

The enemy at home

DUNCAN CAMPBELL opens up government documents to discover when the first aim of war is to defeat the 'subversives' at home

MRS THATCHER's clarion calls to the public to crush strikes with 'the Falklands Spirit' would appear to be absolutely in accord with Home Office policy. Their official, but private, Training Manual for home defence Scientific Advisers identifies 'adverse public reaction', 'anti-war demonstrations' and 'dissident groups' as the first enemy to be tackled in any war.

When the present wave of plans for 'home defence' began in the early 1970s, it was then stated that the first objective was to 'maintain the internal security of the United Kingdom'. 'Mitigating the effects of a nuclear attack' came second; 'recovery' from a nuclear war, if possible, came last.

The Training Manual, which was drawn up by the Home Office's Scientific Advisory Branch for the volunteer scientists who will check fallout and radioactivity levels in official bunkers, puts an illuminating gloss on this. Under the heading 'The Threat' it notes:

The overall threat can be divided into the following:

- internal threat (sabotage, subversion and possibly adverse public reaction to government policies)
- conventional attack
- nuclear attack

The document characterises British 'dissi-

dent groups' and anyone arranging strikes or anti-war demonstrations as having already thrown in their lot with the enemy. Such an assumption by the Home Office would legitimise, in the public eye, the internment of critics of the government and the use of police or army against anyone who obstructed the NATO-wide build-up to war.

Organising the 'detention or restriction of movement of subversive or potentially subversive people' would, according to the Police Manual of Home Defence, be the task of MI5 and police officers. In all home defence rehearsals for war, it is assumed that an Emergency Powers Act would be passed in the lead-up to war. Under such an Act the government could set up the new state structures it needed and issue orders and regulations by decree alone.

Such rehearsals take place every two years, with the next one — under the unusual code-name of *Hard Rock 82* — scheduled to start on 29 September and run for a week. During the exercise, government bunkers will be operated to rehearse what would go on during three phases — 'conventional' war, a nuclear attack, and a post-attack 'survival' period.

SHOULD ANY of the estimated 20,000 people who would be the targets of a pre-war round-up of subversives not know what the Home Office expects them to do, the Training Manual tells them. Under the heading of Sabotage, it says that the UK's internal security will potentially be threatened during periods of international tension by acts of sabotage by enemy agents 'possibly assisted by dissident

groups . . . Their aim would be to weaken the national will and ability to fight.' Such acts, besides undermining the Falklands Spirit, would 'tie down large numbers of men on static guard duties thereby preventing them being used on other necessary tasks . . .'

Who exactly are these saboteurs? The Manual, not updated since the emergence of a mass peace movement, says there are certain *dissident extremist groups*

which are known to be in sympathy with our potential enemies and which can be expected to react against the good of the nation in times of tension.

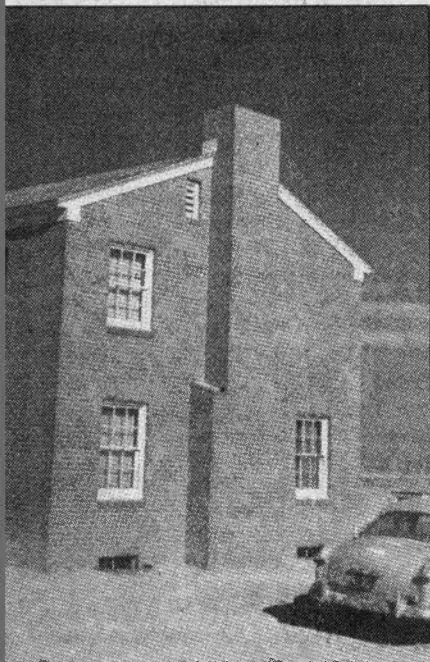
The threat *subversive groups* pose includes

fomenting strikes in key industries, promoting anti-war demonstrations to turn the populace against the government and disruptive activities connected with war preparations.

The language could have come straight from the cold war speeches of our 'potential enemy', the Soviet Union, on how to characterise its own dissidents.

The new governmental forms which are being planned go beyond the appointment of Controllers and Commissioners under an Emergency Powers Act. A Cabinet Office 'Transition to War' working party reviewed further measures in a secret 1979 report to a committee on the same subject, chaired by Cabinet Secretary Sir Robert Armstrong. The aim is to produce an 'integrated' government control system, with the Central Office of Information co-ordinating the news media. Although plans may change with the discovery of the talents of Ian McDonald, the Armstrong

In order to discover as much as possible about the effects of bomb blast simulated dwellings were built close to the centre of nuclear test sites. Automatic cameras photographed the results. Left: the homes just before the explosion; centre the blast effect; right: the end result. Pictures come from the official Home Office publication, 'Nuclear Weapons', which gives details of the expected effects of nuclear attacks on British cities. Some of the Home Office figures differ considerably from United States estimates



Committee intend that the chief censor and information co-ordinator would be the Prime Minister's Press Secretary, Mr Bernard Ingham. Another official, Mr Alan Howard, who directs the Home Office's emergency planning division, has spoken publicly to county council civil defence staff of the need to avoid the 'trauma' of public debate before a nuclear war. 'Trauma' could be avoided by the early suppression of public discussion.

