play out like 1914 and not like 1870, and the Maginot Line was a key piece of that strategy. Let me emphasize that the Maginot Line was not, and was never thought to be, the sum total of French strategy. No one believed that the Maginot Line made France invulnerable to a German attack.

The purpose of the Maginot Line, which ran roughly along the Franco-German border from Switzerland in the south to Luxembourg in the north, was to deny the Germans the opportunity to deliver a knockout blow directly across their shared border. The Maginot Line would force the German offensive northward, through Belgium, which would take longer, give the French more time to mobilize, and cost the Germans valuable time and momentum, as indeed it had in 1914.

The Maginot Line, as conceived and built, was a masterpiece of modern military technology, incorporating all the lessons learned so painfully in the trenches of the Great War. Remember Verdun? The lesson of Verdun was that a thoroughly prepared defensive position could force the enemy to expend such huge amounts of time, resources, and blood as to make the potential gain not worth the terrible cost. The Maginot Line included underground bunkers where soldiers could live in comfort for long periods, all but immune to enemy artillery and aerial bombing, underground rail lines to feed and supply them, and pop-up turrets from which the soldiers could lay down light artillery and machine gun fire on the enemy, then retract the turret, making it invulnerable to enemy counterfire.

Again, the purpose of all this was not to render France immune to attack; it was to allow a relatively small number of French soldiers to hold this line against any German attempt to rapidly overrun or encircle the defenders, and thus buy the rest of the French military time to mobilize.

You might wonder, why stop at Luxembourg? Why not build the Maginot Line all the way to the North Sea coast? There were proposals to do just that, but they created diplomatic difficulties with the Belgians. Unlike 1914, when it was studiously neutral, Belgium had signed an alliance with France in 1920, and French proposals to extend the Maginot Line along the Belgian border were poorly received in Brussels. It looked too much as if France was proposing in the event of war with Germany to throw Belgium to the wolves in exchange for greater French security, and that just wasn't on.

Even so, the Maginot Line farther south would force a hypothetical German offensive farther north, where it would have to fight its way through Belgium first, before reaching French soil. This brought advantages with it. Not only would it be a slower and longer trip for the Germans, giving France more time to mobilize and prepare, but if there were any doubts about British willingness to come to French aid once again, another round of big, bad Germany invading poor little inoffensive Belgium was the surest way to lay them to rest.

Also, the recent advances in military technology would work in French favor here. Mobilizing the soldiers and getting them to the front would be faster and easier in an age when cars and trucks were far more common. Remember how the French military used Parisian taxis to rush soldiers to the front in 1914? This would be so much easier today, not to mention a lot cheaper, since the French government wouldn't have to pay cab fare this time. Likewise, tanks could be driven to the front in a matter of hours, and French aircraft could be there in minutes. Therefore,

France would be able to meet a German invasion force head on, a lot faster than was possible in 1914. Afterward, the offensive would likely wind down into another stalemate like the Great War. This time, however, the French were determined that it would not be French soil devastated by years of artillery bombardment and trench warfare. It would not be French factories and French mines commandeered by the enemy. This time, the French Army would mobilize rapidly and charge into Belgium, meeting the Germans right there, and if years of inconclusive fighting had to happen all over again, let the Belgians play host to it this time.

So there's the plan in a nutshell: Maginot Line forces German offensive north, through Belgium, where it will be met head on by the cream of the French Army, including tanks and aircraft, presumably with the Belgian Army fighting at their sides, and likely the British Army too. The Germans will be forced to a halt before they ever reach the French border, and afterward, if they want to waste inconceivable amounts of their own blood and treasure on a lengthy war of attrition they are doomed to lose, that's on them. For France, it would guarantee that the next war would look more like 1914 than 1870, with the added bonus that the combat would take place in someone else's country.

[music: Méhul and Chénier, "Chant du depart."]

French military strategists had their Maginot Line; British military strategists had the English Channel. If you're sufficiently interested in history to listen to this podcast, I need hardly explain to you the military significance of the English Channel. It kept the Germans out of Britain as recently as the Great War. A French attempt to assemble an invasion armada together with the Spanish was frustrated by British admiral Lord Nelson at Trafalgar in 1805, while a Spanish attempt to assemble an invasion armada on their own was defeated at the Battle of...well, in a series of battles in 1588. As you no doubt already know, the last successful attempt to invade the island of Great Britain was made by some bastard named William in 1066. For more information on that, consult the British History Podcast.

