

## **HARD LUCK, HARD ROCK**

Some months ago Edward Leigh, chairman of the right wing National Council for Civil Defence, warned the Government that CND would be able to make 'a shambles' of the Hard Rock national civil defence exercise, due in autumn this year. And now CND, with the aid of many local authorities, has done just that.

On July 14 William Whitelaw, Home Secretary, announced an indefinite postponement of Hard Rock, caused by CND's campaign and the refusal of 20 of the country's 54 county councils to take part in the exercise. Cheers and congratulations all round.

But what now?

More than 170 local authorities throughout the county from the Greater London Council to local parish councils, have declared themselves Nuclear Free Zones; they include the biggest cities in Britain, and the whole of Wales. They oppose the manufacture, transport and emplacement of nuclear weapons in their areas. A great many of them have declared opposition to the Government's civil defence programme.

Mr Whitelaw coupled his retreat with a threat to these councils. He would bring in legislation to make it compulsory for local authorities to participate in exercises like Hard Rock. In fact, as the Home Secretary well knows, the Government already has power under the Civil Defence Act, 1948, and the Civil Defence (Planning) Regulations, 1974, to order local authorities to make plans for civil defence. So is Mr Whitelaw's threat merely a device to soften the ignominy of retreat? Or is he really proposing heavy penalties against local authorities who refuse to co-operate? Until Mr Whitelaw's statement, the Government had hesitated to use a big stick; it only 'requested' local authorities to join in the Hard Rock exercise. But there was a dusty answer — or, rather, a whole lot of dusty answers. It's one thing to issue orders to local councils, but quite another thing to make them carry out the orders.

It seems unlikely that the Government will be passive in face of this blow to the entire civil defence system — for that is the meaning of the Hard Rock retreat. Therefore the need now is for a strong campaign of support for the Nuclear Free Zone councils,

and a renewed attempt to increase the number of such councils — they already represent half the population of Britain. Just as the Government has been defeated on Hard Rock, so it can be thwarted if it attempts to bully local authorities. CND's National Council, meeting three days after Whitelaw's announcement, decided to transform its Hard Rock campaign into a 'Hard Luck' campaign, part of the wider drive against civil defence as a whole. Much planning and work had gone into the campaign against Hard Rock; to lose momentum was considered to be a mistake. A 'scenario' showing realistically the effects of a nuclear attack on Britain, as opposed to the fictitious account in the Home Office briefing for Hard Rock, was already being produced. In conjunction with this the CND scientists group SANA (Scientists Against Nuclear Weapons) is to issue a computer based bomb burst pattern covering the whole country, and showing each area what to expect.

The Home Office scenario was a delicate job. It had to be strong enough to test the civil defence apparatus, but not so strong that it would alarm either the participants or the general public. It had, in fact, to be both a limited test and a propaganda exercise. A description of it is useful because it shows what the Government considers an optimistic picture of a nuclear attack.

It envisages a war in which 105 nuclear missiles would fall on Britain. Those bombs, the planners calculate, would have a total explosive power of 200 million tons of dynamite — equivalent to 13,000 bombs of the type that destroyed Hiroshima and killed 140,000 people. This is a prospect terrible beyond comprehension. But reality will have an even more dreadful face.

Although the Government was secretive in the early stages of preparation for this war rehearsal, information uncovered by July was enough to give a general picture of the assumptions on which Hard Rock was based. The timetable was:

18 Sept: Crisis in Europe. Armed forces alerted; local authorities review civil defence plans.

19 Sept: Troops leave for Europe. Subversive leaflets distributed at Forces HQs.

20 Sept: Rallies for and against Government policy.

25 Sept: People in London and other cities alarmed, start to flee into the country. Government tells them to stay where they are (in target areas).

27 Sept: Conventional bombing. 82 targets attacked during the following days.

30 Sept: Considerable civil disorder; Sub-Regional HQs (see below) are staffed. Hospitals discharge many patients (to make

room for nuclear and other casualties). Prisons parole all but the most dangerous prisoners.

2 Oct: Nuclear attack. 80 bombs burst on the ground, 20 in the air, 5 under water. The attack begins at 8pm and continues until three o'clock the following morning.

These events are followed by what the Home Office sees as a post-attack period of 28 days and then a 'recovery' stage lasting an indefinite time.

The idea that an attack on a country crammed with nuclear bases would last only seven hours and that there would be only one attack is nonsense; the list of bursts is fictitious, and the assumption that there will be a warning period of conventional bombing is an attempt to dodge the real nature of nuclear war. One revealing fact is that local authorities have been asked to choose, as it were, their own bombs. They were told to suggest a bombing pattern in their own areas which would test their resources but would not be so heavy as to wreck those resources. This is fairy tale warfare.