GOVERNMENT HOSTILITY to any public opposition to its war plans, revealed in the Training Manual, will not seem hypocritical after the Falklands war. But what may distress government supporters is the blatant conflict between the Manual's assessment of likely war damage and the claims made publicly by the Home Office since the Manual was written. In 1981, a Home Office public pamphlet, *Domestic Nuclear Shelters*, said that knowing where the bombs would fall was impossible but claimed that about 80 per cent of the land area might suffer 'no blast effects at all.' In an introduction to the confidential Training Manual, the Director of the Scientific Advisory Branch, Mr J. K. S. Clayton, says that only 40 per cent of the land area of the UK will be 'undamaged' by nuclear blast: 5 per cent of the land area will suffer 'heavy damage', another 15 per cent 'extensive damage' by blast and fire and another 40 per cent 'superficial damage'. So-called 'superficial' damage in this case means about a one-ton force distributed across typical domestic doors and windows from the explosion's blast wave. That is enough to destroy doors, windows and roofs, rendering the houses useless as fallout and weather shelters during and after an explosion.

At the time *Domestic Nuclear Shelters* was published, Mr Philip Steadman, the Director of the Open University's Centre for Configurational Studies, challenged the Home Office claim that 80 per cent of the land area might suffer 'no blast effects at all.' He published an analysis in *New Scientist* (18 June 1981) showing that the sort of attack the Home Office expected would leave only 40 per cent of the country's land area (relatively) unscathed, and a similar area would be in the outer area of 'superficial' blast damage. That is exactly the same proportions as in the secret Training Manual's predictions - which Mr Steadman had not then seen.

Yet when Mr Graeme Bushell, the Cambridgeshire County Council's Emergency Planning Officer, raised Mr Steadman's criticisms with the Home Office he was told that Steadman had been invited to the Home Office, where he was shown, and had accepted, the error of his ways. This information came in a letter Mr Bushell received on 30 July 1981 from a Mr K. A. Day of the Home Office Emergency Planning Division, and one of the authors of the pamphlet. Mr Day's assertion is quite untrue.

This week, Mr Steadman said: 'I regard it as very serious that the Home Office is seeking to discredit my work behind my back by misleading others'. Mr Day, who has presumably seen the Training Manual, also repeated the assertion in his letter to

Mr Bushell that

It is nevertheless reasonable to say that about 80 per cent of the land area of the United Kingdom might suffer no blast effects

Mr Day's letter went on to say that the Home Office 'certainly did not accept' Mr Steadman's general criticisms. His article had pointed out that the areas most directly affected by expected nuclear attacks were those in which most people lived. Mr Day said:

Mr Steadman makes much of the possibility that a large number of people might reside in the areas directly attacked. But that is not, really relevant.

In the Home Office's view, it is a technical matter of whether or not shelters against radiation from fallout - but not blast - can stand the strain. A country of dead and dying people with solid nuclear shelters as their tomb-stones would, resumably, be a Home Office success.

THE MANNER in which 'superficial damage' (in private) becomes 'no blast effects' is typical of a wide variety of inaccurate, incompetent and sometimes deliberately misleading statements and procedures used by some official practitioners of home defence 'science'. They have produced at least three quite different tables of bomb effects in official publications which appear partly to be based on an inability to distinguish between multiplication and division. They have circulated tables of casualty levels which finish up

with 115 per cent of the original population accounted for and have calculated 90-100 per cent population survival rates at levels of blast or radiation which the US Department of Defense's experts regard as wholly lethal.

One of the fundamental mathematical errors made by Mr Day's working party on shelters is its failure to distinguish between the *radius* of a circle and its *area*. In a technical manual on 'Domestic nuclear shelters' they claim that when a bomb goes off in the air, the 'distances (of the bomb effects) would be increased by 30 per cent' compared with a bomb that goes off on the ground. This is wrong; but more to the point, the accompanying pamphlet of the same title claims that 'the *area* affected will be about 30 per cent greater.' 'O' level arithmetic examiners normally expect that students know that when the radius of a circle goes up by 30 per cent, its area increases by 69 per cent (since area is proportional to the *square* of the radius).

Such errors have been a persistent feature of British government 'science' when seeking to justify political notions. In the 1930s, the government defended its determination not to build public shelters with statistical 'proof' that people would be safer 'dispersed'. A leading critic, Professor J. B. S. Haldane, had to publish a paper in *Nature* to disprove formally the official claim. □

Duncan Campbell's book on civil defence, nuclear war, and the Hard Rock 82 exercise will be published in September. It is called War Plan '82.

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