I'm sure he'll get to it any day now. What's that you say? He has?

[sound effect: cheering]

Fun fact: I'm married to one of William's descendants. Which, if I understand this correctly, makes me practically royalty, so show some respect.

But I digress. There was one teensy-weensy little problem with reliance on the English Channel in the twentieth century, though: the invention of the aeroplane. I discussed this exact problem back in episode 72, titled "England Is No Longer an Island," and yes, I know England isn't actually an island; it's a country on an island, but you'll have to take that up with Lord Northcliffe. Who was English, last time I checked.

Anyway, Lord Northcliffe's 1909 declaration was not wrong, although it may have been a bit premature. Powered heavier-than-air aircraft played a significant role in the Great War, as we saw, but the technology was new, the aircraft were clumsy and fragile, and their role was mostly limited to reconnaissance and to shooting at each other. The Germans experimented with bombing Britain, both from airplanes and zeppelins. They managed to kill over 500 British civilians in the course of the war in this manner, but the military significance of these attacks was minimal, so much so that I never bothered to talk about them during the war.

The fifteen years since the end of that war saw dramatic improvements in airplane design. Single-engine biplanes made of wood and fabric have given way to multiengine monsters sculpted with sleek metallic skins that could fly much faster, higher, and longer. By the early 1930s, passenger air travel had become a fact of life, with tri-motor planes capable of carrying a dozen passengers at a time in comfort.

Please note, however, that an aircraft capable of carrying twelve passengers could easily be reconfigured into a bomber capable of carrying twelve bombs. Great War bombing began with pilots lobbing grenades over the sides of their aircraft. By the end of the war, the Allies had developed more sophisticated planes with mechanisms to target and drop the bombs and machine guns to defend themselves against enemy fighters.

Airplanes of the 1930s were even more capable. They could carry a much larger payload over a much longer distance. And they were fast. A large tri-motor airplane was not as nimble as a single-engine fighter, but it was almost as fast. By the final months of the Great War, Allied air forces had figured out that bombers sent together in formation could defend each other against attacks by isolated fighters.

In 1932, the scenario that kept British military planners awake past midnight looked like this: a wave of bombers, hundreds of them, crosses the North Sea in a matter of minutes and drops thousands of bombs on British factories and cities. Hundreds of thousands of British people are killed or injured; the nation's capacity to make war is snuffed out overnight. Perhaps even more important: the dazed and grieving survivors of this catastrophe will have lost all will to fight.

In 1932, no one ever said where these bombers would come from, but I think we all know what country they had in mind: the one already known to be rearming itself in violation of the Treaty of Versailles.

How do you defend your nation against an attack like that? In principle, you could station fighter planes in various locations across Britain, with pilots ready to go on a moment's notice to defend their homeland. But remember that these bombers are coming in large numbers. An isolated fighter or two won't cut it; you'll have to gather a large force in the air and attack the enemy all at once. And then remember that the bombers are almost as fast as the fighters. That means your fighter-interceptors will have to rendezvous in large numbers at some point ahead of the bombers and meet them head on.



In other words, in the case of a surprise attack, here's what you have to do: You have to spot the approaching bombers. You have to study their flight path long enough to get an idea of where they're heading. Then you have to contact your fighters, get them in the air and assembled over the target. You have to do all this in a matter of minutes, or it will be too late to do any good.

And then you have to hope you guessed the target correctly.

It was widely believed that a fighter defense such as I just outlined was a practical impossibility. The only real deterrent to a surprise bomber attack would be for the RAF in Britain to maintain its own fleet of bombers, ready to launch an equally devastating counterattack should that dread day come, and make sure the potential adversary knows that the price of an attack on Britain is equal devastation of their own country.

Those of you who have read ahead in the history of the twentieth century recognize that this sounds remarkably like the strategic thinking about nuclear weapons during the Cold War era, which is at this point still a generation in the future. This is what Stanley Baldwin was telling the House of Commons in his speech of November 1932 that I quoted at the top of the episode, the speech that contained the memorable line, "The bomber will always get through." At this moment in history, Stanley Baldwin is not the prime minister; he does not even hold an important ministerial portfolio, but he is the leader of the Conservative Party, by far the largest party in the National Government, so his words represent government thinking.

