

## PART I—THE WAR PERIOD

### 1. THE FIRST IMPACT OF THE WAR ON NEW ZEALAND'S BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTIONAL INDUSTRIES

As international relations continued to deteriorate in the early part of the year 1939, preparations were being made in many countries to meet the contingency of an outbreak of war. New Zealand at that time established her Organization for National Security, charged with the responsibility of seeing that plans were made for action to be taken immediately war broke out. Part of these plans consisted of a programme of constructional works required by the Armed Forces.

With the declaration of war this programme of defence work was swept into operation with extraordinary speed. Conditions favoured speed. At that stage the mobilization of men into the Forces had only commenced, and manpower was consequently available to the constructional and associated industries in numbers which have not since been even approached. Materials were plentiful; stocks of timber were high, and, indeed, all the building and constructional materials were flowing into the market at their maximum volume. Under these conditions it was possible to carry out defence work to a total value of some £3,600,000 in the first seven months of the war without causing any major suspension of normal peacetime work.

Apart from the construction of airfields and emergency-landing grounds, the most important work done at that stage was to provide mobilization camps in which Army and Air Force personnel could be trained prior to their embarkation overseas. Sites were selected, levelled, roaded, drained, and provided with sewerage, water-supply, and electric power. Barracks, kitchens, mess-rooms, garages, hangars, bomb-stores, magazines, bulk-fuel stores, workshops, administration buildings, general stores, machine-gun ranges, wireless and telephone installations, water-towers, recreation-rooms, hospitals, and sick-quarters had to be provided as appropriate in each case, and, apart from these main mobilization camps, considerable work was done on the provision of harbour-defence works, gun emplacements, guard stations, and naval bases. Air Force stations alone accounted for some £1,619,000 in this period. Army camps cost £1,274,000, while naval installations absorbed £74,000. The total cost of all work done up to March, 1940, was £3,568,000.

Most of the work was done by contract on the tendering system which had been normal in peacetime. Men, materials, and plant were assembled on the site. Very little prefabrication was being practised at that stage. Following this initial burst of activity in the opening months of the war, the tempo fell to some extent. Men became more scarce as mobilization proceeded and material supplies became more difficult to obtain. Most of the work required for the training of men to take part in the war in Europe had been done. In the whole twelve months from March, 1940, to March, 1941, less money and less man-hours went into defence works than in the first seven months of the war.