HISTORIOGRAPHY: ROLE OF APPEASEMENT

b) The Origins of the Second World War, A.J.P Taylor

- Pretending to prepare for a great war but not in fact doing it an essential part of Hitler’s political strategy
  - Those who were worried about Hitler unwillingly did his work for him (Ex. Churchill)
- 1909, German Government accused by many British people of secretly accelerating naval building without the approval of the Reichstag
  - Accusation probably not true, but still raised suspicions
  - Suspicion strengthened by evasions of the disarmament imposed by the Treaty of Versailles
  - Hitler encouraged and exploited this suspicion
- 28 November 1934, Baldwin denied Churchill’s statement that German air strength was equal to that of Great Britain’s
  - Baldwin’s figures were right
- 24 March 1935, Sir John Simon and Anthony Eden visited Hitler
  - Hitler told them that the German air force was already equal to that of Great Britain if not superior
  - Hitler was at once believed; Baldwin was discredited
- German rearmament largely a myth until Spring 1936
  - Hitler’s motive was principally fear of the Red Army
  - Great Britain and France had also begun to rearm
  - Hitler was at same pace with others
- October 1936, Hitler told Goering to prepare German army and economy for war within four years
- 1938-39, Germany spent 15% of Gross National Product on armaments
  - British proportion was almost exactly the same
- After Munich, German armament expenditure cut down and remained at this lower level
  - By 1940 British production of aeroplanes way ahead of Germany
  - Germany had 1450 modern fighter planes and 800 bombers; GREAT Britain and France had 950 fighters and 1300 bombers
  - Germans had 3500 tanks; Great Britain and France had 3850
- Allied intelligence estimated German strength at more than twice the true figure
- Germans confident that they could defeat Poland if they were left undisturbed in the west
  - Hitler had no idea he would knock France out of the war when he invaded Belgium and Holland on 10 May 1940
  - This was a defensive move to secure the Ruhr from Allied invasion
- German production of armaments reduced in winter of 1940-41 and further reduced in autumn of 1941 (when war against Russia had already begun)