The image of the formerly secure island of Britain being subjected to attack from the air also emerges in some of the fiction of the period. You could regard these stories as successors to the pre-war invasion novels I told you about all the way back in episode 2. One example is English philosopher and pacifist William Olaf Stapledon's 1930 book *Last and First Men*, which includes a description of such an attack early on, although this ambitious work is not content to describe just a future war; it lays out the future of the human race over the next two billion years, because this is 1930 and science fiction is beginning to come into its own.

You didn't have to be H.G. Wells, the English writer whose name was practically synonymous with predicting the future, to anticipate a bomber attack. And Wells himself was on it. In 1933, at the age of 67, he published *The Shape of Things to Come*, another proto-science fiction work with a more modest ambition than Stapledon's, this one merely to tell the history of humanity through the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The story begins with a surprise aerial attack on Britain in 1940, the prelude to a terrible decades-long conflict that destroys civilization. Wells' book would be made into a British film in 1936, produced by Alexander Korda, who also produced *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, directed by American William Cameron Menzies, and starring Raymond Massey. *Things to Come* has been called "the first true masterpiece of science fiction cinema," and in its narrative choice to background characters and plot in service of presenting a sweeping vision of the destiny of the human race, it has to be seen as in the same cinematic tradition as 1968's *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

The moral of the story, both in fiction and in real life, was taken to be that warfare between nations had become unthinkable and that peaceful arbitration of international disputes through supranational organizations such as the League of Nations was the only alternative to a devastating conflict that could mean the end of civilization.

Naturally, all this talk about a horrific future war was destined to engender a strong backlash from a public that still vividly remembered the horrors of the Great War, which only ended fifteen years ago.

In February 1933, four months after Mr. Baldwin told the Commons that “the bomber will always get through,” the Oxford Union Society debated a motion: “This House will under no circumstances fight for King and country.” The student supporting the motion argued: “The justification urged for the last war was that it was a war to end war. If that were untrue it was a dastardly lie; if it were true, what justification is there for opposition to this motion...?” Against the motion, one student pointed to the recent Japanese invasion and occupation of Manchuria and noted that it had only been possible because Britain lacked the military force to intervene and prevent it, and that a disarmed Britain would subject European nations to a similar bullying from aggressive powers.

At the end of the evening, the motion carried, 275-153.

Now, I like college students just fine. I happen to be a former college student myself. But let’s face it. College students spend inordinate amounts of time in emotional debate over abstract and often abstruse disputes with little or no real-world significance. It’s part of the whole college student gig. So nothing about this is particularly surprising, especially given all the nervous talk about “things to come.” Also bear in mind that the members of the Oxford Union Society were not voting on behalf of the entire British nation, or even on behalf of all the undergraduates of Oxford. They were voting only for themselves.

And indeed little notice was taken at first; not until the *Daily Telegraph* ran a story about the vote under the inflammatory headline: “Disloyalty at Oxford.” At the time, Winston Churchill condemned the result with characteristically flamboyant language, calling it shameless, disgusting, and squalid. Later, after the Second World War, Churchill would claim that the leaders of Japan, Germany, and Italy were emboldened by the Oxford debate.

That’s a claim that would be difficult to verify. The newly installed Hitler government in Germany did not make a big deal out of it at the time; neither did the Fascist government in Italy, though for what it’s worth, there is anecdotal evidence in the form of British travelers to those countries reporting their attempts to explain away the Oxford resolution in the face of scorn and derision from ordinary Germans and Italians.

Was the Oxford Union Society speaking for the broad British public, or were they not? You’ve heard me say many times on this podcast regarding matters of public opinion, that they didn’t

have public opinion polls back then. Well, that's been true up to now, but the 1930s marks the beginning of the first attempts to measure public opinion scientifically and systematically by sampling the views of members of the public. One of these early attempts was the so-called "Peace Ballot" of 1934-5.

The Peace Ballot was conceived not so much as an opinion poll as a privately conducted referendum of British voters. The poll asked six questions regarding the League of Nations, disarmament, and the proper response to a nation that commits aggression. The Peace Ballot was not binding on anyone. It was conducted by the League of Nations Union, an organization of League supporters lead by Lord Cecil, the same Lord Cecil who had been one of the architects of the League, so not exactly a disinterested organization. The wording of the questions has been criticized as biased, but the result, after canvassers spent months over late 1934 and early 1935 going door to door soliciting answers, was a resounding show of support for the League of Nations, for disarmament, and for reliance on collective action through the League in response to international aggression.