The preliminary period before the attack is important. Note the references to subversive leaflets, rallies against Government policy and civil disorder. This is the period when the Government anticipates widespread, active opposition to nuclear war and hopes to suppress such opposition. People acting against war — that means a large part of the labour movement as well as the general peace movement and religious and liberal groups — will be arrested and probably accused of sabotaging the war effort. Punishment will be anything from detention in concentration camps to execution. All this is indicated in official circulars and publications.

For instance, duties listed in the Police Manual of Civil Defence include 'control of selfish and disgruntled minorities', 'support and protection of special courts', 'subjection and elimination of hostile elements' and 'guards on internment areas'. A similar list has been issued to the armed forces — in the 1980 civil defence exercise, Square Leg, thousands of soldiers were allocated to the job of rounding up 'subversives'. The establishment of special courts to sentence offenders is referred to in a document entitled 'Briefing Material for Wartime Controllers', issued from the Home Office in 1976.

All these activities will be continued in the period after the attack. Of course the police, the military and the courts will also be used to combat looting and the gangs that will appear in the anarchy following a nuclear attack, but their essential purpose will be to suppress opposition to nuclear war before an



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Sub Regional Headquarters for the government 'Home Defence' control network — each would administer the remains of two or three counties after nuclear attack. Most government cash for home defence is being spent on the bunkers and their communications, intended to maintain control of the population before and after attack. Pictures by Duncan Campbell from his book on civil defence and *Hard Rock, War Plan UK*, which will be published in October (Hutchinson/Burnett Books).

attack and, after an attack, opposition to a government that has led the country into nuclear war.

Government plans for control during and after a nuclear war are now fairly well known. In charge of internal military operations in wartime will be the UK Commander-in-Chief Committee which will rule from a bunker near Salisbury. Another secret bunker for Ministers, known in Whitehall as the 'Maggie Bunker' is believed to be near Bath. Britain will be divided into 12 regions each under the control of a regional commissioner (usually a junior Minister); below the regions will be 17 sub-regions, corresponding roughly to the counties, with the chief executives of the counties as sub-regional commissioners.

Below these will be a network of local controls, from district councils to parish councils and ward committees, even down to neighbourhood groups covering a number of streets and, finally, 'street watchers'. (At the moment, the lower range of the network — from district councils downwards — exists only on paper).

Side-by-side with the regional civilian controls will be a system of 12 military bunkers. Many people believe that here is where the real power will lie; it could well be a basis for a military dictatorship. This point was put to Sir Leslie Mavor, former chief of the Civil Defence College and now in charge of the co-ordination of civil defence work. He admitted the possibility and is reported to have said: 'We'll just have to trust the gener-

als to be good boys.'

Immediately before the outbreak of war the Government at Westminster will (if it has time) dissolve itself, and the country will be controlled first through the 17 sub-regions and later through the regions, when these are fully activated. The whole apparatus will be staffed by 20,000 civil servants; the staff of a regional bunker will be 200 and upwards.

All these plans will be unaffected by the postponement of Hard Rock — and so, of course, will the real scale of a possible nuclear attack on Britain. Which is why the CND campaign is going ahead.

Civil defence war plans continue. The realities of nuclear war will be glossed over. Little will be said officially about the horrors of radiation poisoning, which threaten the entire population; or the millions of bodies that will lie rotting in the streets; or the diseases that will sweep the country when our sanitation system is wrecked, rats and disease carrying insects multiply and people are weakened by starvation; or those deranged by shock and fear; or about the general breakdown of civilised society.

The Government seeks to present civil defence as a humanitarian, life-saving operation. 'Life-saving' is a strong point of the official argument. But there are two main reasons why this is false.

The first is that civil defence is, in fact, an integral part of the military preparations for war. In a House of Commons debate on 21 February 1980, Mr Leon Brittan, then Minister of State in charge of civil defence, said, according to a report in *The Times*: 'Civil preparedness should be adequate if the credibility of the military deterrent strategy was to be maintained. Military and civil preparedness were closely related.' This clear-eyed view of civil defence policy has been repeated from time to time. No woolly humanitarianism there. Civil defence is undoubtedly part of the arms race, a preparation for war. It is a political statement that Britain is willing to fight, another step towards the final catastrophe. How many lives do we save that way?

The second reason is that so long as we have nuclear bases — particularly American nuclear bases — in our country we are a target and we are in danger. 'Refuge rooms' in our homes will not save us, neither will instructions to sit under the kitchen table, and we will not be protected by a network of underground bunkers staffed by politicians and civil servants. Our only real civil defence is the removal of the bases that make us a target for missiles that cannot be stopped.

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