The League Union wanted to demonstrate support for the League, and they got it, with Britons participating voting overwhelmingly for Britain to remain a member of the League and for collective action to oppose aggression, including at least mild support for the proposition of multilateral military action to oppose aggression. But it was also a resounding vote of approval for disarmament, a subject on which the League's members had made no meaningful progress.

It put the National Government in an awkward place. That Germany was secretly breaking some of disarmament requirements imposed upon it by the Treaty of Versailles was common knowledge by 1934, but late 1934 through early 1935 is exactly the same time frame in which the Government first became aware through intelligence reports of how Germany's new Nazi leadership had begun an ambitious secret rearmament program that went beyond anything the German government had done before, including building an air force in direct violation of the Treaty. The Cabinet had to decide on a response to German rearmament, a response that might well require beefing up the British military generally and the Royal Air Force in particular; at the same time the results of the Peace Ballot were coming in, signaling that the public was looking for disarmament.

The Cabinet also had to read some troubling by-election returns, most famously the October 1933 by-election in the constituency of Fulham East, part of the London borough of Fulham. Fulham East had given 69% of its vote to the Tory candidate in the 1931 general election. Two years later, the pacifist, pro-disarmament Labour Party took 60% of the vote in the by-election, an eye-popping 29% swing in two years.

The person in the Government on whom the question lay most heavily was Tory leader Stanley Baldwin, and Baldwin's actions during this period have been the subject of vigorous debate. Winston Churchill later accused Baldwin of putting party before country; that is, of disregarding

national security for the sake of protecting Conservative seats in the House of Commons, a decision with disastrous consequences for Britain and for Europe generally. Baldwin's defenders argue that he was doing all he could in the face of a stiff headwind of public opinion hostile to any talk of rearmament.

Winston Churchill went beyond criticizing Baldwin personally; he made public in the Commons secret details of the German rearmament campaign and castigated the government for not doing more. Stanley Baldwin supporters argue that he deliberately looked the other way while this secret intelligence was leaked to Churchill because he wanted Churchill to make the information public as a way of building political support for rearmament.

If that's true, you might think Churchill could have done more good from within the government and ask why the Tories have kept him in the back bench all this time. When this question was put to Baldwin years later, he answered it in one word: "India." In other words, it was Churchill's vehement opposition to greater self-rule in India that led the Conservatives to hold him at arm's length. Still, the British government would cautiously begin to rearm, approving an expansion of the Royal Air Force against the possibility of a German attack from the air.

Then, in early 1935, the German government admitted openly when everyone in British government already knew privately. German rearmament was no longer a rumor; it was real and it was under way, and the German government itself had confirmed that.

But that is a story for another episode. We'll have to stop there for today. I thank you for listening, and I'd especially like to thank David and Omar for their kind donations, and thank you to Glenn for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons like David and Omar and Glenn help cover the costs of making this show, which in turn keeps the podcast available free for everyone, so my thanks to them and to all of you who have pitched in and helped out. If you'd like to become a patron or make a donation, just visit the website, [historyofthetwentiethcentury.com](http://historyofthetwentiethcentury.com) and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons.

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And I hope you'll join me next week, here on *The History of the Twentieth Century*, as we turn to Germany for our next two episodes. We'll talk about German rearmament in two weeks, but before we get to that, I need to tell you the story of Hitler consolidating his power. He needed conservative allies to get him into the Chancellery, but he had no use for them once he was there. Hence, The Night of the Long Knives, next week, here, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. On February 9, 1983, the fiftieth anniversary of the King and Country debate, the Oxford Union took up a similar motion, this time that the House would not fight for Queen and country. Times were very different in 1983, with the Cold War growing tenuous once again, leading to yet another round of calls for disarmament, but also with Margaret Thatcher in Number Ten and the Falklands War just months in the past.

On this occasion, following debate, the motion was defeated, with 416 votes against versus 187 in favor.

And by the way, Jamie, when are you going to get to the Tudors? That's where the really interesting British history is.

[music: Closing Theme]